

AG Buddies

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One method for helping keep members engaged and supported is to start a buddy system in your affinity group:

- Have someone to keep track of buddies
- Not everyone will want a buddy and that's OK
- Different buddies will want to meet more or less frequently
- Buddies can be support buddies (but if your AG has formed for an action they could be action buddies)
- Confidentiality is required
- Encourage active listening
- and review buddies in AG meetings

What is an AG buddy system?

An AG support buddy system basically pairs up rebels together for emotional or general support. Each person is the other person's "buddy". Buddies can check in with each other periodically and just have a chat about how they are doing. It can prevent rebels from feeling isolated or feeling awkward about reaching out for support, and it also takes pressure of the affinity group coordinator to keep in touch with everyone in the group.

This is different from a buddy system on actions - we recommend that people have specific buddies for specific actions as attendance may vary.

Buddy Point Person

It is important to have a point person to keep track of buddies. Responsibilities will include:
Matching buddies and keeping track of pairs
Checking in on buddies periodically to see if it's going well
Reworking pairs as needed if things aren't working out

Getting Started

Using whatever communication method works best for your group, whether that's a meeting, email, or group chat, to find out if your group would like to have buddies and how they would like to match people up. Select a point person. Discuss an idea of what your members want to get out of a buddy -- of course this is just a starting point, buddies will develop a rapport that works for this over time.

Active listening for buddies is strongly encouraged. This is known to foster a regenerative culture that helps people feel listened to and in a safe space. Additionally, confidentiality between buddies is critical. Matching buddies There is no one right way to pair buddies up, but here are some suggestions! Rotating Buddies One option is a rotating method. Randomly assign buddies for a fixed period of time and then rotate later. This can be great for new affinity groups so members can get to know each other better early on. One AG rotated every 8 weeks, and it worked well for them.

Fixed Buddies

Another method is to ask your AG what they want out of a buddy. Get a sense of how often people want to check in and what communication methods they want to use. Use this information to pair people together, or where there is an odd number, three people. This can work well if you know your members well and can use this to try and put people together who you think will get on well.

There might be some benefit to pairing members who are more able to make meeting and attend actions with members who are less able to.

Members can also try self-selecting buddies, though this may run the risk of leaving out members who are less comfortable reaching out to other members asking to be buddies.

Checking In

The point person should check in occasionally with their AG members to ask if their buddy is working for them. Is their buddy on the same page in terms of how to communicate and how often? Are they able to foster a regenerative environment with their buddy? Do they still want to have a buddy at all? Would a member who didn't want a buddy at first want one now?

If there appears to be a poor buddy match, that's perfectly fine. Just try to find a way to rematch any buddies that aren't working out. This might require turning a pair into a threesome depending on how things are working. If you find yourself struggling to figure out how to make it work, reach out to AGS and we can talk it through with you..

Example Questions for Pairs

How often do you want to catch up? Daily / Every few days / Weekly / Every couple weeks / Just as needed for support (less frequently)

How do you want to keep in contact? (Circle all that apply)

Over text (whatsApp, etc) / Phone call / Video chatting / In person

What do you want to get from your buddy?

A friendly connection at a stressful time / Only XR related things - to help you keep in the loop and answer questions / Climate things in general - to share your concerns / A supportive person to provide a 'active listening ear'

