

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. ❁



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