



The WHALE Study Family Newsletter

March | 12th | 2021

Maybe it's them; maybe it's the pandemic

Our families (you) shared in our weekly surveys that your children have been experiencing increased symptoms of anxiety during the pandemic. In our [last newsletter](#), we provided resources specifically on managing back to school anxiety. This week, we wanted to provide some reassurance that many of these anxious responses may also be "pandemic normal."

Comparing your child(ren)'s behavior to traditional expectations of children their age may not be appropriate for the current context. Just as they were beginning to learn the rules of the world, those rules changed. Young children these days are experiencing the same pandemic we are struggling to navigate as adults -- but they have fewer skills to express themselves, less control over their lives, little previous life experience to draw upon, and no outside network to text for validation of their experiences. Can you even imagine?

So perhaps some of the behaviors you may be noticing -- extra clinginess, delays or regression on developmental milestones (potty training, sleeping through the night or independently), additional whining or fighting with siblings -- may be their response to stress. We typically think about anxiety in children as responses to irrational fears or exaggerated reactions to typical stressors. But the pandemic brings appropriate fears and uniquely stressful times. These behaviors may be less about your individual child, and more so a reflection of the world they live in.

Circumstances will change. Their behavior may or may not. When conditions are more stable, we'll all be in a better position to assess and address. While there is finally light at the end of the tunnel, we are *still in a pandemic*. We know you are doing the best you can in these trying times. Let's trust that your children are doing their best, too. If they are seeking extra reassurance, maybe it's not the worst thing to provide that to them in this hectic time, and maybe you'll even have a happier and healthier child in the future because you hugged them more now.

So, trust your instincts as a parent. Connect with your child, comfort them, hug and hold them tightly -- for their sake and yours -- and appreciate that being together *is* helpful, healing, and may be exactly what you both need.

Check out the page below for [parenting](#) and [community](#) resources!

Click [here](#) to tell us what topics you want covered in future newsletters!



Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: whalestudy@unc.edu | 919-914-0588

Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab_unc](#), Instagram: [circlelab_unc](#), and [Facebook](#)!

Newsletter written by Dr. Ilana S. Berman and formatted by Dominique N. Martinez

FUN FACT AND REMINDERS

Fun science fact: When you help your child calm down from being upset, it can also help you calm down and regulate your emotions and physiology. This process is called co-regulation, and can be beneficial for both of you. Common strategies for co-regulation include labeling your child's emotions, modeling coping strategies, and providing a supportive environment.

****Reminder:** Please refer your friends if they have a 4-6-year-old and you think they would be interested in participating in the WHALE study. For every eligible family that you refer to us, you will receive \$10!

PARENTING + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

Parenting Resources:

- Click [here](#) and [here](#) to read about co-regulation
- Click [here](#) for validation on being "good enough"
- Click [here](#) to read about how to support your child's mental health during the pandemic
- Click [here](#) for tips to keep the calm at home

Local Centers for Child and Family Services:

- Click [here](#) to learn more about Hope Services 4 U (Raleigh)
- Click [here](#) to learn more about the Center for Child and Family Health (Durham)

HOUSING

- [Durham Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#)
- Eviction Information
 - 216-965-5095
- [Durham Rescue Mission](#)
 - 919-688-9641
- [Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness](#)
- [Urban Ministries of Durham](#)
- [Durham County Social Services](#)
- [Orange County Social Services](#)
- [Wake County Social Services](#)

FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Wake County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Durham County Public Schools Free Meals](#)
- [Orange County Food Resources](#)
- [Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools](#)
- [TABLE](#)
- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [Wake County Food Resources](#)
- [No Kid Hungry NC](#) - Text FOODNC or COMIDA to 877-877 to receive information about 3 drive-thru or pickup sites with meals for kids closest to you

HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
 - 919-929-7122
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
 - 919-403-9425
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
 - 919-828-7501
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
 - 866-935-4783 (call) , 919-504-5211 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
 - 919-967-8844 (Crisis Unit, Chapel Hill)
 - 1-877-967-8844 (Mobile Service)
- Suicide prevention lifeline: 1-800-272-TALK
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463

CHILDCARE

- [NC Hotline for Critical Workers Seeking Child Care Options](#)
- [Covid Childcare Co-op Creator](#)
- [Covid Urgent Childcare](#)
- [Child Care Services Association](#)

LEARNING

- [Scholastics Learn at Home](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [PBS Kids](#)
- [CDC Tips for Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)