

The access buddy guide

For two people going to one thing together. Read it in the car. It takes four minutes.

A buddy is not a caregiver, a chaperone, or a fixer. A buddy is a second set of hands, a witness, and a pre-arranged exit. **Everything in here gets decided before you arrive, because the whole point is that nobody has to negotiate in a loud room while their body is failing.**

Who is who	
Going to the thing	
Along as the buddy	
Event, date, and hard stop time	

Before you go
check these together, out loud, at least a day ahead

	Who checks	Done
The address, the right entrance, the parking, and how many minutes it takes to get from the car to the seat.		
Whether there is seating. If the answer is unclear, assume no and decide now what we bring.		
Where the quiet space or the car is, and how fast we can get to it from the middle of the room.		
Bathroom location, and whether reaching it involves stairs, a code, or asking a stranger.		
The food situation, plus what we bring for when the food situation is a lie.		
The bag: meds, water, earplugs, sunglasses, charger, snacks, mobility gear, backup mask.		
The hard stop time, decided here and not renegotiated at the venue by anyone, including us.		
The ride home, which does not depend on the event ending when it says it will.		
Who we are allowed to leave without saying goodbye to, which is ideally everyone.		
One sentence on what I actually want out of tonight, so we both know what counts as worth it.		

The signals

agree on these in the car. A signal only works if it needs no explaining later.

The signal	What it means	What the buddy does
Two taps on your arm	I need to leave. Now.	Say we have to run, start moving, ask nothing.
"Do you have my charger?"	Get me out of this conversation.	Step in, redirect, walk away with me.
Flat hand on your back	I can't talk. You talk.	Take over and do not explain why.
Thumbs down at the hip	I'm at twenty percent.	Seat, water, quiet corner, within five minutes.
A single dot by text	Come find me.	Locate me. No announcement, no search party.

Three rows are blank on purpose. The best signals are the ones already built into how you two talk.

Helping without taking over

the difference between a buddy and a manager

Do not answer for them. Unless they gave the signal, let the silence sit. Speaking for someone who did not ask is the fastest way to become the reason they stopped bringing anybody.

Do not explain the disability. Not to hosts, not to strangers, not to anybody's aunt. Not to be kind, not to smooth it over. It is not your information.

Ask what do you need, not are you okay. One of those is answerable in a loud room. The other requires a whole assessment.

Agree on a check-in cadence. Then keep to it. Hovering every ten minutes reads as surveillance and burns the same energy as the event.

Carry the bag, do not reorganize it. Whatever system is in there is load-bearing.

When the signal comes, move. Do not ask if they're sure. Agreeing in advance was exactly so nobody has to be sure twice.

Do not apologize on their behalf. Leaving early is not an offense that needs your regrets attached to it.

Hold your disagreement until you are both home. If you think they made the wrong call about their own body, that conversation happens later, once, in private.

Their exit is not a verdict on your night. If you want to stay, say so honestly during planning, not in the doorway with the coats.

While you are in there

small jobs that cost the buddy almost nothing and save the other person an hour of battery

Hold the seat. Reclaiming a chair is harder than keeping one.

Refill the water without being asked. Same with finding the food that is safe to eat.

Read the menu, the program, or the sign out loud, casually, before anybody has to squint at it.

Watch the clock so nobody else has to. Give a quiet fifteen-minute warning before the hard stop.

Take the photos, so the other person does not have to be switched on for a camera.

Stand on the loud side, the bright side, or the side with the crowd. Be the wall.

Run interference on the person who will not stop talking. This is the buddy's best trick.

Know where the exit is at all times, and know it without looking around for it.

Getting out

the exit is a plan, not a scene

The line we say to the host

Who says it

Where we meet if separated

Food on the way home

No debrief in the car. The ride home is for silence, air conditioning, and a drink with sugar in it. Nobody evaluates how the night went while one of you is still running on adrenaline.

After

the bill comes due somewhere between two hours and two days later

For the person who went

Assume a crash window and protect it in advance. Cancelling tomorrow is part of the cost of tonight, not a separate failure.

Dark, quiet, horizontal, salty, hydrated. Meds and food before sleep, not after.

No decisions, no email, no reading the group chat for twenty-four hours.

If you owe anybody a follow-up, it can wait two days. Everyone survives that.

For the buddy

Send one low-demand message the next day. Something that can be answered with a single character.

Do not take the silence personally. A crash is not a review of your company.

You are allowed to be tired too. Say so out loud rather than filing it away as a favor owed.

Do not fix anything yet. The debrief on the next page happens once you have both slept.

The two-day debrief

Four lines, once you have both recovered. This is the part that makes the next one cheaper.

What worked	
What cost more than it was worth	
A signal we should add or drop	
What we do differently next time	

Cut these out. One each.

The card goes in a pocket, not a phone. Phones die, and reading a screen in a dark loud room is its own tax.

OUR SIGNALS TONIGHT

Get me out

Rescue me

You talk

Twenty percent

Hard stop

Ride home

Exit line

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Fix the habitat, not the habit. Copy it, print it, change the signals, hand it to whoever is coming with you.