

Puzzles, punching and excuse my Spa4nish

They say as you get older you should engage the head in activities that stimulate and keep the brain fresh such as Sudoku or maybe Pictionary. I am not sure my brain has many cells left after a lifetime of tequila and kids driving me mad but I do believe in the philosophy. My Grandpa Kat was a puzzle man and as kids it always gave us great pleasure to try to stump him with the most challenging puzzles we could find; the best one, as I remember was Spilt Milk. He completed it with ease, and we never managed to rattle him. He had great patience to deal with dozens of grandchildren and to complete even the most brain busting game.

In Singapore, because it is difficult for expat spouses to work, we are always searching for new ideas on how to keep the cerebellum on an upward spiral so we don't become complacent and die of boredom in the heat. Yes, "Wah, Wah," says the expat wife, and I will forgive you if you don't feel sorry for me.



Take that, girlie man!

My latest pursuits are a little off the beaten track when you think of Asia. This continent conjures up the idea of the mysterious Orient, heavenly spices, mythical creatures, bizarre medicinal remedies and exotic ladies dressed in Cheongsams. None of that nonsense for me though. I have decided to take a self defense class while here to keep my muscles confused. Before I came to Singapore, I spent half of my life in a sweaty, testosterone gym and since leaving, I have turned into gelatinous goo. I do bike but I can only ride so many kilometers before I fall off the island and end up in Indonesia. I thought self defense would be a great way to keep mentally alert and toned at the same time.

When you think of Asia, you think Mr. Miyagi in the Karate Kid, graceful Tai Chi, or ear piercing "Hi-Yahs" in Judo. Not my bag. I decided to take an Israeli self defense class called Krav Maga that is comprised of kicking, biting and punching your way out of any situation, including a paper bag. What Israel has to do with Singapore, I have no idea but I am never the one to take the traditional route.

Can't tell you whose face I am imagining

There is nothing sexy about Krav Maga. It isn't for show, belts or the fighting ring like Muay Thai. It is just to survive in case of an attack. The only problem with taking the class, as much as I enjoy hitting the instructors and breaking free from a choke hold, is that I am now looking for people on the MRT or the bus to nail after the class is finished at 10:00 p.m.



I walk away from the class with bruises, and cuts, so whilst on the subway home, I am begging people to mug me or get frisky with an Outrage of Modesty incident. No such luck. I have taken to walking down dark alleys but Singapore is one of the safest countries in the world so the chance of any type of attack is less than zero. I will have to suffice with punching the bags, beating the pads or giving my instructors a good smack now and then. I have noticed when I arrive home, both R2 and Man are safely tucked into their beds for fear I want to show them a newly learned technique.



A few of my texts for class

The other activity that I have taken up, which makes no sense in Asia, is Spanish. I pay a private tutor more money than my son's college tuition to teach me "Hola, dos cervezas, por favor." I can't be satisfied to learn Malay, Mandarin or even Singlish for that matter. I can't say "lah" at the end of every sentence or cut phrases to a minimum by saying, "Can, can," or "Can not" as they say in Singapore. I had to hire an expensive tutor from Spain to teach me Latin American lingo. You must remember I live with two Spanish men but they seem to forget they are Spanish speakers when I enter the room. That is why I pay the hefty fee, do a ton of Spanish homework, and hope one day I can survive in a Latin country without sounding like a complete hick town girl, from Canada. "Mi nombre es Dora la Explorador," well, you get the picture.

I mustn't be too hard on R2 and his lack of language teaching skills. I have for a fact, become incredibly adept at swearing and blasphemy with every combination of sinful words available to me. For some reason, I pick up these words like a duck to water, I can prattle them off at any situation. I am not sure why I am so fluent in expletives but it might have something to do with every time there is a futbol game on the computer, I hear words that would make a Mexican bandido blush coming from the office, where R2 is holed up trying to get any soccer news from home.

I am not sure where Krav Maga and Spanish will take me. I know that I am frustrated that I am not as agile as I used to be so it makes Krav Maga more difficult, but to date, all of my pearly whites are still intact, and I do come home with some skin left on my arms so that is a bonus.



I can speak to Caterina in Spanish

Spanish, well that is another story. I guess I should have paid more attention in Grade 9,10 and 11 French class but our 300 pound pedophile teacher was more interested in staring lecherously at the young girls, handing out chocolate bars when you won French bingo, and having the students make "snack runs" to the local store, than teaching us anything useful. Had I only knew how to conjugate French verbs and understood the masculine/feminine thing that goes on in other languages, not called English, I might be a wee bit more successful at Spanish.

We are on countdown mode to leave Asia and we have no idea where we will end up. For four years the Canadian Government has held up R2's residency for reasons we will never understand. I have come to learn that Mexicans, even well educated, highly sought-after professionals, face great discrimination across the world and Canada is no different. You never know how my Spanish will come in handy while living in Mexico, and my Krav Maga, well, that will keep the bandidos at bay while we wait to return to Canada. Meanwhile, these new activities may or may not be keeping me on my toes but I know my body and my brain need a constant diet of Tylenol.



G.L. & Steve are ready to Protect

For anyone interested in taking Krav Maga, Muay Thai or Boxing, I would highly recommend **Protect Singapore**. Senior Instructors Steve and GuanLong (G.L) are fierce competitors and well trained in these disciplines. They are tough, and when you hear them kick a heavy bag, you know it. They are also both extremely patient and work you at the level you need to be; not under and not over. They both look like a couple of gentle, Singaporean gentlemen, but believe me, you would not want to be in a fight with them. I can almost guarantee, you would not win.

The particulars for the studio are below.

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