

4 ways to stay out of trouble at this year's Christmas party

It's the end of the year and most of us want to kick off our shoes and have some fun. And while the work Christmas party is a great way to celebrate, it pays to be aware of inappropriate behaviours and how to avoid them.

SEEK research has uncovered what most of us think of as behaviour to be avoided at Christmas parties. We asked [SEEK's Resident Psychologist Sabina Read](#) how to best prepare for these situations and stay out of trouble this festive season.

1. Talking inappropriately about your work, boss or colleagues

Socialising with your colleagues outside of work can be great. You get to see them in a different context, talk about things other than work and spend time with people you don't often talk with. But the combination of end-of-year fatigue, the desire to celebrate and the availability of alcohol can let behaviour and words go unchecked.

A work Christmas party isn't the time to bring up grievances or start difficult conversations. "Negativity is contagious and can bring our mood down, and can lead us to wonder if the same person could talk about us in the same disparaging tone," says Read.

If you think you might start talking inappropriately, ask a colleague to keep an ear out and nudge you or interrupt if things go down that path. If a colleague starts bad-mouthing a co-worker, you can make an excuse to exit or steer the conversation in another direction.

2. Drinking too much or appearing intoxicated

"High levels of alcohol consumption take away our inhibitions, affecting our attention,

behaviour and decision making,” Read says. “Although work parties are social and celebratory events, they’re still work functions, and require a level of professionalism.”

If you’re someone who likes a drink, alternate alcoholic drinks with water, make sure you eat enough food and find a buddy to keep you accountable, so things don’t get out of hand. “Making an agreed time to leave the function by pre-ordering transport is also a useful strategy,” Read says.

3. Being overly affectionate with a colleague in front of others

It can be uncomfortable seeing people be intimate, especially your colleagues. “Public displays of affection can feel awkward at the party and also later when everyone has returned to work,” Read says. Even though it’s a party, you are in a work environment, so the boundaries around physical contact still apply.

4. Sharing information that wouldn’t otherwise be shared

It’s tempting to gossip at an office party, but while social functions can help you bond with your colleagues, it’s important to keep a sense of what’s professional. “If you witness oversharing by a colleague that makes you or the recipient feel uncomfortable, call out the behaviour by letting the offender know that what’s been said doesn’t feel right,” Read says. “When we observe and accept other people’s offending behaviour, we send a message that the behaviour is acceptable and can inadvertently normalise toxic and damaging behaviours.”

The key to a fun and incident-free work party is being aware of your behaviour and how it impacts others, and letting colleagues know if something doesn’t feel right. By keeping these tips in mind, you can enjoy the year’s hard work and have a great time with your colleagues without any red faces or repercussions.