

Jogging buddies

How two online friends found running together made their training a whole lot easier.
By Christine Fieldhouse

PERFORMANCE



The loneliness of the long distance runner has become a cliché, but we all know how those hours can drag when we're doing long runs. If you're training for a marathon, runs can last three hours or longer.

Having a friend to run with not only encourages you to get out of bed and get going, it also keeps you safer and helps the time fly by. You're more likely to run if you've agreed with a friend to be in a certain place at a certain time.

Yet finding someone to run with who's not only compatible with your personality but also with your running isn't easy – a mismatch could be potentially problematic.

The meeting point

But now, as runners Mona Sorensen and Katja Harjanne have found, groups are springing up to match runners together. Mona, 35, and Katja, 36, met through www.joggingbuddy.com, a free website that allows members to find others in their area to go running with.

Launched in 2008, the site now has members in 89 countries. Not only can members find a buddy, they can plan routes, log runs and find events.

Katja, a sales manager, says: "I used to run with friends from work. We met up at work at 7am and run along the seafront in Brighton. But when I moved I lost touch with them, so I looked

into the jogging buddy website."

Katja was training for the first Brighton Marathon in 2010 when she started chatting to Mona online. The two bonded almost immediately, but they didn't start running together straight away.

Danish-born Mona, a client services coordinator for the charity Mankind, had already run her first marathon in Copenhagen in 2009 and was happy to run alone most of the time. But she felt she should take training more seriously, so she signed up to the website.

Wine first – running second!

She says: "Kat and I both did the Brighton Marathon independently and discovered that we did it in very similar times, so we decided to meet up for a glass of wine."

The two got on so well they signed up for the 2011 Brighton Marathon and started doing their long runs together.

"We bonded so naturally, and as I was going through a break-up, my runs with Kat almost became therapy sessions!" says Mona. "Running is my therapy anyway, but to have a friend who listened and supported me was something I never expected."

"We also supported each other to stick to the training, and of course we both experienced the same butterflies in the lead up to race day!"

Katja, who's Finnish, adds: "Having a partner, especially during the long runs, made me achieve what I wanted and pushed me that little bit further!"

Now the two do long weekend runs of up to two and a half hours together.

Girl talk

"For the first one and a half hours we chat," laughs Mona. "After that we can't talk much. We look forward to our runs all week as they're a great way to catch

up. If we miss a week, we almost have too much to say to each other!"

"Katja has found some amazing routes through the great scenery. If it weren't for her, I'd just run along the seafront!"

After their runs, the two have a celebratory coffee, and they often meet up for cocktails in the evening.

"I love the saying that you meet people for a reason, a season or a lifetime. Kat is definitely a lifetime friend for me," adds Mona.

Keep on running

Katja has signed up for her third Brighton Marathon, while both hope to get a place in the 2012 London Marathon.

"Whatever happens, we'll continue to run together and support each other in our adventures," says Mona. "We've both talked about doing a marathon together in one of our native countries."

"We're both restless souls with a hunger for challenge, whether it's triathlons, marathons, or sea swimming!"



Katja and Mona motivate each other to get out and run!



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