



## The WHALE Study Family Newsletter

October | 22<sup>nd</sup> | 2021

### Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes in Family Structure

Adult relationship decisions often impact the children's lives. In a [previous newsletter](#), we emphasized the importance of your role to facilitate positive co-parent communication for shared goals to benefit the child. But what about the child's perception and feelings about these family dynamics?

Common thoughts children will have with any big change (e.g., break-ups, dating) include *"Is this my fault? How will my life be different now?"* You can help facilitate transitions by helping them understand the situation using words and concepts they can recognize. They'll want to know what might change or happen next. Predictability is important! Will their routines change? Letting them know what to expect allows them to mentally and emotionally prepare and be able to ask more questions.

Children often wonder if life changes are because of something they did even if that makes no sense to us as adults. Developmentally, at this young age, children are learning about consequences of their actions (both natural consequences and punishments/rewards from adults). Helpful reassurances for children may include: *All grown-ups have disagreements. It's grown-ups' jobs to take care of themselves and you (the child).*

With change also comes loss. Children may talk about the person they see less (or not at all anymore). While it may be painful for you, allowing them to share their positive memories and sometimes remaining connected to that person can help them cope.

When a parent is dating, young children may also wonder how new people will affect their own relationship with you. Some children may become jealous of new partners because it means sharing your precious time and attention. Be sure to reserve special time for them, and conversations about their feelings. Some kids may be as excited as you! They may be eager to form attachments with new people. Let your child know what this person's role will be (e.g., "friend," co-parent, still figuring it out). Sometimes these partners don't stick around for very long - and that's okay. If things aren't going well, it does not benefit the child to stay in a relationship with a partner only because your child likes them. Your wellbeing will benefit their wellbeing.

(Continued on page 2)

Check out the page below for **family changes** 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](mailto: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

For any life transition, share the “child version” of what’s happening and what to expect, welcome their feelings and questions, and continue to be there for them. Together, you’ll shape a “new normal” for your family.

## 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! Email us at [whalestudy@unc.edu](mailto:whalestudy@unc.edu) or call/text us at 919-914-0588 with their information.\*

## FAMILY CHANGES + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- How to introduce new person/people: [WikiHow](#), [Parents.com](#), [BetterRelationships](#)
- How to navigate new house/family dynamics for cohabitating: [RaisingChildren.net](#) , [FamilyLives.org](#), [Very Well Family](#).
- [Sesame Street](#) is a great source for age-appropriate content about family changes
- Separation and divorce from [Scary Mommy](#) and [Feminist Books for Kids](#)
- Blending families from [Parent.com](#) and [Feminist Books for Kids](#)
- (**Pro-tip:** If you search YouTube, you'll likely find FREE read-along videos of popular books! For example, [Read Brightly](#) its own channel)

### 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](#)