

The WHALE Study Family Newsletter

April | 23rd | 2021

Helping or hurting?

All parents experience being frustrated with their child. No caregiver wants to intentionally hurt their child, and ideally, we want the most effective method to teach them how to behave and follow our guidance.

Corporal punishment or physical discipline, hitting, spanking, pinching or slapping is not a recommended form of discipline. Physical discipline might not be bad for *every child* - for instance, many people parenting today were spanked as children and feel we've turned out fine. However, research shows that, *on average*, it is associated with increased aggression and mental health problems in children later on. Even if it stops behaviors in the short term, in the long term it is ineffective and not healthy for children.

Consistent limit setting, starting at a young age, and non-physical discipline (like time-outs) are better at getting kids to behave long term. However, being consistent about rules or using time-outs is hard. It can feel unnatural overwhelming. Even when it's hard, being calm and consistent is important. Kids aren't developmentally able to understand the context for why caregivers use physical discipline. Instead, they experience one of the people they love hurting them.

Physical punishment is often used to teach children lessons, but they can actually be learning something different. They may be learning that violence can solve problems; that it's okay to hurt those you love, or to love people who cause them pain; or learning to listen only because they're scared of you. But submission is not a substitute for a good relationship. Fortunately, there are alternatives to give you hope!

What you can do: Positive and effective strategies for discipline include praising behaviors we want to encourage and ignoring "bad" behaviors.* Much of children's "inappropriate" behaviors are developmentally appropriate attempts to fulfil a need (independence, control, connection), but you can teach them better ways. Your child is capable of having conversations about their emotions and reactions. Children are more likely to listen if they feel heard *and* have other opportunities for positive attention. Kids hear and remember what you say, even if it doesn't seem like it. Making time for conversations is most effective when you're both calm.

Managing *your* emotions shows them how and can help you avoid reaching a breaking point. One effective strategy for getting through frustrating moments is a time out (for your child, or for you). This newsletter won't radically transform your parenting, but we hope you're inspired to explore the resources below. Working with a therapist or taking parenting classes *can* address family conflict. It shows your strength as a caring parent willing to work toward a peaceful home.

Check out the page below for **healthy discipline** and **community** resources!

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

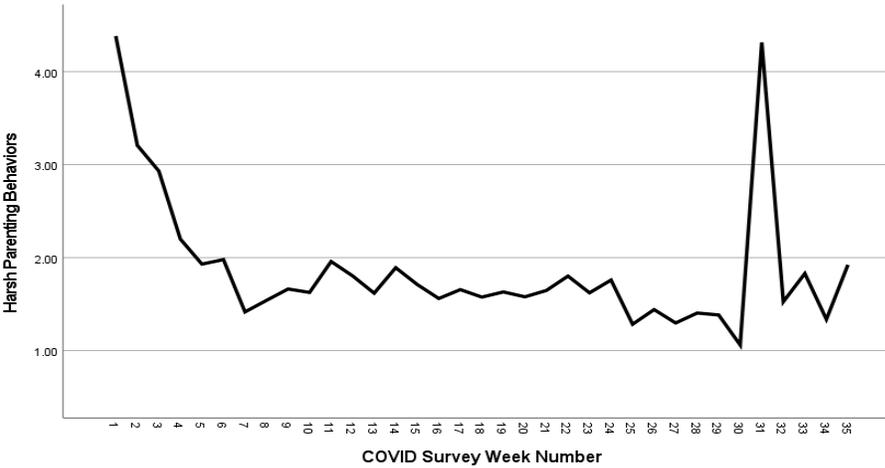


Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study or the COVID-19 situation. Staff can be reached by call, text, or email: whalestudy@unc.edu | 919-914-0588

Find us on Twitter: [@circlelab_unc](https://twitter.com/circlelab_unc), Instagram: [circlelab_unc](https://www.instagram.com/circlelab_unc), and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/circlelab_unc)!

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

WHALE Participants' Harsh Parenting Practices During the Pandemic



This graph shows the *average* of our WHALE participants' (your) responses about harsh parenting on the weekly COVID-19 surveys. This has not been an easy experience for families!

*It sounds counter-intuitive, but if a child is exhibiting a behavior to get attention, and they don't get it, they will *eventually* stop the behavior after a(n exhausting) period of time of *consistently* not getting any attention (including negative attention, like yelling!) for those actions. We do not recommend ignoring physically dangerous behaviors. **This strategy is best practiced with the guidance of a trained therapist** who can help you problem-solve those extra difficult moments and support your family through the process.

HEALTHY DISCIPLINE + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- [StopSpanking.org](#) has fantastic resources on effective peaceful discipline and free community support groups. They currently have a special event for FREE [parenting webinars](#) if you register by April 24th
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) for more quick reads on the risks of physical discipline
- Click [here](#) for a quick 25 tips and [here](#) for more about responsive (not reactive) parenting
Click [here](#) for a printable of positive parenting reminders - Great for the fridge
- Click [here](#) to learn about Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) if you are seeking effective support

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](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741 741

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](#)