

**TWO'S
COMPANY:**

GET ACTIVE FOR A BETTER RELATIONSHIP

WORKING OUT
TOGETHER AS A
COUPLE REAPS MANY
REWARDS—FROM
BOOSTING YOUR
PHYSICAL FITNESS
TO STRENGTHENING
YOUR RELATIONSHIP.
IF YOU LOVE TO
EXERCISE, WHY NOT
DO IT TOGETHER AS
A COUPLE?

Text: Chow Ee-Tan | Images: Courtesy of Respective Interviews/Stockphotos



We all know the benefits of regular exercise and having a workout buddy not only helps us to stay accountable and motivated in our fitness goals, but also improves our relationship. Some people are fortunate to find their fitness buddies in their significant others. Working out, exercising and pursuing various sporting activities are something they enjoy doing by themselves but more so, together.

When you work out together, it has a significant positive impact not only on your physical health, but also the health of your relationship. Couples who exercise together discover that by doing so, it gives their relationship a new dimension and new life.

BONDING OVER THE LOVE OF SPORTS

Sports are what engineer Wan Adrie Wan Ahmad, 45, and wife Malis Zainuddin, 44 love doing since school days, and have continued doing so after getting married and starting a family.

Two years after tying the knot in 2002, they became sports buddies when they started scuba diving.

"I was the one who wanted to try out scuba diving first," says Masli, a former accountant turned homemaker. "I told Adrie since I've always followed him to watch him play futsal and joined him playing tennis together with friends, I asked him to follow me to scuba dive.

"I felt that as a couple, we should give and take and that if we wanted to do a new sport, let's do it together," recalls Masli.

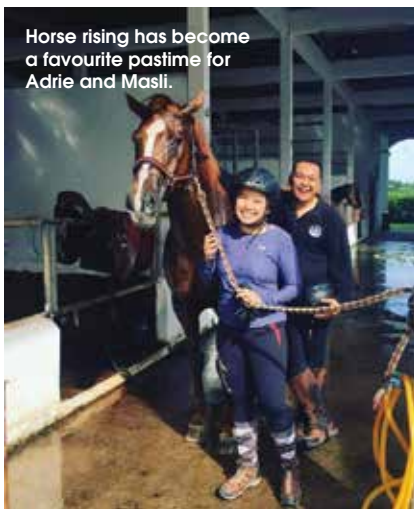
Although Wan Adrie was hesitant at first since he had not swum for a long time, he decided to go diving with his wife and they became avid divers. Ever since, they have been pursuing sporting activities together as a couple.

In 2010, the couple decided to take up horse riding, and soon

"Playing sports together is not just a recreational activity and can go much deeper than that. It can be used as a platform to bond with your partner."



Adrie and Masli on the tennis court.



Horse riding has become a favourite pastime for Adrie and Masli.



Adrie and Masli diving into the deep blue sea.

taking their two young sons with them and getting them to ride on ponies. From local equestrian clubs, they travelled to ride horses in Cherating and Terengganu, and even in Dubai. This sport has now become a family affair although it's Masli who excels in it by competing professionally and winning prizes.

From their dating days till now, a common denominator between them has always been tennis, which both of them have been playing at proficient levels. In the early days when they were very busy at work, they still tried to play during weekends.

Nowadays, Wan Adrie and Masli play tennis almost daily, and in the last few years, it has also evolved into a family activity. Their

children, Wan Danihqziq, 16 and Wan Nabeel, 13, are participating in the National Junior Tour.

Besides tennis, scuba diving and horse riding, Wan Adrie and Masli have also run a marathon together. Here is a couple who simply loves to do sports more than other activities together.

"With sports, you learn to know your partner better, understand each other and communicate at an optimum level," says Wan Adrie. "Work has been stressful, but we always make it a point to go to the islands to dive three times a year. And also travelling to do horse riding. They are well-needed break from work."

Masli adds that as a family with kids, they like to do sports together for bonding.

"It's fun and a very good way to spend time together, and also to keep the kids away from their devices," she says, adding that inculcating sportsmanship in children is a great way to build up their characters.

Indeed, they often watch tennis and football matches together, either live or over television, and always end up cheering their favourite player or team!



THE PROVEN BENEFITS OF WORKING OUT TOGETHER AS A COUPLE

According to an article in LiveFit.com entitled "*Couples Who Sweat Together Stay Together*", couples who do sports together are able to reap the benefits of motivation as they would have less excuses to slack and in fact, it will be an excellent way to create a regular routine for them.

Another great benefit is the emotional support one can render to his or her other half. When a couple is on the same page in encouraging each other to reach measurable goals and progress, they are more likely to achieve their goals than doing it alone. Even a little friendly competition can push them to their very best and add a little more fun not only to their exercises but also their relationship.

