

# Arts & Life

Wilton Villager

## RELEASING STRESS



Photos by Alex von Kleydorff

**CORE ENERGY** Above, Judy Gotlieb, left, takes her frustration out on a punching bag held by Marsha Antkies. Below, they illustrate a power struggle through a game of tug of war. The women are certified Core Energetics instructors and are offering a workshop next month.

## Women's group helps empowers clients and releases frustration

By ASHLEY VARESE  
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WILTON — In a world filled with business meetings, teachers' conferences and after-school activities, people have various ways of coping with daily stress. Whether working out at the gym, practicing yoga, meditating or involving themselves in a hobby, different strategies work for different people.

Judy Gotlieb and Marsha Antkies, certified Core Energetics instructors, have a unique approach to dealing with stress and the feelings associated with busy lifestyle, and it includes a rubber mallet.

"We all sit with energy in our bodies, and when you express it physically, it helps to get you out of your head," Gotlieb, a Wilton resident, said.

Gotlieb's home office is filled with tools including a large rubber cube, a giant medicine ball and, of course, the mallet.

During a recent interview, she and Antkies demonstrated a number of techniques including tug of war, which represented a power struggle between two people; rolling back and forth on the medicine ball to expose vulnerability; and hitting the cube with the mallet to release frustration.

They also stood on opposite sides of the cube, banging their hips, or the core of the body, against it in an effort to release stress and express their feelings.

The Institute of Core Energetics was founded by Dr. John Pierrakos in 1973 as a way to redirect energy, or the "life force" within the human body.

"It helps people drop into a place of inner wisdom," Antkies said.

"It's about slowing people down," Gotlieb said. "Helping them be grounded in the present moment so they can know what they really need in the moment."

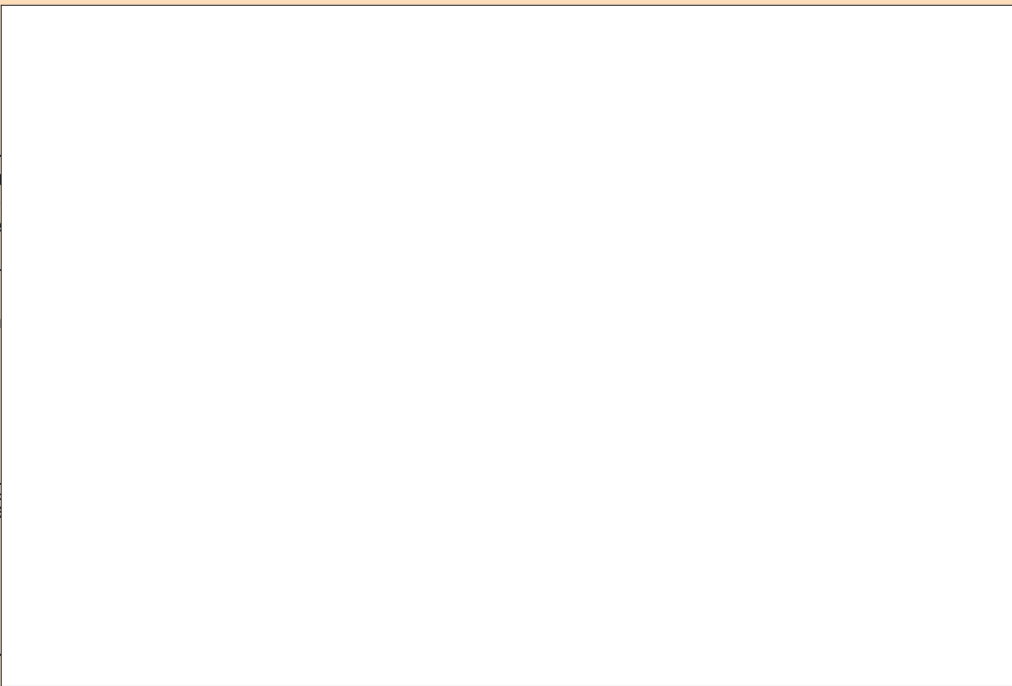
Next month Antkies and Gotlieb will offer a weekly women's group that focuses on the strategies of Core Energetics.

The two-and-a-half-hour session is geared toward empowering women, and helping them on their journey toward personal growth.

"The goal is to become more of who you are," Gotlieb said.

Gotlieb started the program about 20 years ago, when she started seeing a Core Energetics practitioner on a regular basis. She decided to become certified in the program, and is now a member of the Institute of Core Energetics faculty.

"I've become more honest, direct and open," she said of her progress. "I don't hold back in the way I



expressed to. I'm more empowered. I've taken more risks in my life."

Antkies, who is certified and also sits on the faculty, said she reclaimed more of her "marshalness" since starting the program years ago.

At 4 feet, 11 inches, Antkies said she's found she's a "pretty powerful person."

"I used to play it small," she said. "I don't empower me to stand out there and say this is who I am, and I don't try to play subservient to other people. That was all a lie."

