

Let me begin by asking you to imagine what it means to be into Judo. It's about loving the smell of the tatami, the crisp feel of the gi over your body, the adrenaline rush of competition, and the slam! That ooh so wonderful sound of landing a perfect throw that fills you with a sense of accomplishment and pride. I am a female athlete, and my sport is Judo.

Judo is a beautiful sport, and I have been into it since I was ten years old. I've been competing for the past four years, and I'm one of the best in my division in Ibaraki. Sadly, it is also because of this experience that I learned that many female athletes couldn't fully enjoy the experience of the sport because of gender discrimination.

When people hear that I do Judo, they usually tell me, "Judo is not a girl's sport!" Even my relatives say, "You are a girl. Why are you doing Judo?" I also remember how the boys in elementary school always teased me that I was like a boy, not only because I had short hair then... but because I do Judo.

I feel sad every time I hear those things. It hurts my self-confidence, and I believe that many female athletes feel the same way, too. I know there are many reasons for this discrimination. In the past, women have been excluded from competing in some sports, so people think these sports are "not for girls." There are also different rules between men and women to make it fair, but people probably thought some rules had to be adjusted because girls are weak. Lastly, some people today still believe that girls should only sit at home and do household chores, which is sad, and all these things are why some girls suffer from discrimination. Something that we should work very hard to change.

I used to feel sad whenever I experienced discrimination in Judo. But I realized that I shouldn't let that stop me from doing what I love, so I decided to change my mindset. Instead of feeling sad, I started to think of it as a challenge. Thinking this way gave me more confidence to confidently tell people that "I am a girl, and I can do judo," and this made me do well in competitions. Sadly, not all female athletes can cope with discrimination. Some girls silently suffer from stress, eventually giving up on their dreams.

So, we have to take this problem seriously, and end the discrimination of women in sports, and doing these three things would be a good start: First, let's challenge stereotypes. We must show that girls are just as strong and athletic as the boys. Second, let's support female athletes, and give them the same opportunities as men. Last and most importantly, let's speak out and do something about it! It is difficult enough to train hard and compete. Female athletes don't need the added emotional and mental stress.

We can't end the discrimination against women in sports alone, but we can make a difference if we work together. Let's create a future where girls can thrive in sports, a world where girls can have the same opportunities to participate in any sport they choose, a world where even Judo can be fully embraced as a girl's sport. Thank you for listening.

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I Am a Girl Who Does Judo