



H.O.P.E.

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HOPEforNutley.org

NEWSLETTER



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Talk to your kids about being safe on New Year's Eve

Many families plan big celebrations for New Year's Eve, and many kids may think they've outgrown spending such a social evening with their parents. Separating from parents and individuating socially and physically is a key part of growing up, and planning for New Year's Eve together can provide an opportunity to strengthen the foundation for sexual health and safety of your children.

School aged kids may be old enough to celebrate with sleepovers at a friend's house. In this case, make sure you have accurate information about the host parents plans for the evening. Know every person who will be in the house and spending the night, both kids and adults. Parents hosting the party may be inviting their adult friends to spend the night as well as the friends of their children; that could potentially expose a vulnerable child to an intoxicated stranger.

We strongly recommend that sleepovers operate under a "check your cellphone at the door" rule. Even when you've reminded your children how much your family values honesty and respect, sleepy kids facing peer pressure can forget your values quicker than you can say "Instagram".

Teens may want to emulate the celebrations they see in the media. Like prom night, New Year's Eve can be a night where high expectations for a special occasion can cloud judgment. If your teens will be going out, make sure they have a plan for the evening, have them share the plan with you and set up a check-in mechanism so you can be sure that they stick to the plan.

Remind teens that your family's values include staying sober, and making conscious, deliberate decisions about sexual activity. The pre-party or big-date discussion might also include a reminder about the physiology of sexual arousal; arousal is an autonomic response to stimulation and a sign that a growing body is working properly. Arousal is *not* an invitation or permission slip to be sexually active. This is also the right time to

remind your child that your family's values do not include pressuring anyone into any sexual act.

People of all ages may use New Year's Eve as an excuse to drink alcohol. A toast may be considered socially acceptable for adults, but for kids it's still underage drinking with all of the risks that it implies. Parents can be criminally liable for enabling underage drinking and your pre-party chat should remind your child about the stupidity of getting into a car with someone who has been drinking.

New Year's Eve is a good time to introduce a promise to your teen that they can call you to come pick them up, any time, any place with no questions asked until the next morning. This promise can be life-saving; one bad judgment by your teen or one of their friends may place them in a place or situation that they need help getting out of. If that happens, you want to be a phone call away; your teen should not have to weigh the dangers of your temper against the dangers of their situation.

The littlest children will be at home, but thought needs to be given to their wellbeing if parents plan to celebrate. Demonstrate your value of placing your children first on your priority list by having a designated parent-in-charge so a child will always have access to a sober, attentive parent when they need one. If you plan to go out, be sure to thoroughly vet the baby sitter and leave hard and fast rules about visitors, celebration and kids' bedtimes. Get accurate information about what's happening in your house by calling home; enjoy a video-chat and send New Year's greeting to your kids!

The best recipe for growing sexually safe and healthy kids is based on parents sending their kids out in the world filled with accurate information wrapped up in that family's values. Special events when a child might think that every day rules don't apply present an important opportunity for parents to have their say, and now is the time to prepare for your child's New Year's celebration.

Rosenzweig is also the author of [The Sex-Wise Parent](#) and [The Parent's Guide to Talking About Sex: A Complete Guide to Raising \(Sexually\) Safe, Smart, and Healthy Children](#). For more information, read her [blog](#), follow [@JanetRosenzweig](#) on Twitter.

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