The Party's Over

September 22, 2016 By Matt Starr

Yep, the party is over. I'm 59 years old, and downtown is more a place to get a coffee, a good book, or a meal than a place to stay up past midnight jamming on.

That's a relatively normal pattern for a lot of folks as they age. But, when we age with something like hepatitis or other chronic disease, a new, subtle yet important change needs to occur.

If you're anything like me, many of your friends have a glass or two of wine with a good meal, don't have the critical sodium or sugar limitations we live with, or love a cold beer on a hot day. They don't even consider reaching, as we need to, for deeper levels of healthy lifestyle choices, which include food, drink, rest, and more. They don't live with the same potential impact.

Maybe you are like me, doing all the right things. It feels right and good. One of those right things is no booze. Not just less, but none.

It's harder, though, when your friends tend to paddle the other way a bit. So many people use alcohol, and in my peer group it's very controlled or moderate, but regardless, it's usually part of the deal. Who is bringing the wine to the dinner party? A cold draft at Fenway? But of course!

And yet, with chronic illness on board, we can't, or at least shouldn't, go that way. It takes commitment, dedication, and the long view. That's attainable for most folks in their home, given the repercussions. There's a whole other level of commitment needed when socializing.

What about you? Do you face these same challenges? How do you meet them?

In general, I've never been close to having a problem with alcohol. It's not the effect that draws me in at a restaurant or at a friend's dinner table. It is more, I think, an under-the-surface desire to just fit in. And in many ways, we don't fit in in the same way. Our game is different. Accept it. Own it. Let your peeps know about how much it matters.

The people around you start to change a bit too, and offer support in various ways. You are not alone.

But, you have to dig down deep to commit to your health. No Fenway drafts, or merlot with spaghetti. Stay focused. Stay committed. And know it will get easier.

You can always count on real friends to help, but you have to bring awareness to them to get what

you need. In the case of drinking, or in my case, not drinking, friends adjust and accommodate. More and more, friends say to me when we pull up to the table together, “You want some seltzer, some juice, tea, or tap water? I have some O’Doul’s (non alcoholic beer) for you, you want one of those?” And that awareness inspires me even more. I hope it can do the same for you.

You’ll still fit in. Your relationships are way above such superficial quirks. They respect your stance for health, and some will join you, and slow down or stop themselves, seeing the positive impact it has on a person to not be buzzed.

So, firmly hold onto your commitment to avoid alcohol when you are out and about. Talk about it. It will take a little while, but your dear ones will get it, and then they will adjust.

What you put in your body is critical to improving your health, with or without chronic disease. Your friends really do want to help you, and simultaneously, help themselves.

Love is precious. Don’t underestimate its power. So is commitment. Grind it out, and stay squeaky clean.

Anything is Possible.

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