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Sesame Family Newsletter Archive

News and Notes from the Workshop
Posted by Jordan Brown

SESAME FAMILY NEWSLETTER---First Playdates
September 24, 2003

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***FINN'S FIRST PLAYDATE

Ever since my 2 1/2-year-old son Finn was about 6 months old, my friend Franklin has shown a talent for making him smile and giggle. To this day, one of Finn's favorite photos shows Franklin's "funny face." In this picture, Franklin's eyes are open super wide, and he's frowning in an exaggerated ghoulish expression. Franklin's talent for entertaining toddlers comes from playing with his niece, Ally. Franklin and I recently decided it was high time for Ally, age 3 1/2, to meet Finn. So, when Ally's parents asked Franklin if he could baby-sit one afternoon, we decided that this was as great opportunity for a playdate.

We made a plan to meet at our local Starbucks. Although Finn is, of course, too young to drink cappuccino, he does enjoy running around and climbing on the comfy furniture. Starbucks also provides opportunities for Finn to watch other kids, taste decadent baked goods, and escape to the bathroom for a quick diaper change. Plus the surroundings are familiar. In the past, Finn and I have met my friend at Starbucks so many times that whenever we pass one, he points and says, "Franklin."

Thinking about Finn's first playdate, I wondered: "Would he and Ally get along?" "Would the age difference be a problem?" Since my son is a "late talker," and Ally is incredibly verbal, I was curious if they would be able to communicate. To learn more about how children make friends at various ages, I read these articles from Sesame Workshop.

FRIENDSHIP: BIRTH TO TWO

At around 6 months, babies become capable of recognizing age-mates, and take great pleasure in seeing and being with other age-mates.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=966>

FRIENDSHIP: TWO TO FIVE

Two year olds engage in parallel play.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=967>

FIRST FRIENDSHIPS

Your child's early alliances are precious. Do you know how to help make them happen?

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=842>

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***WHEN FINNIE MET ALLY...

The morning before the playdate, I told Finn that we were going to see Franklin (big grin from Finn) and we were going to meet his niece a little girl named Ally.
Here's how things went that morning...

Finn and I arrived a little early and grabbed a table. When Franklin got there with Ally, Finn and I were looking at a homemade book of some of Finn's favorite things: bubbles, trains, bagels, water fountains, bananas etc. When Ally saw Finn's stuffed Ernie toy and his photo of the moon, she put these ideas together and started to sing Ernie's song from Sesame Street, "I Don't Want to Live on the Moon." Finn smiled, recognizing it.

After a little while, Finn started to get restless. He quietly said to me, "outside." I tried a few distraction strategies, but nothing worked. Soon, Finn was repeatedly yelling, "Outside! Outside! Outside!" like a participant in a prison riot. People at nearby tables were shooting us dirty looks. Before things got too hairy, Franklin suggested that we walk to his apartment. As soon as we got outside and Finn was free to run, he was a charming little boy once again.

As we walked into Franklin's apartment, I felt certain that Finn and Ally's playtime would go well. This confidence came from reading the following article about the secrets of successful playdates.

RECIPE FOR A GREAT PLAYDATE

An ages and stages guideline for creating a perfect playdate for your little ones.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=16460>

***SESAME STREET MUSIC WORKS

At Franklin's apartment, Finn and Ally first had fun jumping on the couch, and nibbling some grapes, pretzels, and cheese sticks. Finn watched in delight as Franklin put Ally on his shoulders, then looked around the room befuddled, asking, "Where's Ally? Where's Ally?"

Finn's eyes lit up when he saw Franklin's electronic piano. He couldn't wait to play it! Franklin helped him turn it on then let Finn plunk the keys and make sound effects. A few minutes later, Ally wanted to play, too. She announced, "My turn!" and gently moved Finn away. Finn responded by getting a bit teary. Franklin and I quickly exchanged looks. Uh-oh!

Franklin quickly suggested, "Hey, you can take turns!" For a few minutes, Finn played the high notes, while Ally played the lower ones. Then Ally got an idea. She found some chopsticks in Franklin's kitchen, and used them to play drums on an ottoman near the piano. Finn noodled on the piano, as Ally played the ottoman. Harmonious cooperation had returned.

Soon after their jam session, I could tell that Finn was getting tired. Within the hour, he'd be ready for a nap. Clearly both kids had enjoyed creating music together. The next time Finn and Ally get together, they might have fun playing music games on the computer. This could provide more practice with taking turns and sharing. On his own, Finn has had fun creating his own Sesame Street opera on the computer, and playing other online games in the Music Zone. Imagine how much fun these games could be with a playmate!

SESAME STREET MUSIC ZONE

<http://www.sesameworkshop.com/gwr?s=nl&t=111041>

***PLAYDATES OF THE FUTURE

Whenever I visit our local bookstore or playground, I marvel at how adept some parents are at bonding with each other, exchanging phone numbers, scheduling playdates, and so on. Since most of the parents

or caregivers in these situations are women, I sometimes feel like the odd-man-out. Maybe it's a "guy thing" or perhaps my somewhat shy personality, but I have found it difficult to help Finn make young friends in our neighborhood. Fortunately, in a week, Finn starts nursery school two mornings a week. I hope to make some new friends and have the chance to arrange some playdates for Finn.

For more on the topic of getting together with other parents, take a look at this article.

LET'S GET TOGETHER

Parenting is a satisfying job but sometimes it can be lonely. Here's how to find support and friendship.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=782>

What activities might Finn and his future playmates enjoy in our home? I found a bunch of fun ideas at Sesame Workshop:

BUBBLES OF FUN

Bubbles, bubbles, everywhere!

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=7367>

IMAGINARY BALL

Add a dose of imagination to a game of catch and watch what happens!

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=18147>

DOUGH IT

Roll, knead and squeeze out the fun with dough.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=81181>

CHALK CREATIONS

Let's talk chalk! Imaginative games for sidewalk drawers.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=7400>

FRIENDSHIP COOKIES

Bake heart-shaped cookies with your child and her best buddy.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=17990>

***SEALED WITH A KISS

Although Finn was definitely ripe for a nap, he didn't want his first playdate to end. While their piano-drum collaboration had a rocky start, by the end, they made beautiful music together. Franklin and I were delighted that they enjoyed each other's company. We took lots of photos, so even though Ally's family doesn't live in our neighborhood, we'll keep these happy memories alive. When it was time to go, Finn gave Franklin and Ally big hugs and kisses.

***SESAME STREET BEAT

In an upcoming episode of Sesame Street, the wind blows away Zoe's tutu, and it ends up stuck in a tree! Telly and Zoe work hard to try and get it down. Super Grover even comes to lend a hand and, of course, ends up getting stuck in the tree along with the tutu. Others around the neighborhood try and help, but to no avail.

Who can get Zoe's tutu unstuck? Check your local PBS station to find out when this episode is airing where you live. Then join your Sesame pals for some online fun.

PBS KIDS: WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=9697605>

THE NUMBER OF THE DAY IS 3

Color in three happy honkers in this printable.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.com/gwr?s=nl&t=3092>

ZOE'S SILLY SEASONS

Find all the silly things with Zoe in each season of this interactive game.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=111660>

SOUNDS AROUND TOWN

From an ice cream truck to a roller skating elephant, help Telly and Baby Bear identify sounds around town in this new interactive game!

<http://www.sesameworkshop.com/gwr?s=nl&t=10413670>

How old is Zoe?

- A. 5
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 7

If you said 3 (C), you're right! Her best pal, Elmo, is also 3.

Have a great fall!

Jordan Brown
Sesame Workshop

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