

# Surviving Holiday Parties When You Have Social Anxiety

By Robert Preidt, HealthDay

Socializing is a major part of the holiday season, but many people find it difficult.

If you suffer anxiety or feel tongue-tied at festive gatherings, here are some helpful tips from Martin Antony, a psychology professor at Ryerson University in Toronto.

First, some advice about making conversation. Smile and make eye contact. Be approachable and open to conversation. Join an ongoing conversation, ideally with a group discussing a topic that interests you. Ask questions and be an active listener.

Try not to simply avoid going to parties altogether. Avoiding fearful situations will only cause your anxiety to increase over time, Antony said. If you're shy, talking to others can be challenging at first but will get easier if you keep working at being social.

Trying to fight anxiety at a party can make the anxiety worse. Accept your uncomfortable feelings and try some of the previous conversation tips so you'll have a good time.

Some of the worst butterflies can come leading up to office parties. Remember, office parties aren't just for fun -- they can serve a purpose, giving you the chance to network and to have an unhurried moment away from the office to chat with co-workers and your boss.

To deal with an office party, Antony offers the following advice:

- Determine the dress code before you go to a party. Ask the organizer or someone who attended last year's event. If you're not sure, it's best to wear business attire.
- Shake hands with your boss and other senior managers and wish them a happy holiday season. Make sure your manager sees you at the party and also remembers speaking to you. It could help in future promotion opportunities.
- Try to begin cultivating new relationships and networks. Use the party as a starting point and follow-up with colleagues later to arrange future gatherings.
- Before leaving, say "goodnight" and "thank you" to the party organizer, your boss and the most senior staff member in attendance.

On the Web:

[www.apa.org/helpcenter/holiday-season.aspx](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/holiday-season.aspx), the American Psychological Association outlines how you can make the most of the holiday season.

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