

The fitness buddy workout

PARTNER EXERCISES

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Is your favorite way to combat stress recruiting your best friend to meet you for a double latte and scone as a prelude to an afternoon of shopping? Though an effective way to boost your spirits, it probably isn't doing your thighs or wallet any favors. Friendly social interaction is certainly needed for mental health, but it can also be a boon for your physical fitness when you spend time sweating together instead of sipping coffee and nibbling a dessert. Fitness professional Sabrena Merrill, MS, shares the benefits of working out with a buddy and a few partner exercises to get you started.



BENEFITS OF A FITNESS BUDDY

According to Sabrena Merrill, MS, a personal trainer and group fitness instructor certified by the American Council on Exercise (ACE), working out with a buddy can keep you committed to your fitness.

"Working out with a buddy is exceptionally motivating, especially for new exercisers who are trying to make regular workouts a habit," says Merrill. "The thought of having a partner to workout with (who will go through the same discomforts as well as feelings of accomplishment with you) makes exercising something to look forward to. Scheduling a standing workout appointment with a partner motivates you to not miss the workout because you have another person holding you accountable."

In addition to being a source of fitness motivation, working out with a partner is beneficial for both physical *and* mental health. Merrill explains, "In our busy, stress-filled lives, it is sometimes difficult to incorporate friendly social interaction into our schedule. Working out with a friend allows us to multi-task by boosting our 'friend time' with others while simultaneously getting a workout."

Having a workout buddy can even boost your fitness more than working out alone. "Working out with a partner actually motivates each person to work a little harder or longer than they normally would alone. Social interaction during exercise provides a distraction of sorts that allows the mind to focus on the pleasure of being with a friend and tune out the discomforts of exercise," adds Merrill.

THE FITNESS BUDDY WORKOUT

The good news about most partner exercises is that you can do them with a fitness buddy as well as by yourself when you do workout on your own. The following three exercises target the core, back and lower body.

MEDICINE BALL V-SIT WITH ROTATION AND PASS

For this core-strengthening exercise, one partner holds the medicine ball, completes two rotations, then chest passes the ball to the other partner who then performs the same.

Start position: Face your partner, sitting tall with your knees bent and both heels on the ground. Both partners recline back slightly, stabilizing the torso by contracting the core (abdominal) muscles.



Movement: Exhale and slowly rotate your torso and the ball to one side, keeping the ball close to your body and aligned with the middle of your torso. Repeat this rotation on the other side. Your partner should mirror the movement.



Partner switch off: Returning to starting position, chest pass the ball to partner, who then repeats the movement, rotating once in each direction and passing the ball back. Perform this series for 30 to 60 seconds.

MID-ROW WITH TUBING

Rowing with an exercise band or tube strengthens the back and shoulders. The beginning level for this exercise is to be seated while rowing the band (as illustrated). A more advanced version is to perform the rowing movement while in a squat position.

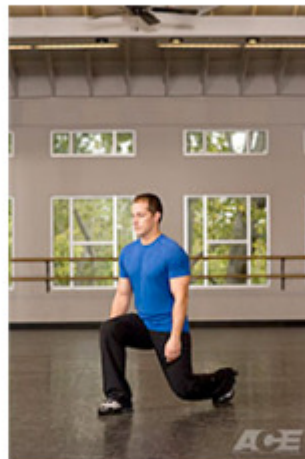
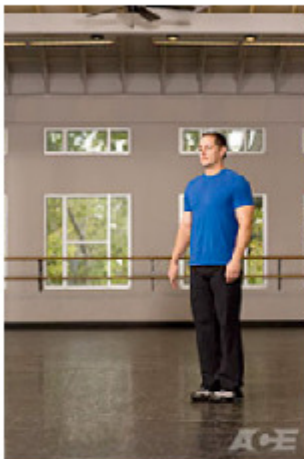
Start position: With each of you holding an exercise band or tube, you and your partner sit with your legs straight in front of you, facing a low horizontal bar or a vertical bar, with tubing wrapped around the bar at chest level. Hold one handle of the band in each hand (palms facing inward) and arms fully extended, shoulders pulled back (the band should be somewhat tight)

Movement: You and your partner will perform the following sequence in synchronization. Exhale and slowly pull tubing towards you, driving your elbows straight back and squeezing your shoulder blades down and together. Think about pulling with your elbows as you bring the handles towards your body. Inhale and gently extend your elbows back to the starting position. Complete 1 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 repetitions with your partner.



LUNGE WITH CHEST PASS

Primarily targeting the lower body, a lunge and chest pass sequence also works chest, arm and core muscles. This exercise also improves balance and coordination. If you don't have a medicine ball, you and your partner can simply mirror each other while performing lunges.



Start position: Stand facing your partner with your feet hip-width apart, holding the medicine ball at chest level. Step into a forward lunge lowering your thigh parallel to the ground. As you lunge forward, your heels and front foot should strike the ground first, followed by the rest of the foot. Focus on dropping your hips towards the floor, rather than driving your hips forward. Keep your back upright.

Movement: Extending your arms straight out in front of you, chest pass the medicine ball to your partner, who is simultaneously performing a backward lunge.

Partner switch off: Your partner will then perform a forward lunge while you are performing a backward lunge, passing the medicine ball back to you. Perform for 30 to 60 seconds.

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For more information on specific exercises and partner workouts, visit www.acefitness.org.