

Pregnancy and Karate - My Experience

I start this article with the glad tidings of the birth of our daughter, Emma Louise Grant, on the 14th September 2000. For those whom did not realise, this is why I haven't been training since January - no, I hadn't emigrated or been abducted by aliens!!

I took the decision to rest and be cautious on realising I was pregnant, despite the fact that many women do continue their karate training to full term. I applaud those who do achieve this - personally, I was too tired after work and I did not want to disrupt the dojo's training routines, despite reassurances from my sensei, Andy Barker, that this would not be the case! Having said this, Goju Ryu Karate did have a role to play in my pregnancy. I found the whole experience of training and taking gradings had equipped me quite uniquely for the rigours of labour!

I am currently first kyu, which has meant that gradings over the last four-five years have become more demanding physically and mentally. They have tested my personal metal to achieve higher standards and to push my body to the best of its ability. The mental focus required for all kata and particularly the technique of breathing in Sanchin kata enabled me to address the issues of relaxing and controlling my breathing during labour - an aspect of karate which I'm sure can be applied to many other situations, such as stress at work or confrontations...

The relaxation and breathing techniques from karate helped enormously in alleviating the labour pains. I was also able to overcome the additional birth complications which I experienced by drawing on the same determination, focus and spirit required to succeed in my gradings.

I feel Goju Ryu Karate provides unique skills not attained from most team sports; it is more than just a way of keeping fit, I think it is about developing yourself from the inside spiritually and mentally; about pushing mind and body to your own perceived boundaries and beyond. The sense of achievement at the end of a grading - at all levels - supports this. I might also add that there is a wonderful sense of achievement and relief at the end of having given birth too!! When you see what you have laboured for - quite literally!!

Now Emma is with us, I hope to return to training soon and I would like to thank all our friends at Sheffield Hallam Dojo for their support over the last 9 months. I hope this article shows how much karate influences all aspects of our lives and is an encouragement to other expectant mothers amongst us!

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