Both women believe the group dynamic is helpful because it helps women see that others share the same issues.

Antkies said the results don't happen overnight. "It sneaks up on you," she said. "All of a sudden you realize your behavior pattern has changed. You may be willing to take more risks. You may be willing to fail."

Gotlieb said that because the program takes time, they ask women in the group to commit for the season, which runs through June.

The physical aspect of Core Energetics is just

one component of the group exercise, and it's not required.

Gotlieb said the group challenges beliefs women learned during childhood.

"We followed a set of rules," she said. "You have to give to get, the world is a dangerous place. We challenge some of the belief systems some people have."

Antkies said people can become stuck, but when they go against the norm, they become empowered.

"Some people go out and get better jobs because they're stronger and more powerful," she said. "Others go back to school because they believe they deserved it."

Antkies also said the confidential group meetings are very personal.

"They get to know each other in ways that even the closest people in their lives don't know them," she said. "There's a certain intimacy not easily attained elsewhere."

Group sessions are \$60 per week. For more information, or to register, call Gotlieb at 834-1012 or Antkies at 438-9526.

## The Magic of Group Process

By Judy Gotlieb & Marsha Antkies

A special magic occurs during a group that can't be replicated in one-on-one sessions. Groups can jumpstart your personal growth and catalyze your own healing journey as well as help build your practice. We have both been involved in Core Energetic process groups for almost two decades.

The purpose of a group is to create an environment where you can explore your deepest life struggles, feel seen and feel safe. A group can heal misconceptions about life that were formed during your childhood. These distortions prevent you from finding fulfillment in life. Healing and change occurs when you connect with your "core" or essence. A group becomes a place where your value as a human being can be celebrated as a unique combination of your gifts and wounds.

Groups represent a microcosm of our family of origin and greater society. Whatever we do and experience in the world, we also do and experience in a group. Patterns and roles first learned in our families and early peer groups are subject to constant replay in our lives. These can be explored in the safe environment of the group and made more conscious. It becomes a "laboratory" where you can learn more about these patterns of relating. You become aware of how you affect people, get close to or push them away, what triggers your feelings and how you get stuck. You also gain insight into how you relate to men, women and authority and your subsequent emotions and reactions. Dr. John Pierrakos, the founder of Core Energetics said, "In order to trust others and communicate effectively, it is important to be able to understand and release our negative feelings – not to act them out, but to self confront and acknowledge the distortions we have toward men or women. If you express your feelings in an organized way, like in a group, then you can transform the negative feelings into creative feelings, releasing tremendous amounts of energy and power." Sometimes relationship issues between group members are explored. This keeps the group alive and dynamic while at the same time increasing a feeling of safety. It also results in a deepening of relationships, which strengthens the group and allows for profound levels of personal healing work to occur.

Since Core Energetics is a body-centered approach to healing, a Core Energetic process group typically starts with some kind of

movement and work with sound and breath to enliven, ground and open the body to greater self-awareness. We often use music in the warm-up to create an atmosphere of aliveness and fun. We all have a life force that is not fully flowing. We block it to defend against feeling our pain and even our pleasure. As your breath and movement become more relaxed and spontaneous, the energy of the group builds, offering you a sense of connection with yourself and others. This helps to bring the group into the present moment. Mutual energy is useful in taking the transformational work further and deeper. The work frees up energy so it can be used in the service of your life and creativity.

After the initial warm-up, we do a check-in to see how each person is doing. Then group members decide if they want to explore their feelings more deeply. Individual work in the context of the group evolves from there. This means that the group is involved in a supportive and interactive way. Awareness of support from other members of the group encourages the "worker" to take risks. Three or four people generally have an opportunity to "work" during

each session, but the benefits to those who are in a supportive role are invaluable. Since the work involves life issues that are basic to all human beings, witnessing another person's work can touch you, stirring feelings that can later be explored. This is part of the "magic" of group process; it helps us see how connected we all are.

A process group is a safe place where you can practice the skills needed in your day-to-day dealings in the world. You can "stretch" in relation to others by going to your "edge" through tak-

ing risks in communicating and expressing yourself. A group can help you know yourself more deeply. Its different members can help you see yourself in a multifaceted way. This experience of being seen and accepted for who you are can result in profound healing. You can tap into your deepest potential and be your fullest and most true self. This fullness organically spills over with positive effect into your life outside the group.

**Marsha Antkies and Judy Gotlieb are both Certified Core Energetic Therapists and currently teach and lead groups together on the faculty of the Institute of Core Energetics East. They each have private practices in Fairfield County, working with individual, couples, and groups. They are forming a new Women's Group this Fall. For more information, or to set up a free consultation for participation in the group, call Marsha (203) 438-9526 or Judy (203) 834-1012. 🌟**



Judy Gotlieb and Marsha Antkies

# WOMEN'S GROUP



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JUDY GOTLIEB (203) 834-1012**

***“Why do you stay in prison  
When the door is so wide open?”***

***-Rumi***