

# THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Teamwork makes the dream work, right? Apply that concept to your fitness goals, and you've got a seriously powerful game plan. Here's why.

BY ROZALYNN S. FRAZIER

## Commitment

We've all been there, struggling to make it to a yoga, HIIT, barre, or [insert your favorite workout here] class. The workout may be hard, but getting there is often harder. "Accountability is the secret sauce of success," explains Rachel Fiske, a NASM certified personal trainer. "Research shows that having someone to work out with makes you more likely to stay committed to a routine and progress toward your goals." This is one of the few situations where it's OK to worry about what someone else thinks of you: If you made a plan to meet a friend for a workout, then canceled last-minute, you've inconvenienced them—not nice!

## Connection

These days, most people are yearning for a connection—and not the empty kind that comes from social media. Training with a friend leverages our natural craving for community, and it leads to a more favorable attitude toward fitness overall. "Social support is linked to a diverse range of health benefits—boosting your immune system, improving mental health states, and increasing one's sense of self-worth," says Stephanie Silber, an ACE certified personal trainer and group fitness instructor. "Connecting with others helps our body produce serotonin and oxytocin, and these 'happy' hormones help turn off the fear center in our brain, which reduces anxiety," explains Andrea Marcellus, fitness expert and author of *The Way In*. "So you'll get an endorphin rush simply from working out, but working out with a friend can create an overall sense of positivity and well-being."

## Challenge

You know that spirit of healthy competition you encounter at places like CrossFit and SoulCycle? It has a name: the Köhler Effect (identified by German psychologist Otto Köhler back in the 1920s). "It's a phenomenon where individuals' effort increases as they see others doing better than them," says Silber. Having someone next to you who is feeling your pain yet keeps going will inspire you to give it all you've got. What's more, "pushing through 10 extra burpees or bench-pressing your own body weight becomes a lot easier when your partner is there, cheering you on. Knowing that you're not alone and finishing those reps or that set together could be just the motivation you need," says Melissa Vogel, a certified personal trainer and owner of Melissa Vogel Fitness.



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