

Tackling your Tao

Written by Ben Brooks

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If your idea of martial arts consists only of Mr. Miyagi's "Wax on, wax off" technique and Daniel-san's crane kick, it's time to take another look. Charlotte's martial arts scene has never been more vibrant than it is today. With respected masters teaching unique fighting styles from across the globe, there truly is something for everyone.

If you want to find inner harmony and project a calm, cool demeanor like Barack Obama, try ... tai chi



Praised for its overall health benefits, tai chi is practiced throughout the world. This form of moving meditation appeals to adults of all ages, because these days most of us are more likely to face a bout of stress over our 401(k) accounts than hand-to-hand combat with local ruffians.

Try it:
The Peaceful Dragon
12610 Steele Creek Rd.
704-504-8866

If you want to get ripped like Hugh Jackman in Wolverine, try ... muay thai



Muay thai is known as "the art of eight limbs," and those limbs include the hands, shins, elbows, and knees. With the hips and core playing a huge role in providing the power for the devastating kicks, your whole body is guaranteed a lactic acid trip that you might only appreciate after class.

Try it:
Black Belt USA
11915-A N. Tryon St.
704-595-1945

If you want to develop a core that would make Kelly Ripa jealous, try ... Brazilian jiu-jitsu



This East-(Japan)-meets-West-(Brazil) hybrid favors working on the ground and applying joint locks and submissions over standing up and exchanging punches and kicks. Brazilian jiu-jitsu also differs from other martial arts because it places a premium on technique and leverage as opposed to sheer size and strength.

Try it:
Alliance Jiu Jitsu
1607-G Montford Dr.
704-477-8552

If you want to learn how to defend yourself like Jason Bourne sans the amnesia, try ... kali



This rhythmic, high-speed Filipino martial art practices the philosophy that the best defense is a good offense. If you watched Matt Damon surgically dismantle an armed assassin using only a pen in *The Bourne Identity*, you bore witness to the brutal effectiveness of kali.

Try it:
Hard Target
5126 Park Rd.
704-676-9292

If you want to look like Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, try ... fitness kickboxing.

While fitness kickboxing is closer to Tae Bo than other more traditional and storied martial arts in terms of serious self-defense, it provides an incredible calorie-destroying workout. After a few classes you might not be able to fight off a team of ninja assassins, but you'll at least look like you could.

Try It:
Charlotte Martial Arts Academy