

Office Party Etiquette: Dos and Don'ts for Employees

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

Q: My husband is finding it harder to drag me to the office Christmas party. Don't misunderstand; I enjoy catching up with some of the people, but I don't know how much longer I can endure his ill-mannered young co-workers. Maybe it's my age, but the brash behavior, the risqué attire and the excessive drinking is frankly off-putting. In case anyone else sees this as a problem, can you provide a decorum guide for office parties?

A: You are to be commended for demonstrating respect and consideration towards your husband by attending the annual office party. Not only do you show support, you set an excellent example.

For those who don't enjoy the office party and would sooner take a demotion rather than mix with the office crew, you should be aware that mingling outside the office with co-workers is a sign of goodwill. For all intents and purposes, it behooves you to change your attitude and consider that it is part of the job.

On the flip side are employees who love to whoop it up. You should understand that the office party is different from socializing with friends in the respect that you cannot count on easy forgiveness when you make a fool of yourself. If you lose control at an office party, you can kiss your reputation goodbye. The worst scenario is that you may not have an office to report to.

Office party manners matter so play it safe by following these rules of good conduct:

Before arriving at the party, consider the statement you want to make with your attire. Choose a tasteful professional look which reflects your personality. Ladies, this is not the time to pull out your most revealing outfit and show up as the office sex-pot.

If you think it is okay to make a brief appearance, think again. Co-workers will notice your insincere attempt to "look good." Plan to spend at least an hour mingling with as many people as possible. Also, know when it is time to go home.

Many people suffer from "minglephobia," but with a little pre-party planning, you can show your genuine interest in others by coming up with questions about family, recent vacations, hobbies and current events to keep the conversation flowing. People like to talk about themselves so use your questions to put the spotlight on them.

A general rule of thumb is everything in moderation. The office party does not amount to the food or alcohol you can consume. Resist loading your plate and use caution when drinking. Your professional future may hinge on the quality of your social behavior.

Be ready to enjoy yourself at the party, but don't have too much fun...after all, it is still business!

Email your etiquette questions to Jill at: information@DefiningManners.com or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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