

## How To Survive Holiday Parties

from the American Counseling Association

The holiday season leaves many people feeling anxious and nervous as they receive invitations to holiday office parties, family gatherings and other social events that they would rather avoid. That's understandable. While such events can be a great time to socialize, they also can lead to disaster.

We've all heard, or experienced, the office party where someone did permanent damage to his or her reputation. Or that family gathering where Uncle Louie had one drink too many and told everyone what he really thought of them.

If upcoming holiday celebrations have you feeling tense and seriously considering not attending, here are some suggestions to help make such events less stressful and more enjoyable:

- **Keep the visit short.** Whether an office party, family gathering or a neighborhood get-together, it's good for you and your reputation to make an appearance. At the very least, show up early in the party, stay for short time, then thank your host and leave. That's better than being a no-show and you may just find you're enjoying yourself and want to stay.

- **Skip the alcohol.** Even one or two alcoholic drinks can affect your judgment, and poor judgment leads to most party disasters. Stick to juice or soft drinks and lessen your chances of looking foolish or saying the wrong thing. If an alcoholic drink is "forced" on you, say thanks but don't feel obliged to drink it.

- **Plan ahead.** Nervous about what to wear? Find out how others will dress and you'll feel less anxious about your appearance. If there will be gift giving, check out what gifts and dollar values are appropriate. Don't do gag gifts that will be embarrassing or risque.

- **Avoid being critical.** Negative comments at a party, even if made in confidence, always get repeated later to all the wrong people. Venting frustrations at office parties almost always produces negative results.

- **Mind your manners.** Don't overeat at the buffet table. Do remember to thank your host.

- **Avoid problem people.** If you and a co-worker always clash, instead spend time with people you enjoy. If a relative always argues with you, simply refuse to respond and excuse yourself politely.

There's no reason to fear or avoid the holiday party. It should be an enjoyable event, even when you feel "required" to attend. Just plan on staying sober, being polite and sociable, and you may just find it a pleasant experience.

*Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcornet@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcornet@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)*

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