

Age is Not a Limit at AQMAI

By Anthony Quatrochi, Anthony Quatrochi's Martial Arts Institute



My school was recently invited to teach a few self-defense seminars at Bowdoin Park. Some of these were promoted through the Dutchess County Office of the Aging, so I had the pleasure of working with some more "mature" students than I normally have on the mat.

Not surprisingly, some attendees came to the class with trepidation about what they *would* be asked to physically do, and some trepidation about what they *could* physically do to protect themselves if a situation arose.

If you've been reading my articles, I'm sure you've predicted that I made sure the class heard about my 81-year-old teacher and his physical abilities that put me to shame. Besides his exemplary self-defense skills, his grace, flexibility and overall control over his body inspire my training every day. His range of motion, combined with his precision of movement, fundamental strength and the confidence he exudes, makes him a force you would never expect in a man of his years. Obviously, he's been training for decades, and while I acknowledge that I might never catch up to what he is and what he can do, and others after me even less so, I truly believe that we all can be at least somewhat like him.

SELF-DEFENSE FOR OLDER ADULTS

My style, Kokoro Kai Jujitsu, is built completely around the idea that small movements can have the largest results. This means you do not need muscle, you do not need size, you do not need years of experience to be able to defend yourself. It is a perfect self-defense style for older adults to study. By focusing on easy, fluid movements, the discipline shows you how to use your whole body as one powerful unit.

Besides teaching you how to keep yourself safe, the techniques will improve your physical health and conditioning. I call the movements "Martial Motion;" one lady in the class compared them to Tai Chi. She wasn't wrong. There are many similarities to be seen between the two activities. By moving this way as he trained, my teacher has stayed "young" and vital. In this week's lesson, he kicked over his head...at 81. He is amazing, and clearly, my role model.

SIMPLISTIC MOVEMENT

At Bowdoin, we started the class with a simple-seeming exercise where it looks as if you're hugging yourself. Who can't do that? The amazing part comes when we show people how that simplistic movement can bring a person to the ground, allowing you the time to get away from danger. The hugging movement opens up your core, stretching your muscles and force wide so that you can put your whole being into crashing upon your attacker like a wave while you stay on your feet and in control of your next move.

We built from there, discussing how the parts of the body are connected and how force moves through the body. By the end of the class, I think everyone felt more secure about their abilities, even if they had physical limitations to work around. Age is no hindrance to what I have to teach in this style. There is always an option when you understand the flow of the body; we can show you, no matter your age. You can learn to be your own best defense and simultaneously learn to defend against some effects of aging.

As always, we invite everyone to come try a free month of class. Writing cannot adequately explain what we do and why we're different. Feeling what we have to teach you will. We look forward to meeting you! ♦

