

# The Surprising Way Boxing Can Change Your Life

The sport draws people in for a fun, high-energy workout—but it can become so much more.

By Kiera Carter



*Photos: Kellyann Petry*

This was originally going to be a story about my first sparring match—about how nervous I felt stepping into the ring for the first time to fight someone with more experience than me; about how weird it felt to punch another human in the face; about how it's the craziest cardio workout you can get in three minutes. Then, I quit my job and moved to Argentina.

If that seems unrelated to boxing, it's not. See, I'm a firm believer that your workouts should power your entire life—and usually, they do. Don't you feel better able to take on life's stressors after a hard HIIT class? Or maybe you've had a brilliant business idea mid-run? (P.S. You can read more about the [benefits of boxing](#) here.)

Either way, the [brain benefits of exercise](#) are real and well-documented, and I had experienced them in smaller ways prior to [adding boxing to my routine last fall](#). Logging a

morning workout made me more efficient when I got to the office, and post-work runs were often my release after a stressful day.

But boxing took everything to another level. George Foreman III, founder of EverybodyFights (yes, *that* Foreman) had me training seven days a week to prep for my first real match. And the workouts were tough: I'd arrive at EverybodyFights by 6 a.m. to do a mix of strength training, technique work, mitt drills, and conditioning, all of which would lead to an unofficial sparring match with other members at the end of the week. (Interested in this kind of training? Check out this [total-body conditioning workout](#) from EverybodyFights trainer Nicole Schultz.)

I was loving it. But the more sparring pushed me out of my comfort zone, the more I realized I wasn't taking risks in other areas of my life. It's like I'd have this rush in the ring and feel empowered to take on the world, but then I'd go home and decidedly *not* take over the world. That started to feel like a problem since exploring the world was, in fact, one of my goals. I've been itching to live abroad for most of my life, but I didn't feel quite ready to make the leap-until recently.

Foreman tells me that my timing isn't a coincidence. "It's common for people to make breakthroughs in other areas of their lives as they start boxing," he says. "It takes courage to even walk into a boxing gym, but as you train, you develop a humble-confidence that translates to every other area of life." Humble, because you know your opponent can-and, at some point, *will*-hit you, but confident because you know you're equipped to handle it. (Psst, knowing [how to throw a punch like a pro](#) helps, too.)

In fact, everything that happens in the ring translates to real life in a lot of ways, Foreman explains. First off, you can get knocked down over and over, but you're still in the fight as long as you keep getting up; and you can still win with a knockout in the very last second of the very last round. Then, there are the people in your life who support you, aka your "corner." "They're your mentors, the people who stand by you in the heat of the battle."

Most importantly, boxing teaches you to think fast and fight strong, especially under extreme fatigue. "You train so that when the pressure is on, you become an even better, superhuman version of yourself," Foreman says. "Your stance is strong, your form is perfect, and you look your opponent in the eyes-that's boxing."

It's easy to see how this type of training sets you up to tackle other challenges. As Foreman says: "How can you not perform better in life when your natural reaction under pressure is to be sharper, to stare a challenge straight in the face?" Suddenly you feel more empowered to ask your boss for a raise, apply to that Ph.D. program, or in my case, travel the world.

Fighting also taught me that "ready" can be overrated. Yes, you should work your ass off to be as prepared for battle as possible-both in boxing and in life-but at a certain point, you just need to trust your training and go for it.

I mean, would you ever feel "ready" to knowingly walk toward someone whose number-one goal is to punch you in the face? Similarly, I wasn't exactly ready to take a jab to the ribs that threw off my training for a whole month-but I recovered soon enough and returned to the fight stronger than before. "You may not win every fight, but boxing trains you to enter the ring with courage no matter what," Foreman says. (Related: [Learn How to Plan the Most Epic Adventure Vacation of Your Life](#))

All that said, I ended up leaving the country before my first USA Boxing-official fight, but I plan to keep up with it everywhere I travel. And while I'm sure my new adventure will bring challenges I haven't anticipated, I also know that after every knockout, I'll assume my stance, look my opponent in the eyes, and fight back.