REASONS TO GET MOVING WITH YOUR PARTNER

CONFIDENCE

Feelings of empowerment associated with increased activity will strengthen trust and communication within a relationship.

INTIMACY

An increase in endorphins will lead you both to feel more willing to connect.

ENERGY

You'll share that boost of energy achieved from a physical activity and you'll sleep better because of it.

STRESS REDUCTION

By increasing fitness levels together, you'll be more understanding and calm, when facing challenges.

RUBBING OFF ON ONE ANOTHER

Another couple, Alvin Looi, 46 and Karynn Tan, 42, who bonds through fitness, was already gym goers before they dated and got married 12 years ago.

In 2012, Karynn took a sabbatical from the gym and started running, an activity she loves a lot till today. She had already registered for her first full marathon a year later. Alvin, however, did not like running, and only finally joined his wife to start running in 2019.

After a hiatus, Karynn decided to follow Alvin back to the gym about two years ago. However, during the Movement Control Order (MCO), all gyms had to close and since March last year, Alvin and Karynn have been giving free fitness classes over Zoom.

"I know I need to exercise. When a friend suggested to me to do a Zoom class, I decided to give it a go although it was something I've never done before," says Alvin, who was naturally the lead instructor while Karynn would be working out alongside him at every class.

"I like the idea of Karynn being there with me. She complements me. Some of the moves are quite advanced and Karynn would do the easier version," he says. Karynn says she likes the fact that Alvin would give her cues from time to time.

Alvin admits he would feel uncomfortable leading the group exercise alone. "Unlike in a physical class when you get

PHYSICALLY ACTIVE DATE IDEAS FOR COUPLES

There's nothing sexier than getting active with your significant other. Partnering up through physical activity is healthy, sparks endurance, and offers you the chance to bond with each other. Here are some active date ideas to inspire you and your partner to get out and get moving.

BIKING

Biking is a great way to get your legs moving and the blood pumping. Take a leisurely ride to enjoy the scenery, or get competitive and race with each other.

HIKING

Hiking is an excellent daytime alternative to a romantic evening stroll. Get creative by locating a new trail in your area every weekend, so the two of you can experience nature in its most glorious forms together.

DANCING

If you and your partner love dancing, pick a hot spot and get all dressed up to get down on the dance floor. Create a playlist and assign a different genre per room: salsa in the kitchen, waltz in the dining room, freestyle in the bedroom.

PLAY HIDE AND SEEK

Make this beloved children's game a fun and adventurous date idea! Choose an unexpected place, like a home furniture store within your neighbourhood, and play hide-and-seek! If it gets too challenging, you can give each other clues of where you are.

energy from participants working out together, there is no such interaction over Zoom. So, it's good that Karynn is doing it together with me."

The Zoom classes have also helped the couple to be committed to regular workouts.

In hindsight, the MCO saw the couple working out more regularly together, and spurring each other on. For Alvin, getting up to run on Saturday mornings can be a dread but Karynn would drag him out of bed.

"Fitness is a part of my life as it is his," says Karynn. "Working out is something we enjoy doing together or even apart. We don't do it because of each other but because we share this same passion."

For Karynn whose love language is quality time, working out together is a way to express love and how she would feel loved. And the benefits go beyond fitness. As part-time theatre practitioners, having a good fitness level allows them to do certain moves as an ensemble.

"Another thing is, we can safely encourage each other to enjoy food, and not worried about putting on weight," laughs Karynn.

EXERCISE YOUR WAY TO A BETTER RELATIONSHIP

With our busy schedules these days, having some quality time sweating it out can alleviate some of life's stressors. Coming out with new workouts and trying new fitness activities are amazing



Alvin & Karynn conducting Zoom workout classes at home.



ways to continuously improve and strengthen your relationship with your partner while also working on your own health and happiness.

Meanwhile, studies have shown that couples who complete engaging workouts and activities together reported increased feelings of overall relationship satisfaction, and even feeling more in love with their partner. This is reported in *Psychology Today's* 2014 article "5 Reasons Why Couple Who Sweat Together, Stay Together". The article suggests that spending time together to

"Whether it's sports, work life or just in general, motivation is something every couple needs. Having a partner at your side to motivate you to play better or reach your goals is amazing and can go a long way."

achieve a beneficial goal is a proven way to increase emotional intimacy and happiness.

According to the article, exercise induces the symptoms of physiological arousal—sweaty hands, racing pulse, and shortness of breath. And these symptoms mirror in many ways the thrills of romantic attraction.

"When working out together, nonverbal mimicry helps people feel emotionally attuned with one another, and those who experience or engage it tend to report greater feelings of having bonded with their partner. Thus, exercising together provides an opportunity to create such connection," the article says.

Of course, one great benefit is that when couples care about fitness—their own and their partner's—it becomes easier for them to achieve their fitness goals. Thus, it is always a win-win situation for couples who sweat it out together. ☺