

Why Avoid Sleepovers?

Should parents have sleepovers for their growing children? Are there any challenges in having sleepovers? Truly, I am amazed how sleepovers have become so popular during the past decades. I also observed that mostly, it is the children who request sleepovers, not the parents. Then parents give in with the view that there is no harm in having the sleepover. They are little children.

Let me remind us about two important principles. 1) It is in the home where children are to feel most loved and secure. 2) It is the parent's full responsibility to provide a healthy growth development plan and environment for their children.

With that in mind, we must understand that young children—from birth to age twelve—are very impressionable and are developing life-long patterns of behavior which become the foundation for their character. So, parents are to guard every minute of their children's lives to ensure that their mind and senses are not cluttered with negative ideas and emotions. It is also my view that teenagers are full of energy and creativity, yet vulnerable and can be innocently exposed to environments that can adversely change their lives forever. It is my view that sleepovers, no matter how well they are organized, are one of those negative gateways for learning destructive behaviors.

Before I go further, I want to share what I would consider as positive points for sleepovers. In the article, "Sleepovers—Bad Idea or No Big Deal?" the writer Shelby Abbott states: "It can be fun for your kids to build deeper and more meaningful relationships with their friends. Time spent in someone else's home can foster an environment of great friendship building. Being in someone else's home can also help kids learn a different family culture or environment. This helps to make your kids more well-rounded, knowledgeable, and empathetic." Also note this important point he makes: "The pros, however, kind of end there. And honestly, the positives mentioned do not only happen in the context of a sleepover. Those benefits can happen in different environments that don't require the vulnerability of staying overnight."

Then, what would be a negative point for having sleepovers. I must first quote from the same author. Here are his words: "We'll start with something minor. Your kids are probably going to stay up late and eat a bunch of junk food, which may make them sick to their stomach and guarantees they will be grouchy the next day. Other more likely outcomes are the mischievous actions, words, and attitudes kids tend to shift toward when unsupervised for long periods. They could watch something on TV you may not approve of. They could be exposed to pornography, alcohol, foul language, or even unsafe circumstances. None of which they are equipped to handle because of their immaturity as children. Even worse, they could be abused in some form or harmed in a way that could affect them for years to come."

The challenge with sleepovers, especially if the number of guest children greatly exceeds the number of your children, is that it is exceedingly difficult to effectively manage all of them. Little children (those up to 12 years) require hands-on supervision. Eyes and ears must always be vigilant. Although teenagers do not require hands-on supervision, still they need distant supervision and can be more reckless and challenging.

Interestingly, while researching on the topic, every article I read had one common reason they opposed sleepovers. They all had a negative personal experience with sleepovers. One author said: "While many kids go to sleepovers that are not a problem, it only takes one incident to ruin a child's innocence. That was the case for me."

Another point is that of being exposed to seeing and hearing destructive information via technology. Shelby Abbott states: "I have just found that sleepovers tend to leave children vulnerable and put them in situations that perhaps they are not ready to deal with when it comes to technology and being exposed to things their little eyes should not see."

In a 2017 Chicago Tribune article by Danielle Braff entitled, "Sleepovers a thing of the past? It's a trust issue, parents," make an interesting point: "Sleepovers were a "rite of passage" during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s for middle-class Americans, but today many parents are rejecting them, fearing sexual abuse and loss of control . . . The classic sleepover: pizza followed by ice-cream sundaes, prank phone calls and movie upon movie until you finally crash as the sun starts to rise may have seen better days. And while there are no statistics about the number of slumber parties today compared with a decade or two ago, all you have to do is Google "sleepovers" to be bombarded with advice on how and why to avoid sending your child to them."

Sleepovers can really impact a growing child negatively and damage him or her for life. If you are considering a sleepover, note my closing points: 1) It is exceedingly difficult to control the movement and actions of all those attending the sleepover. 2) Also, often negative habits are learned during sleepovers and the parents may not be aware of them until it is too late. 3) If you are deciding to have a sleep over for your children make sure it does not include both sexes. This situation may produce sexual overtones that can leave the child confused or wounded. 4) Ensure that there are sufficient supervisors that will remain awake 24/7, sufficient bathrooms, ample sleeping areas to prevent proximity and unnecessary touching. 5) A sleepover will be exposing people in your children's private spaces and times that can be very detrimental and life changing.

Parents, if you are considering a sleepover for your children, please examine your own motives. Is it to boost your own ego? Are you foolishly giving in to your children's wishes and will you regret your decision in years to come? Are you using the sleepover to make up for your own lack of parenting skills and time spent with your children? Please remember, you have really nothing to lose by not having a sleepover.

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