

Find Love in the Gym this Valentine's Day

Submitted by: Better leisure

Sunday, 12 February 2017

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2017

Find love in the gym this Valentine's Day

And you'll be fitter than ever before

Joining a gym and working out isn't just good for your health, it's great for your love life too... according to new research from leisure group 'Better' (a not for profit, social enterprise). The romantic heartland of 'gymsphere' is London – where one in ten of us has met their partner while at the gym or playing sport. This is in contrast to the solitary West Midlands where only 1% have started a romance on the playing field, treadmill or sports hall. Amongst those of us still looking for love, a further one in ten would attend a 'singles night' at their local gym if given the chance. Overall nearly a third (30%) of Britons who take exercise do so with a partner or friend, with more than half of us (52%) believing that working out with a partner can improve a relationship. In fact, 40% believe that exercising makes us more confident, so more open to meeting new people. Two thirds of respondents felt that exercising is as much of a social activity as a health activity. Of those who work out with a partner, over half of those surveyed say that it keeps them more motivated (55%) and that it makes exercising more fun 54%, with the figure rising to 78% in the West Midlands. 53% believing that working out with a partner means that they exercise more often and 42% that it ensures they don't make excuses to avoid exercise, with the figure rising to 6 in 10 amongst those living in the South East.

These findings are borne out by Better leisure centres' own data, which shows that partner members join and stick to exercise for 10% longer than any other type of leisure centre member.

Sports psychologist Lerissa Graham comments: "It is well known that exercise can help to improve our physical, psychological and emotional well-being. However, whilst the benefits are clear, adhering to physical activity can often be a challenge. Scientific research has suggested that one way to help maintain motivation for exercise, promote higher intensity workouts and increase our level of enjoyment is to train alongside another person, such as a friend or partner. If you're finding it tough to get into the gym, or out for a run, it might just be worth a try!"

Team GB triathletes Reece Barclay (25 years) and Lucy Charles (23 years) not only met through sport – they were both members of the same swimming club - they now exercise and train together nearly every day and find it difficult when they are apart. "Lucy's been away competing in Dubai this week and I've found it really hard" says Reece. "There are loads of benefits to training together. We understand what the other one is going through. We keep each other motivated. We're both super competitive, so we drive each other on. And socially it's great to train with someone else, in a sport like triathlon, which can be quite solitary."

The research shows that it's not just couples who're romantically linked, who benefit from taking exercise with a partner. Working out with a friend or family member can offer the same benefits too. Men are most likely enjoy the competitive nature of working out in company (28%) and see it as a learning opportunity (25%) whereas women tend to focus on the social benefits most. Working out with a companion is seen as an opportunity to have a laugh by over half (54%) of respondents, with only 5% considering it to have no benefit whatsoever.

-Ends-

Notes to the editor:

Research undertaken by ICM Research, January 2017, sample size 2,000.

For further press information

Carole Pendle E: carole@pendlepr.com T :07768462601

<https://www.better.org.uk>

Appendices

Appendix 1

Research consistently reveals that finding a workout partner can not only increase your motivation but also improve your performance. So why not make your training partner be your significant other like these celebrity couples?

1. Michelle Keegan & Mark Wright
2. Chloe Madeley & James Haskell
3. Jennifer Metcalfe & Greg Lake
4. Pixie Lotte & Oliver Cheshire
5. Victoria & David Beckham
6. Claire Danes & Hugh Dancy
7. Trudie Styler & Sting
8. Louise Thompson and Ryan Libby
9. Gisele Bundchen & Tom Brady
10. Nicole Kidman & Keith Urban

Appendix II

Elite athletes who found love in the pool

Lucy Charles (23yrs) & Reece Barclay (25yrs)

Lucy and Reece from Chingford in Essex are two of the UK's most successful triathletes. Lucy was a member of the British Swimming open water squad and is now the Ironman 70.3 age group World Champion. Reece has competed at national level in squash and swimming before turning to triathlons and qualifying for the Ironman World Championship Kona. He's also a black belt in karate.

As well as competing at elite level they run a personal training business and regularly work out at the Waltham Forest Feel Good Centre.

