

Teetotalers: Surviving the holiday parties

Question: “Last year, our company celebrated the holiday season at a bar near our office building. This event was basically an “alcohol fest” that began after work and continued late into the evening. I never drink alcohol because my father died of alcoholism. Also, I really don’t care for the taste. However, I’ve found that when I decline a drink, people regard me as strange. Sometimes they become insistent and insulting, saying things like “What’s wrong with you?” or “Are you in recovery?” Apparently, I am the only person in this entire group who doesn’t drink. It hurts to be called an oddball, so I’d like to be less conspicuous. I was a new employee at last year’s party, but this time I want to be prepared.” —*Abstainer*

Marie’s Answer: To avoid attracting attention, you’ll need to blend in with these boozy partygoers. The simplest strategy is to keep a nonalcoholic beverage in your hand at all times. Orange juice, soft drinks, and sparkling water are available at almost every bar. If you’re holding a glass, your abstinence will be less obvious.

Avoid making pronouncements about being a teetotaler. If someone offers to fetch you a drink, just say “No, thanks. I’ll get something in a little while.” In response to direct inquiries, give a simple but true reply: “Unfortunately, I’ve found that alcohol really doesn’t agree with me, so I’ll just keep sipping on my soda.”

During the party, maintain a cheerful and friendly attitude. As long as you seem to be enjoying yourself, people are less likely to speculate about your alcohol consumption. If obnoxious co-workers make rude or intrusive comments, simply change the subject or end the conversation.

Finally, keep all observations about party behavior to yourself. If you want your colleagues to quit bugging you about being sober, you must never mention the stupid things they do when they’re drunk.