


The WHALE Study Family Newsletter

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What to do when you are blue



In a [previous newsletter](#), we've talked about what to do if your child is feeling sad or depressed, but what about you? The National Academy of Medicine estimates 15 million children each year grow up with a parent suffering from *major depression*, meaning a severely low mood that persists for a long period of time that affects how you think, feel, and behave. And many more children live with a parent whose symptoms of depression are left undiagnosed or untreated, including: persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities that used to bring pleasure, difficulties sleeping, changes in appetite and low energy. These symptoms can be brought on by stress related to a parent's job(s), finances, limited time to spend with family or other valued activities, or other pressures.

Parents experiencing depression tend to show more irritable or sad emotions while also not showing positive emotions, which can make it challenging to provide warmth (e.g., praise), be involved (e.g., attending school meetings, helping with homework), monitor behavior (limit setting), and engage in effective discipline (e.g., consistently follows through with reasonable consequences).¹ Yet these behaviors have been shown to be important for kids' development! Additionally, depressed parents experience more distress during interactions with their children than non-depressed parents.² Understandably, when it's hard to manage and respond to emotional experiences (also known as "emotion regulation"), parents may struggle to *model* effective coping skills for their children.³

While it is really hard to parent effectively while depressed, there are many ways to help. Generally, children don't need happy parents, but they do need parents who try their best to explain what is happening and help them understand. Researchers have found that helping the child recognize that they [the child] are not to blame for their parent's behavior during depressive episodes is very important for the development of resilience.⁴ Additionally, studies have found that children who developed a strong positive self-concept were also likely to display resilience over time.⁵ A positive self-concept involves developing strong beliefs about their abilities (e.g., believing they are capable of achieving anything), beliefs about control (e.g., believing they are okay with not always having control), and beliefs about the importance of certain goals (e.g., believing if they work hard enough, they can achieve their dreams). These beliefs are the mark of a resilient and adaptable child.⁶ Building a positive self-concept is one of many ways you can help your child thrive, even when you are not feeling your personal best.

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

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

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Please reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The WHALE Study.

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

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But parenting without depression is definitely easier - if you are experiencing depression, know that there is hope and that you are not alone. Depression *can* be treated and help is out there. If you are struggling, a medical doctor or a local mental health professional can provide a safe space for you to talk about your feelings and help find a treatment plan that is best for you and your family. Parents who work to recover from depression have an easier time raising healthy resilient kids!

1. Lovejoy, M. C., Graczyk, P. A., O'Hare, E., & Neuman, G. (2000). Maternal depression and parenting behavior: a meta-analytic review. *Clinical psychology review*, 20(5), 561–592. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0272-7358\(98\)00100-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0272-7358(98)00100-7)
2. Maternal depression and child development. (2004). *Paediatrics & child health*, 9(8), 575–598. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/9.8.575>
3. Gentile S. (2017). Untreated depression during pregnancy: Short- and long-term effects in offspring. A systematic review. *Neuroscience*, 342, 154–166. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroscience.2015.09.001>
4. Beardslee, W. R., & Podorefsky, D. (1988). Resilient adolescents whose parents have serious affective and other psychiatric disorders: importance of self-understanding and relationships. *The American journal of psychiatry*, 145(1), 63–69. <https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.145.1.63>
5. Tiet, Q.Q., Bird, H.R., Hoven, C.W. et al. Resilience in the Face of Maternal Psychopathology and Adverse Life Events. *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 10, 347–365 (2001). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1012528910206>
6. Gordon, K. A. (1996). Resilient Hispanic youths' self-concept and motivational patterns. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 18(1), 63-73.

CAREGIVER RESOURCES

Quick-Reads:

- [Parenting Through Depression – How to take care of yourself and your family](#)
- [How to Parent While Depressed](#)
- [A Depressed Mom's Tips: What You Need to Know in Order to Help](#)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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](#)
- **Social Services by County:** [Durham](#), [Orange](#), [Wake](#)

HEALTH & SAFETY

- [Compass Center for Women and Families](#)
 - 919-929-7122 (24/7 Domestic Violence Hotline)
- [Durham Crisis Response Center](#)
 - 919-403-6562 (24-hour Help Line)
- [InterAct Family Safety and Empowerment Center](#)
 - 919-828-7501 (Main office)
- [Orange County Rape Crisis Center](#)
 - 866-935-4783 (call), 919-967-7273 (text)
- [Freedom House](#)
 - 866-275-9552 (Orange/Person County Mobile Crisis)
 - 919-957-7386 (Durham Women’s House)
 - 336-599-8366 (Roxboro)
- [Suicide & Crisis Hotline](#): call or text 988
- [Hope4NC Helpline](#): Call or text “hope” to 1-855-587-3463
- [24/7 Crisis Text Line](#): Text HOME to 741741

FOOD & GROCERIES

- [Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina](#)
- [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.
- **Free/Reduced Price School Meals:**
 - [Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools](#)
 - [Durham County](#)
 - [Wake County](#)
- **Food Resources by County:** [Orange](#), [Durham](#), [Wake](#)

CHILDCARE

- [Childcare Payment Assistance](#)
- [CCSA Child Care Scholarship Program](#)
- [NC Pre-K](#): state-funded, part-day preschool program
- [Durham Pre-K](#): 1-833-773-5338
- **Child Care Subsidy Programs:**
 - [Alamance County](#): 336-570-6532
 - [Durham County](#): 919-560-8300
 - [Orange County](#): 919-968-2000
 - [Wake County](#): 919-212-7000
- [Child Care Referral Central \(CCRC\)](#)

More community resources can be found on our website: circlelab.unc.edu