SOLO VS. GROUP WORKOUTS

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The New Year's hype of getting fit is long gone and you've found that you're one of the few who actually managed to maintain their resolutions as habit. You slowly discover more people in the same situation and it raises the question: do you work out solo, or in a group? Follow-up question: which works better?

SOLO
Right off the bat, working out solo is infinitely more flexible in almost every way, compared to working out with friends, gym-buddies, in a yoga class etc. No one will hold you back if you wake up at 3 am with a massive urge to do deadlifts. However, I would suggest stretching properly before attempting that.

A lot of people set goals differently. When you're exercising by yourself, you can clearly focus on your goals. For example, in my karate class, our sensei aren't the biggest fans of body-building. But what if you want to be able to do karate chops while looking buff too? Or what if your goal is to "just get fit" while half the group wants to be able to run 50 miles every single day? Working out alone allows you to set your own goals.

Speaking of focusing, solo workouts usually allow for good focus; you're less likely to goof off by spending time comparing the random posters of toned men and women on the gym walls with your friends.
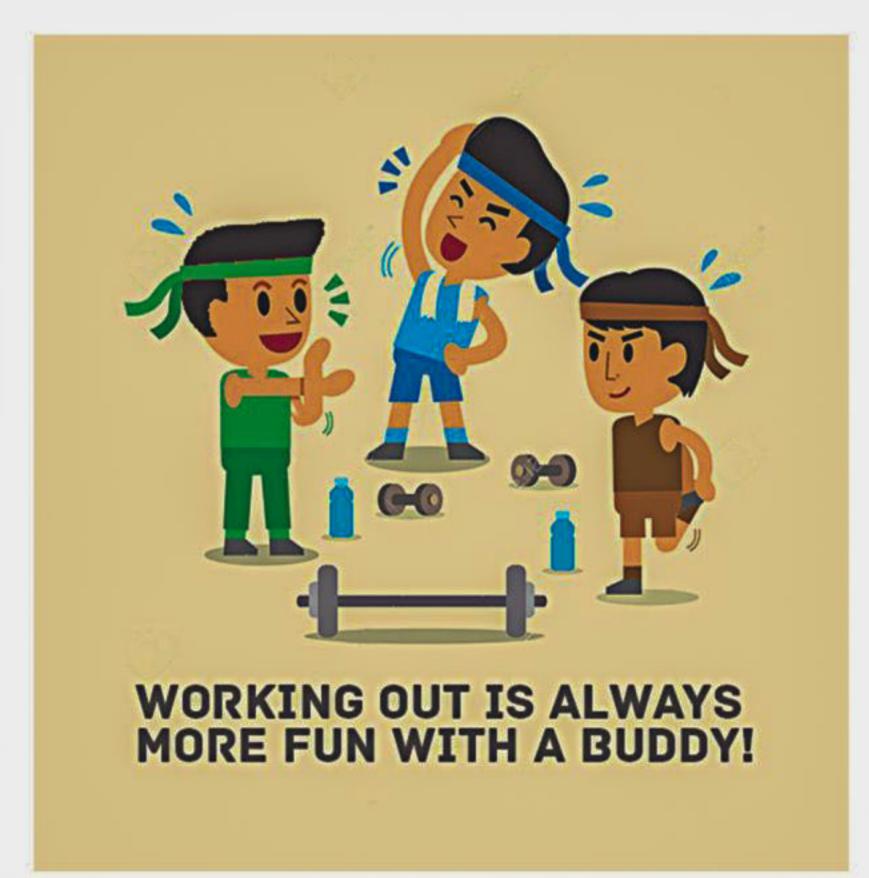
Customising your workouts is a staple when going solo. When you're in a group that's doing regular squats, you can't really start doing Cossack squats. It can go the other way too, where you can barely do a push-up but everyone else is doing diamond push-ups. Either way, you kind of have to match the group's pace. This could lead to underworking yourself and cause you to lose your gains, or it could lead to overworking yourself and being sore to the point where you can't move for the next three days. Working out solo gives you singular democracy: by the person, for the person.

You'll figure out what your limit is and work with that, gradually upping your game at the correct pace.

GROUP
Hey look, you're not forever alone anymore! The first thing you'll notice in a group is that it's more fun than working out alone (unless you hate people). Goofing off occasionally is very much welcome and boosts your energy for the next reps and sets. The (hopefully) friendly competition between group members gives you that much-needed push to work yourself just a bit more, either through jealousy or inspiration or a bit of both.

Watching people grovelling on the floor and sharing your tiredness is strangely motivating and uplifting, and that brings me to my next point: motivation and

WORKING OUT IS ALWAYS MORE FUN WITH A BUDDY!

accountability. While working out should be based on discipline, there will always be days or weeks when you just can't channel enough energy to get up and hit the gym or group classes. This is where your group buddies motivate you drastically by encouraging you. If they can't do that, they'll hold you accountable and will drag you by your tail-end if they have to, to make sure you don't lose your gains. Joke's on them, though: you don't have a tail.

One of the biggest problems about working out solo is attention to your form, which is immediately solved by working out with a group. If you're exercising incorrectly, you'll know because someone WILL point it out. Working out also has a possibility of injuring you, so it's good to know that you have a safety net of caring people in case things go south.

These caring people also tend to advise you and introduce you to new workouts and get rid of obsolete exercises. This helps you diversify your workout and increases efficiency, which can sometimes be lost when it comes to solo exercise due to laziness.

VERDICT
Now that you've reviewed the main points, what should you do? Sadly, it's not as simple as counting the pros and cons of both sides. Various factors, such as your personality, current fitness level, current workout routine, mood, budget, daily schedule, your goals, etc. apply too. You might already be severely disciplined with enough info regarding working out on your hands, and feel that a group may only slow you down. You could be looking to socialise, so then obviously, working out solo won't be your thing. Working out relieves stress, but introverts would be more willing to exercising alone and vice-versa. Therefore, the answer to which you should choose is: it depends, as annoying as that sounds. That, or you could just find a healthy balance between both group and solo like I have. The choice is yours.