

## The Group Exercise Effect

### Group Exercise as a Mood & Energy Booster:

While we may not have been attending as many live exercise classes in the past year, choosing instead to take virtual classes from the comfort of our own homes, there is still that same energy that comes from working out in a group.

Think back to the last time you attended a live exercise class. Compare the start of the class with the end of the class. Did you notice a difference in the overall energy of class participants or even yourself after the finished workout? Specifically, did you notice a drastic change in your mood? If yes, this is because when you exercise, it increases those feel-good chemicals, called endorphins. Those feel-good endorphins are associated with feeling happy, confident, capable, less anxious and stressed and even less physical pain. These one-hour or so blocks of time may also offer you social inclusion opportunities, health benefits and psychological support.



Author Kelly McGonigal discusses how endorphins help us bond with others in her book [\*The Joy of Movement: How Exercise Helps Us Find Happiness, Hope, Connection, and Courage\*](#). Endorphins help strengthen ties to individuals we're not related to, which helps us build extended families and important social networks that help stave off loneliness and social isolation.

### Strength in Numbers:

When you're surrounded by committed, like-minded people, it's often easier to stay motivated. And when you're crunched on time, group fitness is an excellent way to get a proper workout in without having to think or plan. When it comes to health, consistency is important, and working out with a group provides social accountability that benefits your body.

### Group Exercise & Social Benefits:

Integrating exercise into our social lives has been shown to benefit more than just our physical wellbeing. One main social benefit of group exercise classes is that you can meet new people and possibly make new friends. Exercising with a friend or in a group environment, for example, helps us pass the time more quickly, increases our ability to try new things, and adds diversity because we all have different skills and knowledge. Group exercises can also bring out your competitive side, which makes exercising more challenging and exciting. A friendly competition with your workout peers and a little nudge from your fitness instructor can be helpful when trying to reach a particular goal.

A small study published in the [\*Journal of the American Osteopathic Association\*](#) found that people who took group exercise classes reported less stress and more physical, emotional, and mental health



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benefits than those who exercised alone or did not hit the gym at all, suggesting that a social atmosphere may compound the already numerous benefits of physical activity.

**Become a More “Social Version of Yourself:”**

Kelly McGonigal, the author of [\*The Joy of Movement: How Exercise Helps Us Find Happiness, Hope, Connection, and Courage\*](#), provides new motivation to move that is less concerned with how we look or feeling compelled to exercise and more focused with how movement with others makes us feel. It's a connection, she writes, that "can be experienced anytime and anywhere people gather to move in unison," whether it during the flow of yoga class, during the synchronicity of team rowing, while running with friends or while practicing tai chi with others.

Whether you are interested in lowering your stress levels, increasing your overall quality of life, or improving your social bonds, taking a group fitness class is a great option for you. Check out the numerous [exercise classes](#) offered by [Employee Health and Wellbeing](#) to reap the benefits of group fitness.