

Aug 01 2007 10:22 AM

**Va-va-va-voom! A non-traditional dance for fitness**

*By Laurie Leavy  
Shape Up*

I did "the walk," oozing across the dance floor. I was feeling the music, a strong beat in the dimly lit room. As I moved, I was swinging my hips and dragging my feet, over-exaggerating the slow, exotic motion. It was a smooth approach to the pole.

Yes, dancing is great exercising. You know that feeling, ladies and gentlemen, when you're at a wedding and you dance all night. It feels good to move your body in that way.

Just like the popular song by Justin Timberlake, I was bringing sexy back, and I was pole dancing.

"I call it playing with the sexy," says Joni Lowe, owner of the Positive Energy Dance for Women studio in Brookfield.

The studio offers pole dancing, salsa (starting August 4) and is soon to offer belly dancing, hip-hop and other forms of dance.

"I wanted to create a place where women felt comfortable and could move their bodies freely," Lowe explains. "The studio is about dance, and fitness is just an added bonus."

As part of pole dancing "101," so to speak, the class began with a core warm-up with stretching and flexibility, as well as a freedom to let your mind focus on movement and motion.

First, "the walk" is a smooth sliding, feet brushing the floor slowly, and shifting of hips with balance.

Our move of the day was the swing. It started by moving around the pole, then swinging around it, landing low and slowly lifting up.

Don't force it, just let go. Let the positive energy take over.

"You get married, have kids, you have to dress like this and act like that.

Women create barriers and we leave that at the door," says Lowe.

"It's different when people are learning this for their own pleasure, as opposed to doing it as a business. You see documentaries about strippers and people being forced into it because of a bad situation. It's different when you are doing it by choice," explains one classmate, "Jackie." "I'm in an earlier generation where we are more intimidated and this is a positive experience of expressing myself."

Another classmate, "Emma" agrees.

"I'm very busy at work and this is an escape into a sensual thing that's all about me," she says.

"It really is an unfolding process," says instructor Kaysa Cruse. "You see how people change how they feel about themselves."

Pole dancing is not only exercise for the body and the mind, it's also retro, going the way of the Tupperware parties of yesteryear.

Lap dance parties can be an evening event, described as "come to learn something a little naughty just for the fun of it."

"The studio is a place to blow out the negative," says Lowe. "I chose the Danbury area because it is a destination spot. I have women coming from all over Connecticut and New York."

The studio will offer levels one through three for pole dancing.

"There are three different approaches to pole dancing," says Lowe. "One is very gymnast-oriented and athletic, and it's all about the trick. I think it kind of takes the sexy out of it. The second is more role-playing, similar to a stripper or how you dance out on a Saturday night. Third is sensual pole dancing, which is when it's not how you look but how you feel."

The moves strengthen and stretch your core muscles (abdominal and lower back muscles), as well as offering strength conditioning for arms and legs. I'll be going back for sure.

It was definitely positive energy, and is a positive experience not only for the student, but can be for their significant other, as well.

Positive Energy Dance for Women is at 265 Federal Road. For more details, call 702-7026, or visit [www.PositiveEnergyDance.biz](http://www.PositiveEnergyDance.biz).

**Did you know?** I remember the pineapple I once ate in Barbados, fresh off the tree. Delectable! Pineapple is a good source of vitamin C, vitamin B6, folate, thiamine, iron, fiber and magnesium. You can add it to a salad or even grill it. I used to put crushed pineapple on my corn flakes in college.

Go Marist! Fresh is best, but if canned, go for pineapple in natural juice, instead of heavy syrup.

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