

Study finds that a new exercise partner is the key to exercising more

October 4 2016



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Researchers at the University of Aberdeen have been investigating whether having an exercise companion increases the amount of exercise we do.

The study reported that finding a new [exercise](#) companion increased the amount of exercise people took. This was increased even more when the new partner was emotionally supportive.

This is the first study to investigate the benefits of a new exercise companion and to look into the specific qualities in a partner that make a good gym buddy.

Dr Pamela Rackow from the Institute of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Aberdeen gathered the data whilst at the University of Zurich. Dr Rackow and her team asked half of the participants to find a new 'gym buddy' and the other half continued with their normal routine. The results showed that the group who found a new exercise partner exercised more than those who followed their regular exercise routine.

Dr Rackow said: "The idea of this study was to test in a very natural setting what is happening when two people get together with the aim to exercise more. I had read motivation tips in a leaflet that suggested that having an exercise companion would help me to exercise more but I wanted to know if this was true.

"This study is unique in that it reflects natural life relatively well because when you decide to exercise with a friend - you ask someone in your normal social network regardless of whether they fit certain criteria or not. "

The team were also interested in what qualities makes a good partner. They asked participants to rate how supportive their partners are and what kind of support was most effective.

They divided support into two types, emotional and instrumental. They found that people exercised more when their companion offered emotional support and encouragement and rather than practical support

like never missing a session.

Dr Rackow added: "Once we found that having a new exercise companion increases exercise frequency we wanted to find out why this is beneficial and what quality of support they offer that has this effect. Our results showed that the emotional social support from the new sports companion was the most effective. Thus, it is more important to encourage each other than doing the actual activity together."

Provided by University of Aberdeen

Citation: Study finds that a new exercise partner is the key to exercising more (2016, October 4) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-partner-key.html>

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