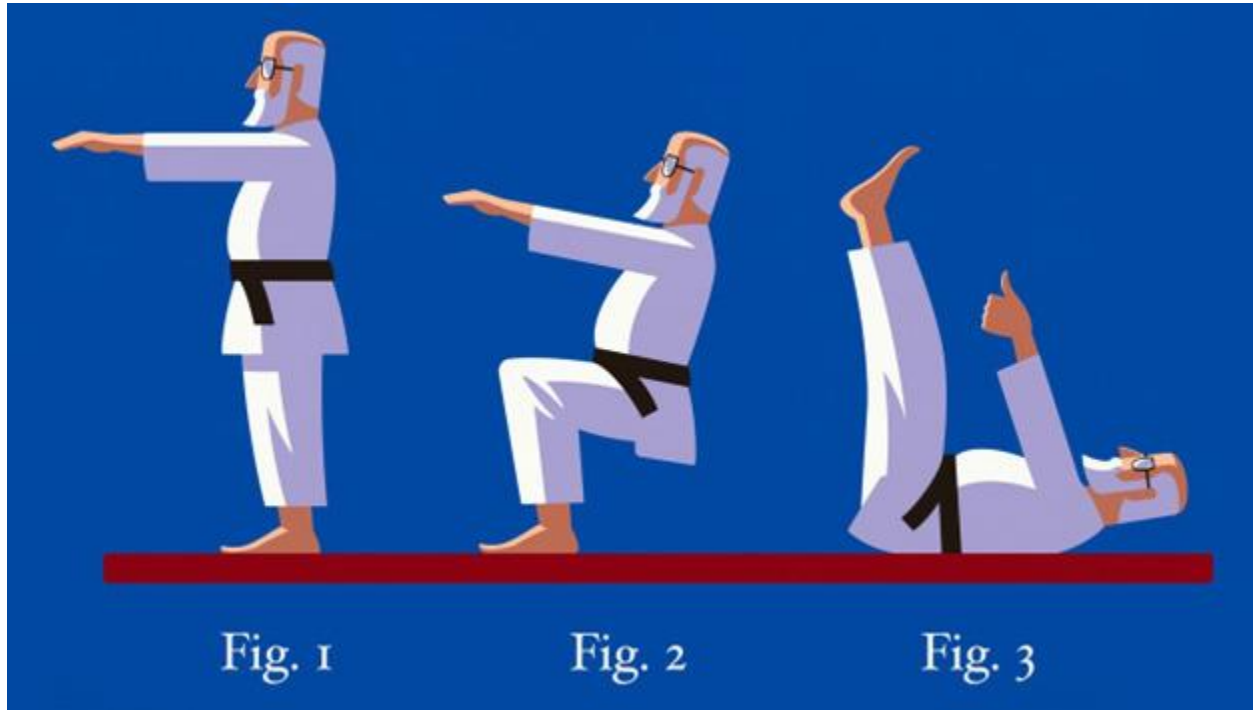


Here's the article for WSJ non-subscribers:

# THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

LIFESTYLE FITNESS



## **If You're Going to Fall Down, This Is the Right Way** ***Martial-arts instructors teach seniors how to avoid serious injuries when the inevitable slip happens***

By [Jen Murphy](#)

November 11, 2023

In any tug of war between Barbro Finndin Stål and her large poodle, Sally, the dog usually wins.

The 72-year-old walks her dog daily, and a few squirrel sightings that excited the dog have left her on the ground. She has been shaken, though never seriously injured. When she saw classes training people how to fall advertised in her local newspaper in Gothenburg, Sweden, she immediately signed up.

Most fall interventions focus on staying on your feet by training strength and balance. Judo federations in Europe and Japan are experimenting with programs like the one Finndin Stål is enrolled in that teach seniors what to do—and not do—when a slip happens.

We are going to take a tumble at some point in our lives, no matter our fitness level. These classes show the right ways to fall to avoid life-changing injuries that can lead to a cascade of other problems that worsen as we age.

Globally, one-third of people 65 and older fall at least once a year, with 5% of these falls resulting in a fracture, according to the World Health Organization. Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury-related death among Americans 65 and older, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Those who fall once are two to three times more likely to fall again, the CDC says. The fear of falling can significantly affect quality of life, says Dr. Lyndon Joseph, an exercise physiologist with the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Aging in Bethesda, Md.

"People become scared to leave their home," he says. "That spirals into people being less active. They become sedentary and lose muscle power. They're less social and become isolated and depressed."



