

good manners for street parties: stay safer while playing dangerously

So, there you are, hanging out with your friends, and suddenly the street around you erupts into a riotous party. Sweet! Unfortunately, cops are drawn to these things like flies to honey. If you decide to join in, or just get caught up in it, here are some tips for keeping yourself and others as safe as possible.

As soon as cops say it's an unlawful assembly, it is. And sometimes they don't even say it before arresting people. That's important to know. You're taking a risk just by being at a thing like that. This doesn't mean it can't be fun, but it is a thing to keep in mind, especially if you're undocumented, on probation, or otherwise at especially high risk if you get arrested. If this is you, you may want to keep an extra eye out for escape routes and do your best to dip when necessary. If you know your friends are at higher risk, keep an out for them.

Cameras are everywhere. Whether they're in stores, on streetlights, or in people's pockets, they can provide evidence against you or other people – and let's not even talk about facial recognition software. Covering your face can help prevent you

from being identified. An easy way to do this is to make a mask

out of a T-shirt.

Cell phones record your location, which can place you at

the scene. They can also connect you to other people. If you

have your phone with you, take the battery out of it if you can,

or turn it off completely if you can't. It's not ideal, but it's better

than nothing. Leaving your phone at home or in the car (and

parking some distance away) is the safest option.

It's a good idea to **pick a buddy to run with**, especially one

who is similar in height and speed. You two can look out for

each other, and it's a good opportunity to bond. You'll probably

want to stay close together, but in case you lose each other, try

agreeing on random words to call out and respond to – like play-

ing Marco Polo in the pool. All of this can happen on the spot.

What you **don't** want to do is **call anyone out by name.** It's

not necessary and you never know who might be listening. Bye

contact or a friendly nod works just as well.

If you see someone you don't recognize, don't ask who that

person is. Do you really need to know that? Probably not. This

is a good thing to keep in mind in general; if you have to ask,

you probably shouldn't.

Trust your instincts. If someone is being pushy and trying

to convince you to do something that you don't feel comfortable

doing, that person probably doesn't have your best interest in

mind. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

If the police aren't there, **watch out for private citizens act-**

ing like vigilantes. If they don't like what you're doing, they

might fuck with you. It's not worth it to stick around and argue

or fight with these people; they are a distraction, and they are

calling the cops on you. Just move on quickly.

If the cops do come, they usually spend some time planning

before they strike. If they are just standing around, you're prob-

ably alright for the moment. If the cops tell people to disperse,

they are giving them a warning, telling them to leave or get on

the sidewalk or they will be arrested. Sometimes they don't both-

er and arrest people anyway.

If you get picked up by the cops, DO NOT TALK TO

THEM. They won't read you your rights, but you still have

them. Practice saying this: "I am going to remain silent. I want

to speak to a lawyer." Say it to everything they say. They will tell

you all kinds of lies and threaten you and try to trick you into

talking to them. Don't fall for it. Don't try to outsmart them or

lie to them. Not talking is the safest thing to do for yourself and

others. They might tell you otherwise. Don't believe them. You

are going to remain silent. You want to speak to a lawyer.

If you made it out of there with anything that could incrimi-

nate yourself or others (this can include shoes or other identi-

able articles of clothing, as well as paint cans and the like), make

sure to ditch it. Do it in a random trash can somewhere, not at

home or work.

After the Party

So, this thing happened. You had a great time! Or you had a

terrible time! Whatever. Staying safe extends far beyond those

moments in the street.

Don't reminisce after the fact. Not even with the other people you were there with. I know, that one thing was just the best, but really. It may seem harmless, but people have gone down for doing just that – even with people they ran with and trusted before. You should be especially wary if someone you haven't seen in a while comes around asking pointed questions about your previous activities; historically, people who have answered such questions have ended up hearing transcripts of those conversations in court.

Don't incriminate yourself or others by bragging about anything illegal you did or talking about what other people did. This includes speculating about who might have done what. Doing so is confessing to a crime, or providing evidence in your own or others' cases. It's not smart, and that information isn't anybody's business.

Speaking of evidence, **don't post pictures online** of what happened, especially on social media – and if you see any, don't tag anyone in them! That is doing the cops' work for them.

And obv's: **no one likes a snitch. Don't be that guy.**

Keep your own and your friends' secrets, and you're that much more likely to be free for the next party. You know you want to go.

stay safe and dangerous!

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