

Survival skills for holiday parties

December 2015 Newsletter



Social skills can get a real workout during the holidays. You may be on the guest list for office parties, family and neighborhood gatherings and other events. And you're usually expected to arrive with lots of holiday spirit!

Whether you're a social butterfly or wallflower — or somewhere in between like most of us — it's a good time to think about ways to handle social situations. Here are some tips to consider:

1. Arriving. It's not unusual to feel awkward when first entering a party — especially when you don't know anyone. Your best friend in this situation? A smile.

People are drawn to others who seem happy and at ease (even if you're faking it!). You can bet there are other nervous guests who are hoping to talk with someone.

So smile and approach a small group or another person who's alone. Suddenly, you're the one who's cool and confident.

2. Starting a conversation. Questions are often the best conversation starters. You might ask: "How do you know [host's name]?"

You can also ask a question about something you're likely to have in common with others. Examples might be a current cold streak, traffic jam or news story.

3. Keeping up the conversation. When you ask a question, be sure you listen to the answer. Don't be too quick to jump in with your own opinion.

Good listening can prompt more questions and reveal common interests. Before you know it, you may forget you were nervous and be engaged in an easy conversation.

4. Observing e-courtesies. Turn off your cellphone or put it on silent. It can be very rude to take a phone call or check your email while you're talking to someone. If you must take a call or answer a text, excuse yourself and step into another room.

5. Taking time out. Feel free to take a breather. You don't have to interact nonstop. Get recharged by taking a few quiet minutes on the terrace or even in the restroom.

6. Leaving. Thank your hosts for a terrific time and pat yourself on the back for your success!