

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### Keeping Alcohol Under Control During The Holidays

from the American Counseling Association

The holiday season brings increased amounts of stress and pressure. It also brings many opportunities to escape that stress. From office parties to family gatherings, the holidays offer lots of chances to be with people we like and enjoy a drink or two... or, too often, more.

Holiday drinking can be a very real problem for many reasons. One is that there are more occasions to consume alcohol, and often in situations that encourage excessive consumption.

In addition, holiday parties may push people to drink who seldom do so at other times. Such people may have lower alcohol tolerance, meaning just a drink or two can leave them quite intoxicated. One drink can be too much if you get in trouble because of it.

The holiday season also produces high numbers of alcohol-related traffic accidents and deaths. And even a driving drunk citation will carry serious implications.

But excessive holiday drinking can also produce other stress-inducing problems. Just one unthinking comment or improper action at an office holiday party has sabotaged more than one promising career. And who hasn't experienced a horrific family gathering when Uncle Fred starts drinking and sharing his feelings about family members?

The key is to keep holiday alcohol consumption under control. Here are some tips on how to make that easier:

- Remember that you have choices. A holiday party is an opportunity to socialize and have fun, not just drink. You get to choose whether to drink or not, and when to stop drinking.

- Feel self-confident enough to say no. Just because alcohol is available, or a host is pushing drinks, doesn't mean you have to indulge. There's nothing embarrassing about asking for a non-alcoholic drink. If someone tries to shame you into drinking, realize the problem is his, not yours.

- Use a designated driver. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair driving ability. Why take chances? No designated driver? Then call a cab.

- If you're going to drink alcohol, decide ahead of time how many drinks are right for you. Choose a number that keeps you in control and then stick to it.

Don't add to holiday stress and pressure with alcohol related problems. You have the ability to make choices to drink wisely. And if alcohol is a problem you can't control, seek help. Your physician, local hospital or a professional counselor can help you attack the problem.

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

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