

A Very New Year

At four months sober, a New Year's Eve party seemed daunting. But she took her sponsor's suggestion and got a big surprise



WHEN I was just four months sober, an old friend came to town for the holidays. She invited me to spend New Year's Eve with her at a party her relatives were throwing.

My friend was highly regarded in the career we had both chosen. At that time, I was experiencing some

difficulty in life, getting sober and starting over after losing both my job and the dream house I had built with my husband. I felt very unsuccessful compared to my friend. Frankly, I wasn't thrilled to see her because I would have to confess that things in my life had gotten so bad that I had actually "joined the program." Couple that with my lifelong social

anxiety (which I usually dealt with by drinking). Spending several hours at a New Year's Eve party seemed like a very daunting prospect. Despite all this, I did long to spend time with my old friend.

I called my sponsor with my concerns and she reminded me that I needn't avoid going to a place where there would be alcohol so long as I had a legitimate reason for being there. The way to get through the evening, she said, was to look for ways to be helpful. So I took some deep breaths and headed to the party.

I arrived at a picture-perfect scene: family and friends gathered around food—and drink—in a cozy home. I politely declined the first of many drink offers and found a place to sit. I joined in the conversation as best as I could, and I got up to help in the kitchen or entertain the kids whenever I felt nervous. Things were going well, but my friend started to look at me funny as I continued declining drink offers.

Eventually, guests began to disperse and my friend and I had the chance to sit together and talk. She asked me what was up: why wasn't I drinking on New Year's Eve? I decided, since there was really was no way around the issue, that I would level with her. I said that I had stopped drinking about four months earlier when I joined AA.

I don't know what I expected, but I was pleasantly surprised by

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her reaction. She put down her own drink, gave me a big hug and told me how impressed she was with my decision. Not only that, she confided that her husband had begun attending AA meetings as well—something none of her other friends knew about.

She and I spent the rest of New Year's Eve sitting next to the fireplace chatting about life, the challenges of problem drinking and the benefits of sobriety. I felt supported by my old friend, and she appreciated being able to talk freely about what was really going on in her seemingly perfect life.

I'm so glad I decided to face my fears and attend the party that night. I am also grateful to AA for giving me the tools I needed to get through the evening without drinking and to strengthen a good friendship in a way that I never even imagined possible.

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