



# Sesame Family Newsletter

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more

March 28, 2007



## For Parents

### [A Sense of Humor? Ha!](#)

by *Jordan Brown*

For April Fools' Day, a dad explores the world of silliness.

### Featuring:

- [A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Supermarket](#)
- [Runaway Car!](#)
- [Controlling the Craziness](#)
- [Laughing At vs. Laughing With](#)

> [Read this issue](#)



**Games and More:**  
**Get Silly with Elmo**  
Celebrate April Fools' Day with the world's silliest monster!

- [Tickle Elmo](#)
- [Chicken Dance Elmo](#)
- [Elmo's Silly Mixed-Up Farm](#)
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

### From the Workshop



[A charitable gift to support Sesame Workshop will go a long way...](#)

### Sesame Store



[Get Sesame Street ringtones and wallpapers for your cellphone at Sesame Street Mobile!](#)

[Read all about it!](#)

## [A Sense of Humor? Ha!](#)

# A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE SUPERMARKET

**Going to the supermarket with children can be a joyful laugh-fest, a frustrating hassle, or a total nightmare.**

With my kids, Olivia (age 2) and Finn (age 6), it is sometimes a combination of all three. In honor of April Fools' Day, let me share a true story that happened last week. Olivia and I had just picked up Finn from school, and were heading home when I realized that we needed milk, pasta, and a few other staples. Aargh! As much as I just wanted to get home, I knew I had to bite the bullet and drag the kids into a nearby store. Announcing that we'd be stopping by the supermarket on the way home produced very different reactions.

"Yay! We go shopping!" exclaimed Olivia.

Finn was, um, less supportive. "No, Daddy. We are NOT stopping ANYWHERE!" my son declared. "We're going home! NOW!"

The grouchy, bossy response came as no surprise. I knew that Finn was exhausted after a full day of kindergarten, and wanted nothing more than to "veg out" at home. Hoping to sweeten the deal, I reminded the kids that they could ride around the supermarket in one of the special "car" shopping carts. These carts, shaped like a truck, have a seat that can hold both children, and even has two steering wheels. Not above shameless bribery, I also promised them that if they behaved in the supermarket, they could pick out ice cream for dessert. Finn rose to the occasion, and promised to go with the flow.

When we pulled into the supermarket parking lot, the silliness began. I opened the backdoor to take Olivia out of her carseat. She gave me a look that said, "Ha! I pulled a fast one on you!" Following her eyes down to her feet, I saw that, sure enough, she had once again managed to take off both her shoes and socks. And, she was wearing the socks on her hands, "Look, Daddy, puppets!" We both laughed, and I said, "You are my silly girl." Launching into one of my favorite games, I then said, "Don't worry, Olivia. I won't tickle you." Pause. Of course, I tickled her. Mercilessly. She giggled with delight. With a grin, I reassured her. "No, no, really, no more tickles." Double pause. Then we locked eyes before I playfully went in for the kill and shouted, "TICKLE!!!"

To add to the mayhem, Finn unbuckled his seatbelt, and hopped over to the third row in our car. Naturally, I pretended to panic, acting as though I had no idea where he could have possibly gone. I asked Olivia where Finn went,



## HUMOR

[A look at humor through the years.](#)

## THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

[A father loves to make his 1-year-old daughter laugh.](#)

## CELEBRATING SILLINESS

[Making the most of April's Fools' Day with your family.](#)

and she just giggled. Finally, I walked around to the back of our car, popped open the door, and Finn yelled, "SURPRISE!" We were only in the parking lot and everyone was having a great time. We were living proof of comedian Victor Borge's observation that, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." Or, in our case, three.

As we headed into the supermarket, I hoped that everyone would be in as good a mood exiting the market as we were entering it.

---

## RUNAWAY CAR!

**Upon entering the store, I was relieved to see one "car" shopping cart left.** The kids hopped in, I buckled their "seat belt," and we meandered our way through the aisles. Well, "meandered" is perhaps the wrong word. More like "careened." Fueled by their laughter, I zoomed the cart through the aisles at a questionable speed. I prayed that we wouldn't crash into a pyramid of soup cans, or a senior citizen (or, worse yet, a pyramid of senior citizens)! We zipped through the aisles, as I quickly added the necessary items to our cart. In the produce section, to keep things light, I let Finn and Olivia take turns weighing heavy things. I challenged them to find and weigh the biggest eggplant or watermelon they could find.

At the bakery counter, the man took FOREVER to slice my fresh bread. I worried that the kids would get antsy, and I would soon have a meltdown on my hands. (There's nothing worse than having to abandon a cart full of groceries to take a screaming kid out of the store. Um...uh...so I've heard.)

As we waited, Finn came up with a fun way to pass the time. From the front seat of his "car," he reached out and grabbed a nearby shelf. He slowly pulled the cart forward a few feet. The sensible grown-up in me almost started to scold Finn for misbehaving. But seeing that he was actually being careful about where the car was headed, I pretended to not notice them moving away. I looked upward, and said a casual singsong, "La, la, la..." Then I looked down in mock shock to "discover" that the cart was "gone." I playfully shrieked, "Aaaah! Runaway car!!!" Olivia and Finn howled with laughter. Olivia called out, "Again and again!"

