

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

A Recipe For Enjoyable Holiday Parties

from the American Counseling Association

Tis the season for parties - office parties... social events... get togethers with friends or relatives. It should be, and can be, a fun time of the year, but it also presents opportunities for difficulties and outright disasters.

While sitting home and not socializing may seem a safe answer, that's really just punishing yourself and can leave you feeling left out and depressed. Instead, follow a few common sense rules to help you enjoy the season and avoid disasters.

- **Don't skip that party.** Whether it's an office party, family gathering or neighborhood get-together, you only damage your reputation by being a no-show. If you're hesitant to attend an event, minimize your exposure by showing up early in the party, staying for a short time, then thanking your host and leaving. And, in some cases, you may find you're actually enjoying yourself and want to stay longer.

- **Be Informed.** - If you're anxious about how to dress for an event, or unsure whether there will be gift giving, ask a few questions ahead of time. A little information will lessen that anxiety. And remember gag gifts should never be something risqué or embarrassing.

- **Avoid the alcohol.** Even one or two alcoholic drinks can affect your judgment and lead to a party disaster. Sticking to juice or soft drinks lessens your chances of saying the wrong thing or doing something foolish.

- **Don't Be Critical.** A holiday party isn't the place to vent frustrations or to negatively critique others. It's almost a guarantee that negative comments will get repeated later to all the wrong people.

- **Use Your Best Manners.** Yes, that buffet looks tempting, but don't overeat or walk away with an overloaded plate of food. Do the things your mother taught you. Politely introduce yourself to others and be sure to thank your host or hostess when leaving.

- **Stay Away From Problem People.** If there's a co-worker with whom you always clash, avoid him or her and spend time with people you like. If there's a relative who always has to argue with you, simply refuse to respond and excuse yourself politely.

Holiday parties need not be feared. They can, and should be enjoyable events, even when you feel "required" to attend. Plan on staying sober and on being polite and sociable, and you may just find yourself having a very good time.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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