Instructor Anders Krus supervises as Ingrid Milvedan Parker, in a purple top, slowly releases Barbro Finndin Stål's hands so she can gently roll backward during a Judo4Balance class at a club outside Gothenburg, Sweden. PHOTO: ANNIKA KRUS

## Help with judo

In judo, your opponent tries to throw you to the mat, so it is crucial to know how to avoid injury when you go down. One of the first skills taught in the martial art is ukemi, or fall-breaking. It involves spreading the impact of a fall over the widest area possible and trying to keep the body relaxed.

In 2015, the Dutch Judo Federation launched a fall-prevention program for seniors called ZekerBewegen, which loosely translates as feeling safe in movement. The six-session program costs \$75 and is taught by around 150 instructors at local judo clubs and in assisted-living homes and senior communities throughout the Netherlands.

“The main goal is to make people feel safe and confident so they can maintain an independent quality of life,” says Benny van den Broek, the federation’s coordinator of sport for all.

At a club outside Gothenburg, Finndin Stål enrolled in Judo4Balance, a low-cost, preventive training program for falls created by the Swedish Judo Association. The 10-to-16-week program made its debut in 2018. All of the experts are black-belt judo instructors.

Students learn techniques for falling backward, sideways and forward. They also do leg- and core-strength exercises, balance training and drills where participants get up and down from the floor lying on their stomach and their back.



Milvedan Parker assists as Finndin Stål on how to safely fall by rolling on her side. PHOTO: ANNIKA KRUS

Kristiina Pekkola, president of the Swedish Judo Foundation, says the program has around 250 licensed instructors, many aged 70 or older, who teach at approximately 40 judo clubs in Sweden.

“Our older instructors have the time to volunteer, and it’s nice for participants to have a role model of the same age,” she says.

### **Falling 101**

Judo4Balance instructor Anders Krus, 75, teaches 20 participants, including Finndin Stål. He starts with basics, like sitting on the floor and falling backward. They move to more challenging exercises, such as standing up and holding hands with a partner, sitting down slowly, then releasing hands to fall backward. Classes take place on cushioned mats.

Important tips include resisting the urge to extend your hands to break a fall. “That’s how you injure a wrist,” Krus says. He also notes it is crucial to protect the head by tucking your chin to your chest and trying to roll to your side in a ball on the ground.

“The first time Anders told us to fall, I was terrified,” Finndin Stål says. The practice has paid off. She says the last time her dog pulled her forward and down, she stayed calm and remembered to protect her head.

Class member Ingrid Milvedan Parker, 74, suffered a broken wrist from a fall a few years ago. She still gets nervous when asked to do a forward somersault in class, but says overcoming her fears in a safe environment has boosted her confidence.

“I can now look both ways when I cross the street and not feel thrown off-balance,” she says. Sessions end with coffee, adding a social component.

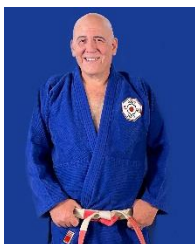
Joseph, from the National Institute on Aging, says he isn’t aware of any official judo-based fall-prevention programs in the U.S. The National Institute on Aging is sponsoring a study by University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City, Kan., that uses techniques from judo for fall prevention in older adults.

Seniors aren’t the only ones who can benefit from fall training. Research shows our balance begins to decline starting around age 50. And falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injuries for all children in the U.S. ages 0 to 19, according to the CDC. Judo4Balance has developed similar programs targeted at working-age adults and children.

“We teach all kids to swim to avoid drowning, so why not teach people how to fall from a young age?” Krus says.

### **WSJ**

#### **Subscriber Comment:**



*This is terrific. The most important thing I teach in this class is to keep your head tucked in. Similar to the effects of a headrest found in cars.*

Gary Goltz

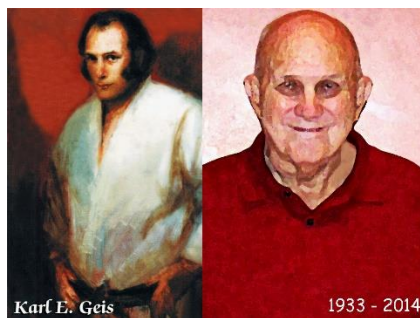


Judo Blog by Gary Goltz for  
**BLACK BELT**<sup>®</sup>  
World's Leading Magazine of Martial Arts

Judo Falling Being Taught as a Way to Prevent Injuries

By [Gary Goltz](#)

2/10/2023



Years ago one of my dearly departed friends and mentor [Karl Geis](#) spoke of developing a program to teach seniors citizens how to fall. Well looks like Karl had the right idea based on these articles I wanted to share as my [Black Belt Judo Blog](#) for this week.



