

You alone can do it - but you can't do it alone!

Ideas for developing your own fitness support system

Leading a physically active lifestyle is a wonderful thing! We know that physical activity helps us feel more energized, sleep better, manage stress, improve our mood, and can enhance self-esteem. There are so many good things about being physically active and many of us want to be physically active yet find it difficult to sustain those changes.

Being active is dependent not only on changes that we make as individuals but also through the social support that comes from friends, family, and coworkers. Social support for physical activity comes in a variety of ways such as providing positive advice on ways to be active, offering a ride to a fitness class, providing feedback on progress, or by being active with others (shooting hoops with a friend or going to a group exercise class).

Research has shown that positive social support significantly increases the likelihood of sustaining a physically active lifestyle. There is a unique strength that comes from our social networks that help us enjoy activity, strengthen our dedication to our efforts, and develop a sense of belonging within our group.

How can you utilize social support to achieve your fitness and physical activity goals? Here are some ideas:

- * Recruit a physical activity partner or buddy
- * Join a physical activity club
- * Create your own mini-club
- * Develop your own formal physical activity club

Recruit a physical activity partner or buddy

Ask a friend or family member to be active with you. This could be a one time thing or something that develops into a more significant commitment for your activity routine. Feeling adventurous? Check out the following website to post a request for a workout partner or to see if there is someone in the area that shares the same interests.

- * Coming Soon!!!! Facebook will soon have an exercise buddy group that can help you find an exercise partner on campus. Do you have any ideas on how to link individuals with the same interests? Email Amy Fletcher at amy-fletcher@uiowa.edu with your suggestions.
- * The Exercise Friends website has places to search for workout partners in your area <http://www.exercisefriends.com/home.aspx>

Join a physical activity club

Formal UI clubs are sponsored by the Division of Recreational Services

<http://www.recserv.uiowa.edu/programs/clubs/sportsclubs.htm> and the Office for Student Life

http://imu.uiowa.edu/osl/find_a_group/index.php. There are also local activity clubs to select from. Click here for area club listings.

Here are some suggestions for selecting a fitness club:

- a. Select an activity that interests you 😊
- b. Gather more information regarding that club by going to the website or give contact person a call.
- c. Decide if this is a good “fit” for you. Can this organization meet your personal needs?
Is the commitment what you are looking for in an activity club?
- d. Make the decision to attend a meeting and/or join the club. If you need extra support, recruit a friend to tag along.
- e. If there are obstacles to your joining or attending (such as time or location) consider forming your own “sister or brother group” that meets in another area of campus or at another time.

Create your own mini-club

Recruit a group of friends who share the same interests. Talk about how you could make this an on-going activity. Ideas include:

- Daily walking or jogging club for your roommates, fraternity/sorority, or residence hall floor.
- Plan a weekly basketball or Ultimate Frisbee game.
- Recruit a group of your friends to go to the Field House, UI Fitness Center, or to a local gym.

Consider the details regarding your “club”

- How many times do you want to meet (daily, weekly, monthly)
- Discuss the best time of day for your club to meet
- Discuss how group members will stay in touch with one another

Feeling a bit more ambitious? Create your own formal physical activity club!

- If want some assistance with information or group planning, you can get professional help from the University of Iowa.
- You can register your group as a student organization with the Division of Recreational Services (http://www.recserv.uiowa.edu/programs/clubs/master_copy.pdf) or the Office of Student Life (<http://imu.uiowa.edu/osl/>). By doing this, you may become eligible for funding through the University of Iowa Student Government, web space, meeting space on campus, and an advisor. Email the Division of Recreational Services Sports Club Coordinator at raymond-beemer@uiowa.edu, 319-335-9291 and the Office of Student Life office at osl@uiowa.edu or 319-335-3059.
- Health Iowa can also be a resource for you to manage your group or to obtain more information about fitness and healthy lifestyles. The website is full of useful information: <http://www.uistudenthealth.com/exercise/>. Call Health Iowa at 353-5965 or email sara-stahlman@uiowa.edu or amy-fletcher@uiowa.edu.

Revised from the Self Help Resource Centre of Greater Toronto (www.selfhelp.on.ca)