


The WHALE Study Family Newsletter

April | 9th | 2021

I screen, you screen, we all screen in quarantine



Managing screen time has been a challenge for all caregivers during the pandemic as media can provide opportunities for learning, connection, entertainment, and distraction. Caregivers have to determine what is the right amount for *their* child. Taking an overall well-being approach can be helpful. Media use may be excessive if it has started to interfere with family interactions, other forms of play,

What does science say about screen time? **Research does not suggest screen time causes the development of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).** ADHD is a developmental disorder that requires management throughout life. Symptoms may involve *multiple* environmental factors on top of genetics. Having your children watch television will not result in a lifelong disorder. However, media may be overstimulating for children and “too much” time with electronics can contribute to symptoms of inattention, particularly because screen time limits opportunities for other forms of developmentally appropriate play: activities that encourage creativity and require sustained attention.

When watching television or playing video games, our brains release the neurotransmitter dopamine in response to these activities that give us immediate satisfaction. Over time, people can develop a higher tolerance to dopamine. That means they can require more stimulation to feel that same exciting effect! It’s important to limit screen time to balance out these quick gratifying experiences with activities that require more patience and dedication to achieve results.

In the pandemic, children are already less exposed to social and growth opportunities. Set aside several periods of time each day for non-media time. Speaking of, are you modeling healthy screen time? Whether it’s intentional “screen-free” times during the day or at dinner, children can benefit from undivided attention from you, and you’d also have guaranteed time without texts or emails!

Turning off the screens can sometimes lead to arguments especially since some media and games are specifically designed to be habit-forming. It’s not uncommon for highly competitive kids to become frustrated or upset about their game performance or having to stop before they reach their goals. It may help to set expectations in advance: Let children know how much time they’ll have for the media activity and, if possible, give a warning before time is up. Incentives can also help. For example, let your child know if they turn off the screen (or allow you to) without whining when told, they can earn the same amount of screen time the next time/day; and if not, they will have less time at the next opportunity. *(Continue reading on pg. 2)*

Check out the page below for **screen time** and **community** resources!

This week’s newsletter was inspired by an anonymously-submitted caregiver suggestion. 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

If your child becomes upset, remain calm and stick to your limits. If your child is arguing with you, you can turn off the screen, remove access to the device, and walk away. Children may also benefit from having several smaller sessions of screen time to practice complying with limits. For children who complain of boredom, suggest alternatives or remind yourself that boredom is a gateway for creativity.

Keep in mind, symptoms of inattention or irritability may arise for a variety of reasons including anxiety and depression. If you are noticing these symptoms in your child, it can be important to check in with them about their emotional experiences. Even if they are not able to verbalize their concerns, paying attention to what's going on in their lives and making time to listen can make a big difference.

REMINDERS

****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!

SCREEN TIME + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

Screen Time Resources:

- Click [here](#) and [here](#) for resources about screen time from sites with ADHD expertise
- Click [here](#) for a podcast on screen time
- Click [here](#) for a podcast on cutting screen time
- Click [here](#) for informational responses about screen time
- Click [here](#) for a great resource on screen time during the pandemic
- Click [here](#) and [here](#) for resources on managing children's media

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](#)

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

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

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](#)