## *Judo Falls Save All!*



### Tua Tagovailoa Hopes Judo Will Help Him Learn to Avoid Head Injuries

by: Mike McDaniel - Posted: Feb 10, 2023 / 05:22 PM PST

**The Dolphins quarterback is looking at an unorthodox way to avoid future concussions.** Dolphins quarterback [Tua Tagovailoa](#) had multiple stints in the [league's concussion protocol](#) this season.

As the Miami quarterback looks to enter the 2023-24 season healthier, he has a plan of attack in an effort to avoid future head injuries: **Judo!**

"We've got a plan set up and I'll be doing judo on Fridays so that I can figure out like ... understanding my body and how to fall," [Tagovailoa told](#) Kay Adams and Nate Burleson on the Up and Adams show on Friday. "Just trying to help myself."

Tagovailoa was at the center of recent discussion on concussions in football after multiple head injuries sidelined him this season. The Dolphins passer suffered multiple confirmed concussions, the final one coming against the Packers in Week 16. He missed the final three games of the season after that injury.

When healthy, Tagovailoa proved that he was good enough to be the Dolphins' franchise quarterback. He notched career highs in passing yards (3,548) and touchdowns (25). Tagovailoa also completed 64.8% of his passes this season as he led Miami to an 8–5 record as a starter.

The Dolphins made the playoffs with a 9–8 record, and finished second in the AFC East to the Bills. Miami's season ended with a competitive 34–31 loss in the AFC wild card round to Buffalo, which was missed by Tagovailoa due to his final stint in the concussion protocol.



## The University of Brighton will play host to the Safe Falls Seminar later this month.

February 1, 2023 by [BJA](#)

Taking place on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of February. The Safe Falls Seminar is an educational program, based on judo, methodologically developed through scientific research, to teach children to fall safely and securely. This prevention strategy emphasizes creating safer environments to reduce daily life risks.

The World Health Organization (2021) points out that falls are the second leading cause of unintentional injury and deaths worldwide. This figure comes from the 37.3 million falls that are severe enough to require medical attention each year.

Faced with this problem of great social significance, and of great economic expense for all countries, the WHO launched the challenge of responding to this social problem with 'prevention strategies that should emphasize education, training, creating safer environments, prioritizing fall-related research and establishing effective policies to reduce risk'.

Institutions such as the European Judo Union and the University of Seville, together with eight other European universities, have reacted to this WHO call and believe that Safe Fall-Safe Schools can respond to the WHO challenge, in a coherent and objective manner. Therefore, they have joined forces to develop the Safe Fall-Safe Schools program and to bring judo, and its ukemis, closer to society, supporting the EJU motto that 'Judo is More than Sport'.



## Judo courses in Quebec are teaching older people how to fall safely Seniors learn new reflexes to prevent injury when they take a tumble

[Rachel Watts](#) · CBC News · Posted: Jan 11, 2023 1:00 AM PST



Keep your head tucked in, form your body into a ball and roll. It's what Monique Laroche, 93, did last year when she fell on the bus. "The driver took off too fast and I didn't have time to sit so I let myself slide and I was careful about my head, like how we practiced," said Laroche.

Laroche walked away without any serious injury thanks to judo courses she's been taking in Saint-Hyacinthe, Que. They taught her how to prevent an injury when falling.

Monique Laroche, 93, was one of the previous participants of the judo courses. Offered in various regions in the province, they aim to help seniors prevent injury. (Submitted by Jean-François Marceau)

Judo Quebec started the initiative, which now includes three judo schools around the province in Saint-Georges, Saint-Hyacinthe and Sherbrooke.

Judo Témis in Témiscamingue, Que., is one of the latest clubs which will start offering lessons on how to fall for people 60 and older.

"We are experts in falling," said Ambroise Lycke, co-owner of Judo Témis.

Lycke says the first thing a judoka — a person who practices judo — has to learn is "how to fall without injuring yourself."

Monique Laroche, 93, was one of the previous participants of the judo courses. She says she used those skills to prevent injury twice. (Submitted by Jean-François Marceau)



### **Our first reflex is a bad habit'**

Lycke says it's all about teaching people to fight their natural reflexes, such as putting a hand out to break a fall.

"What happens is all your weight goes to your hand and that's the place where you'll have [a] fracture," said Lycke.



"Same thing for your head. Your head will go back and so you'll hurt your head and you will snap your head on the ground."



- [An often-overlooked risk, the science of slips and falls can be lifesaving](#)
- [6 overlooked risks of falls for seniors and how to prevent them](#)

Quebec seniors across the province can start the new year by learning how to fall like judo black belts. Ambroise Lycke is a Judo teacher and owner of Judo Témis in Saint-Bruno-de-Guigues in the Témiscamingue region. He tells Quebec AM host Julia Caron why it is a valuable skill for people of all ages, but especially seniors.

