

Business

Positive Energy 'challenges' women to respectfully 'be sexy' Pole dancing parties, classes are available

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It was only hours after watching an episode of "Oprah" on television three years ago that Joni Lowe decided she wanted to take her life in a new direction.

Following 10 years in the corporate world and another seven years as a stay-at-home mother of two, Ms. Lowe said she was moved to launch her own business.

The key motivator was an "Oprah" show in 2003 that featured Sheila Kelley, founder of The S Factor, a workout inspired by striptease and pole dancing.

Ms. Lowe's focus, she said, was to empower women by teaching them how to move their bodies in a new way through pole dancing classes.

Today the Brookfield resident owns and operates Positive Energy Dance for Women, which opened in January. She teaches pole-dancing classes in New Milford and is licensed through A Pole Lot of Fun to present pole-dancing parties for women in their homes.

"It's not about performing," Ms. Lowe, 37, said of her pole-dancing classes during a recent interview. "It's about being so aware of the movement and how it feels."

There is no nudity in the classes or at the home parties. Students and party participants wear comfortable clothing that allows for movement.

Upon her request, Ms. Lowe received a pole as a birthday gift from her husband, Robert, in 2004.

Since then, she took a three-week pole-dancing training course in Los Angeles and became licensed with A Pole Lot of Fun.

Dressed in a hot pink quilted dress jacket

and casual pants, Ms. Lowe described her pole dancing classes as a time when women "slow it down."

"Be in your own body [and] celebrate being a woman no matter your shape or size," Ms. Lowe related.

The former 15-year aerobic and step aerobics instructor said her classes and the home parties "empower women so they can take ownership of their curvaceous bodies."

"I love to see people light up," said Ms. Lowe. "This experience is impacting their life."

Roxbury resident Betsy Sundgren, who hosted a Pole Lot of Fun party and is taking classes with Ms. Lowe, is among the students who feels empowered by pole dancing and agrees it has changed her life in a positive way.

"It's helped me create boundaries for everything in my life," stated Ms. Sundgren, who decided to try pole dancing following several life-changing events, including a divorce.



Ms. Lowe demonstrates pole dancing.

She described the exercise as an activity that “challenges me not to be so insecure about myself” and has helped her love herself more.

“It’s not about any kind of sex or about performing for people,” Ms. Sundgren explained.

“It’s private,” she related, and allows women “to get in touch with their feminine side and be OK with it and not feel dirty.”

Many women are not aware of or conceal their sexuality and sensuality because they are taught, either at home or as they grow up with the pressures of society, that feeling and being sexy is a dirty act.

Ms. Sundgren emphasized that Ms. Lowe’s pole-dancing parties and classes teach women how to feel and be sexy and how to boost their confidence and let go of the misconception that being in tune with one’s body is a dirty act.

“It challenges us so we can still be sexy women and have a sincere respect for ourselves,” she observed.

Katrina Brown of New Milford said the pole-dancing classes have increased her confidence.

“I’m not so worried about what people think about me,” she related.

“It’s a totally feel good feeling for you and nobody else,” she said of what she experiences during the pole-dancing classes.

Ms. Lowe said she brings the pole, music and a few accessories — feather boas and a pair of six-inch high heels — to the two-hour home parties, which are normally attended by up to 10 women.

Participants have an opportunity to tap into another side of themselves right off the bat by picking a fantasy name — perhaps Cinnamon or Sweet Cakes — for their name tag, a task that often eases the nerves of some of the women.

After a brief introduction to the night’s activities, Ms. Lowe said she places scarves over the lamps to soften the lighting in the room, “create a nightclub feel” and help “people so they don’t feel like they’re on display.”

Following some quick warmup exercises such as hip circles, women then have a chance to try their hand dancing around the pole to a variety of music, including “Beautiful” by Christina Aguilera, “Naughty Girl” by Beyonce, “Pour Some Sugar on Me” by Def Leppard, “Fallin’” by Alicia Keys and “Fun, Fun, Fun” by the Beach Boys.

Ms. Lowe said people are “used to bouncing around with the music” they hear. What she teaches women to do is incorporate particular movements that tap into their sensuality and sexuality so they feel more confident and empowered as they move their bodies.

“It’s like we’re all back in high school cheering each other on for a basketball game,” Ms. Lowe described of the atmosphere and mood at a home party.

Parties end with the distribution of goody bags that contain coupons to local businesses and other treats.

While the home parties tend to be on the large size and are lively, the pole-dancing classes are limited to four women per class and take place in a quieter setting.

Although most of the women in the classes don’t know one another, Ms. Lowe said “there’s a level of comfort” in that because it allows students to open up without the other women knowing all about their lives.

Three levels of two-hour classes are offered at Positive Energy.

The first level begins with a lengthy warmup routine similar to Pilates, in which students learn a variety of stretching and flexibility exercises and develop breathing techniques.

Simple pole tricks and a dance routine are introduced in the level two class.

The third level class is all about helping women become a “pole diva,” according to a Positive Energy brochure.

Pole tricks that involve a more developed body strength are incorporated into the routine in this class.

In addition to pole dancing classes, Positive Energy offers a sensual dance class which teaches women how to experience “womanly movement” without a pole.

For more information about pole dancing class locations in New Milford or A Pole Lot of Fun home parties, call Positive Energy at (203) 702-7026.</p></div>