

## Networking for Shy People

### What networking tips do you have for someone who is shy?

For someone who isn't naturally outgoing, networking and other events can be especially daunting - and even painful. This is particularly true when you're new to a group or you're attending an event for the first time and everyone else seems to know each other. They're greeting one another like old friends, and perhaps sharing jokes or stories that an outsider can't relate to. How do you break the ice? Here are some ideas:

**Arrive early.** When you arrive early, you're not as likely to be intimidated by a room full of people who are already talking, laughing and sharing inside stories. If you're one of the first to arrive, chances are that you'll have an easier time striking up a conversation with the other earlybirds. Don't be afraid to tell them you're new to the group and that you're looking forward to meeting other people.

#### **Seek out the host or group leader.**

Introduce yourself to the host or group leader. Tell them that this is your first time attending, and that you don't know anyone. Ask them if they can introduce you to a few people in the group.

**Bring a friend.** If you're uncomfortable talking about yourself or introducing yourself to others, bringing a friend can help ease the pain. Let your friend introduce you and you introduce her. It's often easier to talk about someone else and what they do than it is to talk about yourself. But be careful - avoid the trap of talking only to

your friend and ignoring the rest of the group. That defeats the purpose of attending the event.

**Look for other outsiders.** Scan the room for other people standing alone or looking as lost as you are. It's usually more comfortable to approach someone standing alone than it is to try to 'break in' to a group that's already engaged in conversation. Chances are that you aren't the only one who is shy or uncomfortable, and teaming up with someone else can make things easier (see 'bring a friend,' above). Work the room together and introduce one another.

**Head for the bar or the food.** This suggestion isn't meant as a tactic to hide out - it's meant as a conversation starter. Again, for shy people, approaching one person is usually easier than approaching a group. Standing on line at the bar or the food table is a perfect opportunity to strike up a conversation with the person in front of or behind you in line.



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