## Teaching how to fall, instead of preventing falls

**Most courses for seniors teach you not to fall, says Benoit Séguin, the founder of the program.**

Part of what inspired him to develop this kind of course was his time in university when he initially taught the course to people with multiple sclerosis. "Once I gave it to those people with multiple sclerosis I knew right there and then that it would be very important and very useful," said Séguin. From there he began putting together a book on how to fall without injuring yourself. That's when Judo Quebec became interested and implemented a few courses around the province.

Séguin held courses in Sherbrooke before retiring. He says he hears a lot of positive feedback from former students, some of whom used the techniques successfully. "One of the women I taught, she was in her late 70s and she fell in the gym and she said, 'everybody was just around me [saying] what happened? what happened?' She said 'I didn't even hurt. And what was funny about it is this big fellow, the next week, he fell the same way as I did, but they had to take him out on the stretcher,'" recalled Séguin. "So it's not a question of age, it's a question of knowing how."



## Course goes back to the basics, builds confidence

**Judo course participants learn techniques to prevent injury. (Submitted by Jean-François Marceau)**

One of the principal lessons is to encourage suppleness and to teach students to not be afraid of falling, says Jean-François Marceau, executive director of Judo Quebec.

As part of the courses, students are taught the basics of how to drop down to — and then get up from — the floor.

"When you go back to that basic thing then you become less afraid of the floor," said Marceau. "Of course you don't learn to fall in one lesson and then it's acquired for life. You have to practice for several weeks ... It keeps the reflex on your body and your mind."



Participants of the judo courses are put through various balance and mobility exercises. (Submitted by Jean-François Marceau)

That's what happened for 78-year-old Louise d'Anjou. Her husband, Bruno Janssen, helps run the judo courses in St-Hyacinthe with Louis Graveline. She started taking the course in 2016.

"I'm getting older, I'm already old now, I told myself why not take this course? So I started and I'm going to do my 11th session this year," said d'Anjou. Over the years she noticed that the people with the least mobility are often the ones who make the most progress in the course.

For her, it began to quell her fear of falling.

"[At first] even going from a seated position onto my back scared me. My reflex was to put my hands in back of me, but that's the worst thing to do," said d'Anjou. "By the second session, because I already did it and I knew I could do it, the fear wasn't there."

**From:** Helen Ballash <hballash@yahoo.ca>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 9, 2023 10:24 PM  
**To:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Subject:** Judo falling course for Seniors

Hi Gary

I saw a blurb on CBC about judo clubs in Quebec offering courses for seniors in the proper way to fall, was mentioned in your article in *Black Belt*.

I was wondering if there is any such course offered in the Vancouver area of B.C. and if not who would one talk to about setting something up. Not really interested in signing up for a judo course per say, but this process really sounded interesting and helpful.

I did call the contact in Port Coquitlam Club, but never heard back from them. I live in Maillardville, which is part of Coquitlam B.C.

Thanks for any help you can direct me to.

Helen Ballash  
604-786-1414

**From:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 12, 2023 3:16 PM  
**To:** Helen Ballash <hballash@yahoo.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: Judo falling course for Seniors

Again, any judo black belt in your area should be able to help.

**From:** Helen Ballash <hballash@yahoo.ca>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 6:00 PM  
**To:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Judo falling course for Seniors

Gary

Just to let you know connected with Johannes Schenk at the Burnaby club and he was halfway there to doing this course.

So are in process of setting up an info session next week and see where that goes. Thanks for all your help and support.

Helen

**From:** Johannes Schenk <jhschenk1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 29, 2023 5:02 PM  
**To:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Judo falling course for Seniors

Hello Gary,

Thank you for the email. I have spoken with Ms. Ballash and am working on an arrangement.

Johannes.

**From:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 29, 2023 5:05 PM  
**To:** Johannes Schenk <jhschenk1@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** Helen Ballash <hballash@yahoo.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: FW: Judo falling course for Seniors

Great! Please let me know how it goes. I'd like to do a follow-up to my article on this with some photos!

**From:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 29, 2023 5:05 PM  
**To:** Johannes Schenk <jhschenk1@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** Helen Ballash <hballash@yahoo.ca>  
**Subject:** RE: FW: Judo falling course for Seniors

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Johannes.

**From:** Gary Goltz <gary@garygoltz.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 27, 2023 6:37 PM  
**To:** Johannes Schenk <jhschenk1@gmail.com>  
**Cc:** Helen Ballash <hballash@yahoo.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Judo falling course for Seniors

Hi Johannes. I'd appreciate hearing from you on how this goes, thanks.



<b>Gary Goltz</b>	
cell/text: 909-702-3250	website: GaryGoltz.com email: Gary@GaryGoltz.com
	
	
2233 N. Campus Ave. Upland, CA 91784	