

THE PROFESSIONAL STUDENT

Learning to Overcome Mental Confinement

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Intro

One day my 11 year old son came to me with a couple of new BJJ moves. One was a counter to an arm drag, another was a guard pass, and the third was a submission from side mount. Although the moves were a bit unconventional, I tried hard to realize the value of what each move represented. You see, when you are open to learning, your creative elements open up and you can experiment without the fear of failure. Conversely, when you think you know-it-all, you place yourself in mental confinement.

Mental Confinement

Mental confinement has walls built on practical, historical, and previously learned knowledge. When held in confinement, BJJ students lose imagination, creativity, and possibility. Additionally, they lose emotional freedom and get upset if tapped or reprimanded. So to avoid further embarrassment, we put ourselves in a safe place. I have seen many good students (white thru black) become mentally imprisoned by their own doing. They reach a level of competency that puffs them up. In the end, they start to rely on what they know, and who they have become. At this point, they are *unteachable*. This stagnant, mental pride is most discouraging for instructors because breaking through those mental walls isn't easy.



Jail Break

So how do we break free of this disposition? Becoming mentally pliable again is not unlike escaping a bad position on the mat. First you *learn it*, then you *drill it*, then you *master it*. It's as simple as that. If you want to become free from mental confinement you need to practice mental escapes. Mental escapes, like BJJ escapes, are best practiced in repetition. By repetition, we can train our minds to become learnable again. Napoleon Hill, in his top selling book, confirms that "any idea, plan, or purpose may be placed in the mind through repetition of thought". In my experience, students who become mentally confined exhibit 3 attributes. They stop asking questions, they start saying "I know" when corrected, and they are filled with pride. Avoid these downfalls at all costs. Anyone who wants to avoid mental confinement must take precautions. Below are 3 ways that students can continue being good students- *professional students*.

1. Ask questions
2. Receive correction with humility (and without saying "I know")
3. Remind yourself that you know nothing

Conclusion

I've been involved in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu for over 16 years. During this time, I've learned one important lesson: the more I learn the more I realize I don't know. It is this realization that has driven me to continue learning. To become a successful Brazilian Jiu Jitsu fighter, you need a proper mental outlook. Reminding yourself to become a *professional student* ensures achievement. One of the last things Carlson Gracie Sr. said to me before he passed away was to "abre o seu jogo" which translates "open your game". The only way to accomplish this is to break free from mental, emotional, and creative confinement and become a *professional student*. Interestingly, months after my son taught me his new guard pass, I saw Andre Galvao (World Champion BJJ fighter) perform the same move in a tournament.

Never stop learning.

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