For Lucy and Reece their relationship and sporting success go 'hand in hand'. They met through sport at their swimming club and decided to switch to triathlons as their main discipline together.

They train together 90% of the time and find it difficult when they're apart. "Lucy's been away competing in Dubai this week and I've found it really hard" says Reece.

"There are loads of benefits to training together. We can understand what the other one is going through, for example if we're feeling tired. And we keep each other motivated. We're both super competitive, so we drive each other on. And socially it's great to train with someone else, in a sport like triathlon, which can be quite solitary."

"Living, working and training together means we see one another pretty much 24/7 but it works. We occasionally bicker but it's never serious – we're more likely to take the mick out of each other."

They are quickly becoming known as the young Iron couple of the triathlon world.

Appendix III

Oxfordshire couple who put exercise at the heart of their relationship

David (55 years) & Lorraine (57 years) Worthy

David and Lorraine from Witney in Oxfordshire have been married for over 30 years and run their own cleaning business. As well as working together they also work out together, for an impressive 12 hours per week at their local Witney Leisure Centre.

"We like to take classes rather than working out in the gym, which can get boring" says David. "A class offers more variety and there is the social aspect too. We've all become friends and often go for a drink after we've had a work out." David & Lorraine's favourite classes are Fit Ball and Spinning, while Circuits "gives a real buzz".

The couple have found more time to exercise since their four children have grown up and left home. David adds "we're probably fitter than the kids now".

Their dedication is impressive, they are often at the leisure centre by 5.30am to fit in a class before work and return for a second session in the evenings. They even plan their holidays around hotels with a gym or a nearby leisure facility.

The couple feel that exercising together keeps them on track. Lorraine explains "if one of us is flat out on the sofa, the other one will get them going again. And we do always have a laugh."

Appendix III

Better's Top Five Exercises to do with a Partner

1. Wheelbarrow press up with squat

Target your biceps, triceps, shoulder, chest and glutes

Work with a partner in this fun version of a traditional press up.

Start in plank position, with arms straight, shoulders above wrists, and core tight. Partner stands behind and raises ankles into a "wheelbarrow" position. Commence press ups, keeping back straight, core tight, and legs straight while your partner rises and lowers into a back straight, core tight squat keeping hold of your ankles. Repeat for 8 to 12 reps, then switch roles.

If this is too difficult, use a modified knee push up instead. Complete as many repetitions as you can and then switch positions.

2. Hook Squats

Targets your glute muscles

This exercise really requires team work and helps increase motivation. If one of you stops the motion, the exercise can't be completed.

Stand back-to-back leaning against your partner and together lower into proper squat position with knees over toes.

Repeat 10 times.

3. Band Jumps

Targets your core

This low impact exercise works to strengthen your legs and core and is also aerobic. Working as a pair helps you both maintain the correct position.

Stand directly in front of your partner, facing away. Loop the resistance band around your waist and pass it back to your partner behind you to hold with both hands. Step forward until there's light tension in the band. With your partner's knees slightly bent, and hips slightly back for stability, jump forward as far as possible. Jump by bending the knees, sending hips back, keeping core tight, and then exploding up and forward. Swing arms naturally for added momentum. Land lightly on toes, then take a few steps back to return to start position. Repeat quickly for 8 to 12 reps, then switch roles.

4. Plank Hold and Jump

Targets your shoulders, biceps, triceps and core

Two person exercise uses keeps you both engaged in the exercise and allows you to swap roles so you don't get bored.

Begin in a forearm plank with shoulders directly above elbows, hands parallel (or clasped to make it easier). Keep core tight, back straight, and hips level. Feet can be a few inches apart. Your partner stands at your feet and jumps laterally over your ankles – to the right then immediately back over to the left as quickly as possible. Repeat for 30 seconds, then switch roles.

5. Crossover Crunches

Targets your abs

An easier exercise, these crunches will keep you motivated. Set a number and see if you can match your partner's pace as you complete them.

Lie on the ground with your back flat on the floor, knees bent, abs engaged. Hands should be at side of your head or crossed in front of your chest.

Hook legs with partner, with your legs locked in between theirs. Crunch up, keeping abs engaged.

Complete 10 reps for three sets, or as many as you can manage.

-Ends