



Tips for Social Situations Involving Alcohol

It's common to be in social situations that involve alcohol while you are sober. Sometimes these situations are required by your desire to get work, secure an account, or maintain a positive relationship with a client or coworker.

Take care of yourself:

It can feel awkward when the rest of the group is having alcohol and you are not. Often few people, if any, even notice! People think of you less often than you think of yourself!

If you are comfortable, let them know you are an alcoholic or in recovery and no longer drink. It is very unusual that you'll get a negative reaction when you are honest about your drinking.

You don't have to explain why you don't drink to anyone. But for those that are new to not drinking, you might feel awkward without a drink. There are some exceptions, but the great majority of people do not care if you are drinking or not, and often the ones that do have their own issues with alcohol. Being honest or having a "go to" response is equally ok.

Examples of "Go To" responses to stop questions:

- o "For medical reasons."
- o "Because of the medication I'm taking."
- o "I've had enough."
- o "I'm good."
- o "I'm driving."
- o "I had a few earlier and I need to be feeling good tomorrow - but you go ahead and have one!"
- o "When I drink alcohol, I break out in handcuffs!"
- o "If you drank like me - you'd stop too!"
- o "Alcohol gives me diarrhea."
- o "Alcohol causes violent vomiting."
- o "The lining of my stomach burns away when alcohol gets in me."

Always have an exit plan:

Try not to ride with someone else to your destination so that you can leave when you want to. If you have a passenger, or if you ride with someone else, they need to understand you may wish to leave early. Never be dependent on someone else to leave a situation or be afraid or self-conscious about leaving early.

Private parties or family events:

- o A red solo cup is a good start. Always bring your own beverages to functions when and where it is appropriate to do so. You may not want to be stuck drinking water all night if the host only stocked beer and wine.
- o Hang out with the kids or young people.

Continued



Tips for Social Situations Involving Alcohol

If you are hosting customers/vendors:

- o Choose a neutral environment for a meal rather than a bar. You can also choose a restaurant that emphasizes cuisine over drinks.
- o If you need to entertain - choose an activity, a show, puzzle room, or event that creates a positive atmosphere rather than just "bar time."
- o Have an escape plan - let them know the meal is for a fixed period of time and that you have an event you have to be at later.
- o When making plans, arrange a reservation so you can arrive and be seated rather than waiting for a long period in the bar.
- o If you do have to spend time in the bar, buy a round of drinks rather than opening a tab. An open tab will always result in more drinking.
- o When the server is near you ask them to remove your wine glass. It removes question or temptation later.
- o At the next order simply say "I'll just have water" or order what you like without concern.
- o In some countries drinking is expected and refusing alcohol can be considered an insult. Explain to your translator or contact if necessary, "I have a medical condition" or "I am on medication that means alcohol is expressly prohibited. My apologies, but it's not an option for me."

At the bar with co-workers or friends:

- o Stay for a short time. Prior to leaving work you can say "I'll come with - but I have to meet my partner/friend so I can't stay long."
- o If you are meeting co-workers or friends - have an ally. Confide in someone that you are not drinking for special reasons and ask them to hang out with you at the bar.
- o You can arrive early and get a club soda. Ask for a lime and stir stick! It may make it appear you have a mixed drink and create less questions.
- o If you can't arrive early, walk up to the bar and get a "mocktail" and return to the table. You can also have your ally order you a mocktail in advance and hand it to you - knowing its safe.
- o Pay for your drink, or a round of drinks for your co-workers or friends, rather than opening a tab. An open tab will always result in more drinking.
- o If you don't see your drink being prepared, take a sniff and a taste before you drink it.
- o Circulate to the group so you feel "seen" - then leave when you are ready.

**Don't ever let anyone pressure you to drink!
There is nothing as important as your recovery.**