

Life... A wedding toast

Situation:

A friend and I are supposed to go another close friend's wedding in two weeks. It's a fair size wedding and I know from hearing about the details that there will be a champagne toast to the bride and groom. It was last Friday night when I first heard about it and that night I had trouble getting to sleep.

Symptoms:

"A champagne toast – what am I going to do?" Because I'm a recovering alcoholic, a relatively new one too, I've sworn off all drinking. And I'm serious about it. "It's going to be uncomfortable sitting at a table with nine other people and when they do the toast, what should I do? It's been a while since I've been close to any kind of spirits. I have to let them pour a glass of champagne for me. It will look strange if I don't. If I do that, what will other people think when I don't drink it and it's just sitting there in front of me?" I actually pictured in my mind what was going to happen, and it wasn't pleasant. I don't like being embarrassed. I thought about canceling out, just not going at all.

Needless to say, with all those thoughts racing around my mind, I wasn't falling asleep and it was already after 1:00 a.m. My whole body felt tense as if I was already at the wedding and facing the whole situation.

I knew that if I didn't make a firm decision, even if I did get to sleep that night, that the issue would just come up in my mind again. And again. And again. Better take the time now to consciously change my thoughts and come up with a plan.

Solution:

First off, facing a glass of champagne is distressing, not dangerous. Even to me who is a recovering alcoholic. I'm not wrong I'm average for being alcoholic. And they're not wrong their average for having an alcoholic toast. Once I dropped that fear and anger I could think a bit more clearly. Everyone who has chosen not to drink faces a first time when they're more or less expected to drink. It is average, and it is uncomfortable.

That's the key: it's just uncomfortable. I've faced other discomfort and made it through. I can again this time! Discomfort is discomfort is discomfort. It doesn't matter where or when it comes up. This may be a new situation, but it's just discomfort. If I bear the discomfort, comfort will come. If I don't face it, there will be another time down the road when I'll have to face it.

With that I made a firm decision: "I will go to the wedding."

It was silly for me to think that I would be the center of attention. It's a wedding. During the toast everyone will be looking at the bride and groom and whoever does the toast. When everybody else raises their glasses, I will too. And when everyone takes that first

sip, I can just hold my glass and then set it down on the table. It may be uncomfortable, but I'm going to practice at home before with a glass of water. I could rehearse!

If someone at the table does notice the full glass in front of me, I can smile and just say something like, "Alcohol and I don't get along." Which is true. It's bad for me. The fact is, lots of people don't drink, for lots of different reasons. The whole thing is a choice, and I'm entitled to that choice too.

In the past:

Before I didn't know I had choices. I didn't know that I could face being uncomfortable. When I was anxious, I'd drink to take away the anxiety. I did that for a lot of years.

I understand that there is no right or wrong if I go to the wedding or not. I'm not right for going and I wouldn't be wrong for staying home. For me, I am going against an old habit pattern. My mental health is at the top of my list and this will be a prime time CTP – Chance To Practice.