In retrospect, it was a good thing that the bakery counter guy took such a long time. We were able to play "Runaway Car" about six more times. Luckily, after all that silliness, I was able to calm the kids down quickly. Since we only had



### MAKING SENSE OF HUMOR

A father nurtures his sneaky 3-year-old's sense of humor.

### LOSING IT

Insanity is hereditary--you get it from your children.

a handful of items to buy, I told them we could get in the Express Line. Finn, ever a fan of trains, commented, "Most of the time, we have to take the Local Line. This time we got to take the Express!"

---

## CONTROLLING THE CRAZINESS

**While the supermarket silliness was fairly controlled, I realized that taking two overtired kids to shop was playing with fire.** Sometimes the outcome isn't so cheerful. Not too long ago, the kids and I were going to Finn's after-school Taek Won Do class. We stopped off at a fast-food restaurant, so my son could use the bathroom to change into his martial arts outfit.

In the bathroom stall, the silliness began. Finn started to pull his shirt off, and then left it stuck over his ears. "Look, Olivia!" he said, "I'm a baker's man!" Then he and Olivia started dancing around. Noticing that the start of his class was approaching, I urged them to stop being silly, and concentrate on getting dressed. Apparently, Finn thought I said, "Ignore any serious requests and start flushing the toilet incessantly just to make your sister laugh hysterically." Well, chaos and time-outs ensued. I felt my blood pressure rise. Finn had crossed the line between having a good time and being disrespectful and rude. He was also setting a bad example for Olivia. Eventually, I got him dressed and we got to class on time. But not without tears. I wondered if and how I could have handled the situation better.

Before Finn's class began, I decided to ask his Taek Won Do teacher "Master Kuns" for advice on what to do when my son when gets super silly. Knowing that Master Kuns skillfully uses humor in his lessons, I thought he might have a trick or two to offer. As part of learning martial arts, he often emphasizes the importance of self-discipline, and showing respect for parents. On the spot, Master Kuns said that in class that day he would have the children play a game about silliness. This is how the game worked: When he told the class to, "Be silly!" they could be as wild and crazy as they wanted, provided they didn't accidentally hurt anyone. When he said, "Stop!" they would have to freeze, stop laughing, and give him full eye contact. Finn and his classmates had a great time playing this game. They were able to be silly when he gave them permission--but then, at the drop of a hat, many of the kids were able to demonstrate self-control. Master Kuns urged the students to remember what they just did--be able to calm down when their parents or teachers ask them to.



### THE JAHNNA & MALCOLM SHOW: NOT-SO-READY-TO-WEAR

It takes stamina and a sense of humor to play the "dressing game."

### COMIC RELIEF

From the mouths of babes come the funniest stories.

### COMIC RELIEF

White skies, boink beds and a bird that can read.

---

## LAUGHING AT VS. LAUGHING WITH

**As Olivia and Finn grow up, my wife Ellen and I hope they continue to develop their senses of humor, and spread good humor to others.** In particular, we want to encourage them to realize that mistakes are a natural part of life, especially when trying to learn something new. By laughing at our mistakes, we can learn to not take ourselves too seriously. On the other hand, as parents, we want to help our kids learn that laughing *at* other's mistakes is cruel and can hurt feelings. But even this topic can be dealt with humorously. When I was a kid, and a friend teased me in a good-natured way, he would often tag on: "Don't worry. I'm not laughing at you. I'm laughing near you."



Wishing you a fun-filled April Fools' Day loaded with laughs!

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

---

## Weekly Trivia

**"When people ask for a thumbnail sketch of what Sesame Street is, I always say it's a comedy show that teaches.**

---

## FROM THE WORKSHOP

In 1968 when it began, it was one little street. Now Sesame Street reaches around the world to over 120 countries. Your gift of support will allow Sesame Workshop, the non-profit organization behind Sesame Street, to use media for what may be the greatest good, helping children around the world reach their highest potential.

[Support the Workshop today!](#)

---

## COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

[Tell us what's on your mind.](#) Kindly note that we are unable to respond to every email received.

## ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit educational organization making a meaningful difference in children's lives around the world. Founded in 1968, the Workshop changed television forever with the legendary Sesame Street. Today, the Workshop continues to innovate on behalf of children in 120 countries, using its proprietary research methodology to ensure its programs and products are engaging and enriching. Sesame Workshop is behind award-winning programs like Dragon Tales and Sagwa, The Chinese Siamese Cat, Pinky Dinky Doo and ground breaking multimedia productions in South Africa, Egypt and Russia. As a nonprofit, Sesame Workshop puts the proceeds it receives from sales of Sesame Street, Dragon Tales and Sagwa products right back into its educational projects for children around the world. Find the Workshop online at [www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)

Sesame Workshop

[Click here to unsubscribe](#)