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Online Course Buddy FAQ

It's common to have questions about the buddy relationship and partner practice. We hope this short FAQ will help answer some of the most common questions that arise.

Does my buddy need to be taking the course?

Yes. The partner practices are specific communication training exercises. We anticipate that you will get the most out of them, and they will go the most smoothly, if you do them with someone else taking the course.

How do I find a buddy?

There are a few ways to find a buddy. You can invite a friend or colleague to take the course and be your buddy; you can complete a simple form and we'll match you up with someone; or, you can join the optional group forum and post there to find your own buddy in the course. See your course welcome email for links to our find a buddy form and the group forum.

Should I buddy with my spouse/partner?

It's up to you, but I generally encourage folks to choose a buddy that is NOT your spouse, partner, or a close family member. There is less charge and emotional history with someone you don't know, so it tends to be easier to explore issues about your life's relationships without your buddy getting stimulated or reactive. That said, if you already have very good communication and conflict resolution skills in your primary relationship, and are NOT looking to work on that relationship in the course, it can work to have your significant other as a buddy!

Do I need to meet with my buddy in person?

You are welcome to do the exercises remotely. We recommend using a video chat if you are able: Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, WhatsApp, etc.

What is the expected time commitment per week for buddies?

We suggest a *minimum* of half an hour per practice session with your buddy, and recommend allotting 45 minutes if possible.

What is the confidentiality agreement between buddies?

We hold all personal information shared in any aspect of this course, including the partner practices, as strictly confidential. Due to the personal nature of communication training, many participants choose to share quite openly in the live class and buddy practice sessions. Feel free to discuss your learning and insights with others in your life, without sharing any identifying information about others. This includes any specific details about their life or situation.

Does my buddy need to have the same experience level as I do?

This is really up to you. Some people prefer to practice someone who is at a similar skill level (beginning, intermediate, or more experienced), while others enjoy learning across skill levels. If you have a preference, just indicate that when you fill out the form or post for a buddy.

What about other preferences I have for my buddy?

It's helpful to feel relaxed and at ease with your buddy, and sharing certain life experiences can support this. For example, some people find it helpful to have a buddy who is also a parent, works in a corporate environment, or moves through the world with a similar aspect of their identity. If it's important to you to partner with someone of the same race, gender, sexual orientation, class, education background, or any other characteristics, include that in your post.

Can I have two buddies?

Absolutely! If you have the time and energy, and would like the extra practice, you are welcome to have two or even three buddies in the course.

What do I talk about / do when I meet with my buddy?

All of the instructions are provided in the weekly practice assignment. Please download the handout from our course and review these prior to meeting with your buddy.

Where do I find the handouts and partner practice assignments?

Each week, I post a "Handout and Partner Practice" in our shared course materials folder. Please refer to your course welcome email for all key links for our course.

What should I do if I have a conflict or argument with my buddy?

First, you don't have to become best friends with your practice partner. While some people do develop a meaningful friendship, it's not necessary to do the exercises, learn, or benefit from the relationship. It also doesn't have to be a perfect fit.

It's also not uncommon to have disagreements or conflict at times with your buddy, or to get into an argument over something related to the assignment. If this happens, we encourage both partners to acknowledge the challenge, take a step back, and each reflect on the situation on your own. Use the tools you're learning to get clear about what matters to you, and get curious about what matters to your buddy. Notice "right/wrong" thinking and do the hard work of translating that into observations, feelings, and needs. Do your best to give them the benefit of the doubt, empathizing with their feelings and needs. If you're willing and able, try to use the tools to discuss what happened and work things out. Take turns listening to each other, reflecting back what you hear and *really* trying to understand one another. It's an invaluable opportunity to put the tools into practice! Of course, if things don't work out, you are always welcome to part ways and try to find another buddy in the forum.