

LET'S GET PHYSICAL



FIRST
things
FIRST

VIRTUAL *Day* **DATE**
AT HOME



WHAT'S BETTER THAN A PARTNER SWEAT SESH?

Okay, maybe a lot of things. It might not top the list of your 50 favorite things to do together (if it does, no judgment—just awe). Still, a good workout with your love is super beneficial, not only to your body but to your relationship, too!

According to [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com), working out with your partner can:

- Provide accountability,
- Bring happiness to your relationship (thanks to those lovely neurochemicals called endorphins!), and
- Increase your emotional bond!

But that's not all. You can compare being physically healthy to keeping your relationship healthy in a lot of other ways, too! Think about it like this. Have you ever taken a break from working out or going to the gym (ya know, a week, a month, a year...), then went back and tried to do exactly what you did before the break? Guilty. You were probably winded, exhausted, and feeling defeated.

Well, let's say it's been a while since you and your spouse have been on a really, really good date together. We're talking wayyyy beyond dinner and a movie. Then out of the blue, you try something new and fun! Yay!

But it feels a little awkward, conversation seems to be slow, and you end the night feeling no more connected than before.

Coincidence? We think not!

Your relationship needs exercise to stay healthy, but the exercises might look a little different! From regular date night to communicating well, **consistency (and practice) is key.**

Sometimes, a workout can seem nearly impossible until the 100th time you try to do it! But that doesn't mean you should stop trying. **It just means you might need to build some other muscles up before you can do it well.**

In this little handy dandy notebook, you'll walk through three great exercises you can use in your marriage (and in your couple workouts!) to keep your relationship fit!



1. ENCOURAGEMENT IS KEY!

Not everyone loves a group workout. Sometimes, it's nice just to pop in those headphones, jam out to your favorite music, and get pumpin'. **When you're used to working out by yourself and someone joins in, it can seem like it's throwing off your groove.**

And let's be real, that totally happens in marriage, too! **Especially when you first start the relationship, it can be an adjustment to do things together.** It may even seem like you struggle as a team. But what does it really come down to?

Encouragement! Everyone has different styles of giving and receiving encouragement. While stern words can be motivating for some, they can be debilitating for others. And maybe a pat on the back means the world to you, but feels belittling to your partner. **If you and your partner don't know each other's styles, it can feel like you're out of rhythm, lack connection, or even like you just don't work together well.**

But when you lock in with your partner and really understand what they need as encouragement, everything will fall back into place. Here's the kicker, though... Your partner might prefer different encouragement styles

in different environments! **The key is being in tune with each other, listening to what they say and how they respond to the things you say, and being willing to give them what they need.** (Not just what you think they need!)



So let's do that right now! This next little section is what we call a "Knee to Knee." Its purpose is to help you take a break from the workout and connect with each other! Take a few minutes now to ask each other these questions, and really listen to each other's answers.

KNEE TO KNEE

1. On a scale of 1-10, how good do you think we are at encouraging each other?
2. Have you ever felt discouraged by something I said or did? How can I avoid doing that again in the future?
3. What's one area in our life that you need more encouragement in? How can I give you that encouragement?
4. How can we make encouraging each other a stronger habit in our relationship?





2. SYNC UP TO SYNC UP

Let's throw it back for a sec. You're 10 years old, it's after school on a Friday, and you and a few other neighborhood kids are throwing a ball around your backyard. (Stick with us, we'll get to our point!) There's one new kid on the block, and he/she has joined in on the game.

At first, the game seems super simple, but it keeps you occupied for a good while, and by the end of it, you're all friends! How does that happen?

According to a study done for the *British Journal of Psychology*, it all happens because of this awesome thing called **nonverbal matching, or mimicry**. In short, this is when you do things in sync with one another, whether it's one person or a group of people.

Throwing a ball, lifting weights at the same time, or hopping in a diamond pattern on one leg together are all examples of nonverbal matching.

Psychology Today says, “nonverbal mimicry helps people feel emotionally attuned with one another, and those who experience or engage in it tend to report greater feelings of having ‘bonded’ with their partner.”

In other words, **being in sync helps you be in sync!** Whether literally in your workouts or figuratively in your everyday life, walking in tandem with your partner can help the two of you feel more connected, increase your emotional bond, and ultimately keep stepping in sync as you go.



KNEE TO KNEE

1. Do you think that we're in sync with each other? Why or why not?
2. What's one way I can be better in sync with you?
3. What's one thing we can do regularly (daily, weekly, monthly) to practice nonverbal matching?



3. DIFFERENT ISN'T A BAD THING

While being in sync during a workout can be great, it's also good to know that sometimes, **you may have different roles during a workout (and relationship), and that's okay too!** Life is all about balance, right?

Let's say you're doing some heavy lifting. While one person is doing the workout, the other person has to be the spotter. While spotting won't give you any gains, it's a suuuuper important role!

If your partner is unable to lift properly, you're there for support and safety. The two roles are totally different, but you can't have one without the other!

The same is true in marriage. **Being in sync with each other has a place, but having different roles can be a great thing, too!** If one spouse is in charge of vacuuming the house, the other spouse's role is to keep the floor decluttered so they can vacuum. Maybe one of you is in charge of helping with the kids' homework, while the other can get some study snacks ready to help keep the focus. You get the idea.

Every person in a relationship has different strengths and weaknesses. It doesn't mean you can't be in sync with each other; it just means you may have different roles sometimes! The main idea here is that **you need to recognize each other's strengths and let them take the lead in those roles.** For example, don't let the person who hates spreadsheets be in charge of the finances. It takes a little bit of give and take, but in the end, it's so worth it!

Instead of your differences putting up roadblocks in your relationship, **you can use them to strengthen your bond, push the two of you forward, and build up your marriage.** Click [here](#) to read more about that!

KNEE TO KNEE

1. Do you think our roles are well-balanced in our relationship?
2. Is there anything you're responsible for in our relationship that you really hate doing or don't feel like you're good at?
3. How can we use our differences to strengthen our relationship instead of building roadblocks in it?

ALL THAT TO SAY...

Working out with your partner can be fun, challenging, and so rewarding. And so can working through a relationship! **While both take practice and consistency, keeping with it and forming good habits pay off big time in the long run.**

And while this handout is meant to be lighthearted and fun, **we know that marriage can have some challenging moments, too!** Maybe it's an injury you're still healing from, and workouts just don't feel the same right now. Or maybe you feel like you've tried every exercise in the book but don't seem to enjoy or see the benefit from any of them. We totally get it.

And that's why we don't just offer a date night once a month and call it good enough! At First Things First, we believe in healthy relationships at every level. We believe in transformation, no matter how hard it can be! **And we are here to support you every step of the way.** Think of us as kind of a personal trainer for your marriage!

If you feel overwhelmed walking into a gym (aka marriage resources), let us be your guide. We'll show you how all the equipment works and even help give you a plan to get stronger in the areas you need! Find it all on the marriage page of our website, [here](#).

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