



Dramatic December? Surviving Holiday Gatherings with Young Kids

The WHALE Study
Family Newsletter
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December is often a time of joy - and sometimes chaos. Schedules are disrupted, families are gathering, and sometimes that brings drama. Here we outline some ways to manage these challenges with minimal impact on your kids.

Some family members may not share the same values as you. If there are rules or expectations for children in your house that you fear others will not uphold, consider sharing these expectations with other adults ahead of time.

Explaining how your rules represent your values, and may impact your children, can help others accept them and respect what you'd like to happen while visiting their home.

If you have disagreements with other adults (about politics, parenting, etc), try your best to have these "adult conversations" out of earshot of your children, especially if they are provoking high emotions. It's okay to ask your children for private time for adult conversations. It's also okay to tell the adults you'd like to pause the conversation and continue it at another time - if you want (e.g., after bedtime, or on the phone). Be mindful of what you share with your children; be prepared to find support from adult friends. Even if you strongly disagree with your child's grandparent, your child is entitled to their own relationship with them.

Remember, when children's routines (eating, sleep, environment) are disrupted, they can become more irritable! New and exciting activities are likely taking priority. And that's okay; sometimes it's okay to indulge (especially if you're allowing it for yourself!) It's unrealistic to expect everything to remain the same, especially if traveling or having guests or gatherings. Your kids deserve a bit of a break, too. To set your family up for success, prepare your children for what to expect (where you're going, for how long). Remember, even if it's a family tradition, big gatherings may be relatively new for young children whose last few holidays were in a pandemic. Be honest with yourselves and your families on how many gatherings you can emotionally manage; it's okay to say no.

Children's holiday excitement and irritability can be challenging for parents. This is a time you may need to gather extra patience and be lenient with them. Those moments of frustration and irritability are opportunities for you to teach them *how* to manage these big emotions. You can label them (For example, "*You seem frustrated*" as they are yelling and stomping), validate them ("*I know it's hard to leave Auntie's house after having such a great time*"), and remind them of the context ("*but it's time for us to say goodbye to your cousins and go home now*").

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Check out the page below for [holiday](#) 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](#)!

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You can also offer redirection and remind young children about future opportunities for connection, (“We can give your cousins a video call tomorrow. Would you like that?”)

Remember that if you stray from routines, your children will require some time to transition *back* to routines by January. Ensure they are prepared for the expectations and get plenty of sleep. More than anything, we hope you find moments of connection and rest this winter season.

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 or call/text us at 919-914-0588 with their information.*

HOLIDAY + COMMUNITY RESOURCES (CLICK BLUE LINKS)

- [Collection of other articles](#) about surviving parenting children with ADHD during holiday chaos
- More info from Healthline.com on “toxic” [families](#) and [parents/co-parents](#) and how to cope
- Lighthearted [Bustle](#) post on managing toxic families this holiday season

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](#)