

withpurpose



Like

Frighth A Girl

When the Purpose meets strong forward-thinking women, great things happen. Lori Hartman Gervasi, *California/Los Angeles*, redefines the strength in our “stronger, more womanly characters.”

When Sarah Ida Shaw wrote about the development of womanly character, she meant that the sorority would help women balance academics with traditional feminine interests. In “The Sorority Handbook”—a work that is part history, part instruction manual, part reference volume, she wrote, “The simple, wholesome social life that the sorority made a possibility was conducive to naturalness, feminine charm and womanly dignity. For the first generation of college girls the sorority was primarily a humanizing agency.”

Today, the notion that the pursuit of education makes a woman less womanly seems absurd. However, there are still some behaviors and pursuits that are perceived as in conflict with femininity.

In her book *Fight Like a Girl and Win: Defense Decisions for Women*, Lori Hartman Gervasi, *California/Los Angeles*, comes out swinging with her stronger and more womanly character.



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GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION

My father served in the Naval Reserves and the Army. While working Army counterintelligence in Japan at the end of the Korean War, he studied judo, received a black belt, and went on to travel with a Japanese judo exhibition team. When he returned to Southern California, he worked as an officer for

the Burbank Police Department. Later, he joined the California Highway Patrol. By the time he retired from the CHP, he was one of the chiefs in the state. Every day I watched that man strap on a gun and head out to work. On Saturdays, he woke up everyone in the house with patriotic marching band music blasting from the stereo. He exercised daily by jogging and lifting weights. To this day, he remains one of the most disciplined and physically fit individuals I've ever known.

When I was young and my dad and I passed in the hallway at home, he'd stop spread out his feet, tense up his stomach, and order me to punch him. "Hit me!" he'd growl with his arms to his sides providing an open target. I'd usually stop for just a moment to throw a punch or two. "Harder!" he'd say. Or "Ah, come on! Hit me like you mean it!" I thought this kind of thing was happening between fathers and daughters throughout the whole country until my girlfriends happened to witness a few

of these encounters and I saw the confusion on their faces. After a while, it became clear that Dad was doing this not only for my benefit, but to flaunt his rock-hard stomach muscles. Nonetheless, it got me punching.

The true impact of this punching ritual wasn't full realized until years later, when I developed the desire for self-protection. The fact that Dad absolutely demanded that I slug him on a regular basis was all the permission I would ever need to turn around and actually use that skill on anyone who posed a threat to me. If I could punch my dad like that, I could certainly punch some slimeball coming across my personal boundary line, invading my space, and breaking a couple of my rules.

For many women, permission to hit, kick, or fight does not come naturally. But it is crucial. Permission is the powerful starting point, the door swinging wide open for the many decisions that follow. Permission is what allows us the absolute freedom to engage in a fight in order to save ourselves. No woman should hesitate to give this personal consent to herself, her friends, or her loved ones.

LEARNING CIRCLE

What is one thing in your life that you had to fight for?

How does fighting make you feel?

What are the differences/similarities between a conflict, a disagreement, a fight and an argument?

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Lori Hartman Gervasi, California/Los Angeles, studied at the Television/Motion Picture School, where she anchored the university's news broadcast. After graduation, she worked at ABC News in the L.A. Bureau, preparing coverage for the network's major news shows, including World News Tonight, Good Morning America, Nightline and 20/20. She then went to Channel 9 News in Los Angeles where she remained for 11 years writing, producing newscasts, and running the entertainment news division. After leaving television to raise her sons, Lori began studying Traditional American Karate, and in 1997, she received a black belt and the degree of Shodon. She trained for ten years, fighting mostly with men, using a variety of techniques including her favorite – self-defense. She assisted her instructor in women's self-defense classes and participated in tournament competition. Now an accomplished writer, Lori has published essays in various magazines. Her first full-length book, *Fight Like a Girl...*, won first prize for non-fiction at the 2004 Santa Barbara Writers Conference.

