



By J.J. Kunkle

Do couples that play together, stay together? How couples combine romance and physical fitness

Since February is the month of romance and love, it seems appropriate to examine how fitness fits into all of this mushy stuff. How do couples balance exercise and romance? What if one part of the couple is active and the other is not? What if you're both really active, but enjoy different activities? If you are single, do you seek out mates that are active and enjoy the same activities you do? Do couples need to play together to stay together?

For me activity level is absolutely an important part of a relationship. I'm a very active person, and what I like to spend my free time doing is hiking, biking, kayaking, running, camping, etc. So ending up with a couch potato would make for a difficult relationship. My career is based on fitness, so finding

someone who lives a fitness-focused life was kind of critical. That being said, I can tell you that on a daily basis, my significant other (hereby referred to as my s.o.) and I do not exercise together. We have very different views and goals when it comes to working out. We do not even work out at the same gym. For example, for me, running is fun—even a social event. I try to find a friend to go along. I almost always run outside (although treadmills are a valuable tool, I only use them in emergencies). And unless it's a race or I'm training for a race, I tend to run at a fairly comfortable pace so the friend and I can talk. For my s.o., running is a duty. He gets on the treadmill, sets it at a pace that would cause me to fly off the back, and runs hard for 40 minutes. We do sign up for races together—and I see him at the start and finish line—but not in between. It's still a nice bonding experience.

But where our zest for fitness comes in handy is on the weekend. We enjoy hiking, biking, camping, etc. And those are things we can do on an equal level.

How do other couples fit exercise in with love and romance?

Dawn of Reston:

We take yoga classes together on a regular basis, at least 2 to 3 times a week, and we begin our morning routine with a meditation together. I would say that we're on equal ground when it comes to fitness levels. Since I teach yoga on a daily basis, I have the luxury of getting exercise in daily. My significant other makes time during his lunch hour or after work (while I'm away teaching class!). We place exercise and fitness high on our priority list. Some of our

"dates" have included taking yoga classes together. Incorporating fitness activities into our relationship has definitely made the relationship stronger. I would have a hard time staying in a relationship with someone who was not physically active.



Debbie and Steve of Columbia, MD.

Steve and I had gotten out of the habit of exercising due to our busy schedules and severe migraines on my part.

We both wanted to get back in shape and find something that we could do together and to support each other. That is when I learned of the TTES marathon program.

Steve went to the info session and when he got home he was very excited. I asked him if he signed up and he informed me he had signed us both up. I was shocked and almost speechless and decided to give it a try.

There have been times during the training where one of us had to miss a run due to illness or work and we have encouraged the other to go on the planned day or have made arrangements to go the following day together. We work at being flexible with each other so we can train together as much as possible.

Steve's athleticism has been a positive influence on me, he has taught me how to roller blade, how to ski and gave me his old mountain bike when he

got a new one. We have been out on the milder trails with them and look forward to doing more biking on the trails when the weather gets nice again.

I think the fitness activities are a positive impact on our relationship. We agree most of the time and when we don't we can discuss and see the other's point... sometimes it may take a bit of convincing! We learn from each other and our performance improves with the encouragement that we give each other.

Laurie of Baltimore:

My husband is less active than I am—and sometimes we don't do a very good job of balancing fitness and our relationship. I don't feel that fitness hurts the relationship, but I do feel that the potential is there to strengthen the relationship. My husband and I have a very independent relationship, and he respects and admires my running adventures. I am currently trying to recruit him to run/walk a half marathon and he is working on it. For us at least, competition also plays a part—he wants to be able to beat me—so if he can't he would rather stay on the couch!

Dan of Annapolis:

We don't exercise together but pursue recreation time to-

gether, i.e. a long slow bike ride on the Band A trail is a common evening together. We swim together at least once a week. But gym time is separate. We train differently for different goals. We play softball for the same league on different divisions for different teams.

I am more structured about training. I try to hit the gym before work or during lunch to avoid taking up our time with my activities. A couch potato will never be an option for me again—it's too contagious.

It strengthens it in some way and weakens it in others. We spend some great quality time together as a result of our active lifestyle. My s.o., however, does not understand the importance that races play in my life. For example, when traveling to a city for a race he doesn't understand the need for avoiding alcohol, sleep, etc.

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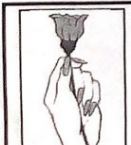


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