Toastmasters' Tips for Surviving Awkward Holiday Party Talk

What to do when natural conversations don't come naturally

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Dec. 6, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- It's the time of year when many people become anxious about upcoming holiday gatherings and the awkward conversations that might ensue.

Toastmasters recognizes that natural conversations don't come naturally to many of us and offers a safe place to practice the art of small talk. Whether you're sipping a drink at a friend's home, sharing a holiday dinner with family or attending the office party, Toastmasters experts offer these tips for a more successful experience.

1. **Look for a friendly face.** When arriving at the event or when you're feeling out of place, seek out the people you know and enjoy spending time with. Remember to navigate toward people who seem to be popular, because it's likely they're good communicators and will help you feel at ease.
2. **Watch your body language.** Be sure to face the individual who is speaking, make eye contact and nod to let them know you're paying attention, listening and understanding. Refrain from texting or repeatedly checking your phone, as this is disrespectful.
3. **Share your stories.** When the timing is appropriate, share your humorous and happy holiday memories. People like to share their own holiday experiences, so this conversation should go over quite well during this time of year.
4. **Set your expectations.** It's difficult to have in-depth conversations at holiday gatherings, so prepare for others to join in and even interrupt at times. Conversations will typically be brief so don't expect to resolve any pressing business or personal matters at the event.
5. **Know when and how to exit.** Before leaving the event, navigate your way around and try to say a brief hello to the people you haven't had the chance to converse with. Be sure to say thank you to the hosts of the party. They likely put in a great deal of effort in the hopes that you would enjoy yourself.

To find a local Toastmasters club where you can practice and develop one-on-one communication, go to www.toastmasters.org/findaclub.

About Toastmasters International
Toastmasters International is a worldwide nonprofit educational organization that empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders. Headquartered in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif., the organization's membership exceeds 352,000 in more than 16,400 clubs in 141 countries. Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people from diverse backgrounds become more confident speakers, communicators and leaders. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org. Follow @Toastmasters on Twitter.

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