

LIVING



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Forget surgeries and pills, MELT your pain away.



Gracie Bonds Staples
This Life

Those of us of a certain age have long held that aches and pain are part of the aging process. And if you don't suffer from aching joints, weight gain, stress and wrinkles, well, count yourself lucky.

And so we do our best to endure; popping the Advil, put-

ting up with insomnia and placing the blame on getting old.

Who knew we could just MELT our pain away?

I sure didn't. Then I got an email from Elena Bennett, a 58-year-old fitness instructor and former dancer from Vinings.

Weeks earlier, Bennett had seen a "Good Morning America" segment about MELT, also known as Myofascial Energetic Length Technique. With three small rubber balls – two golf-ball sized and one the size of a marble – and a soft roller, you can literally massage

away pain.

"I'd been living with pain for at least the last 15 years," Bennett said. "I was intrigued enough to Google and locate a MELT instructor here in Atlanta."

Just like that, she found Karen B. Wells, one of a few certified MELT instructors in the Southeast and about 1,300 nationwide.

After just one private class with Wells, Bennett said her pain was gone.

"The first day I left pain free" she said. "For the first time in years, I slept through the night. I felt great. It was

like an awakening."

Well, I thought I'd heard it all.

More than a 100 million Americans, especially dancers, athletes and fitness instructors, suffer from chronic pain. From what I hear, too many doctors explain patients' pain away or simply ignore it.

Despite back and knee surgeries for overuse injuries, Bennett said she lived every day with joint pain. Nothing she did helped until she discovered MELT.

MELT continued on D5

MELT

continued from D1

The "MELT" Method, as it is called, was developed by Sue Hitzmann, a body worker and bestselling author after she herself developed severe pain in her right heel and doctors told her it was all in her head.

Hitzmann stumbled upon what was then an emerging science of connective tissue or fascia, a three-dimensional fluid-filled support network that surrounds the muscles, bones, nerves and organs – a new therapeutic, self-treatment exercise program that helps people to live pain-free, while also improving their posture, core strength, energy, balance and overall well-being.

The way Wells explains it, the wear and tear on our bodies, repetitive movement, stress, and even a sedentary lifestyle can dry out our connective tissues so they become stuck and less flexible.

MELT manipulates and rehydrates the connective tissue while aligning our bones and



Karen Wells, a certified MELT instructor, works with Elena Bennett to relieve pain in her lower back. Bennett, 58, said she suffered with pain for years until she heard about the MELT method on a recent segment of "Good Morning America." CONTRIBUTED BY JIM BENNETT

joints to bring the body back to an upright position.

Here's how. First, to test one's balance and alignment you are asked to stand on one foot with your eyes "open for 30 seconds" then do it on the other foot. Then you repeat the test with eyes closed for 30 seconds. If you stumble, Wells said, that's an indication your nervous system, muscles, bones and connective tissue are

out of whack.

To get the fluids moving again, she placed a ball under one foot, pressing down in the middle of the foot then all the knuckles of the toes with the SOFT ball. Then moving the ball back and forth over different points on the arch and heel. The other exercises were done lying or sitting in various positions with the MELT soft foam roller.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

Gracie Bonds Staples is an award-winning journalist who has been writing for daily newspapers since 1979, when she graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi. She joined The Atlanta Journal-Constitution in 2000 after stints at the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, the Sacramento Bee, Raleigh Times and two Mississippi dailies. Staples was recently promoted to Senior Features Enterprise Writer. Look for her columns Thursdays and Saturdays in Living and alternating Sundays in Metro.

him into the class.

After one session, Wells was hooked.

She enrolled in all the MELT certification programs, more than 100 hours of study and practice total, before launching MELT Atlanta in 2007.

OK confession. The very thought of a major workout drains me. I prefer a walk around the neighborhood. But this isn't like a regular aerobic routine or some of the grueling cycling classes I've observed. MELT focuses on the mind and body connection. It's not even meant to be a workout. It's closer to getting a massage or going to a physical therapy session.

Here's a mental picture that Wells likes drawing: Your nervous system is in Chicago. Your musculoskeletal system is in Florida. MELT makes it possible for the two to meet here in Georgia in the same place at the same time.

And voila! The pain vanishes you can sleep again.

And get this. MELT will also get rid of our unsightly cellulite.

WOOHOO!

It's sort of like putting oil on the Tin Man. A squirt here and there and he can move again. You get the picture.

Wells, who's had her own issues with chronic pain, happened upon the MELT Method in 2005, while attending a National Fitness Convention in New York City. She spotted a good-looking guy and followed