



Sesame Family Newsletter

January 17, 2007

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

[Go to Sleep...](#)

PLEASE!?!

by *Jordan Brown*

A drowsy dad struggles with his daughter's sleep troubles.

Featuring:

- [Sleeping Through the Night...](#) (Yea, right!)
- [A "Big Girl Bed" and Other Strategies](#)
- [They Say I'll Miss This Some Day](#)

> [Read this issue](#)

Games and More:

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- [Goodnight Grover](#)
- [Elmo's Cloud Game](#)
- [Sleeping Dog](#)
- [Connect the Dots](#)
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

From the Workshop



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Street musical revues.

📖 [Read all about it!](#)

Go to Sleep... PLEASE!?!

SLEEPING THROUGH THE NIGHT...(YEA, RIGHT!)

My wife Ellen and I are fast asleep when my 2-year-old daughter Olivia calls out, "Daddy, I need you, a hug! " Before hurrying to her room, I glance at the clock--it's midnight.

I find her standing next to her bed, squeezing two dolls. I scoop her up, give her a tight hug, and coax her back to bed. "Time to go back to sleep, honey," I say, kissing her forehead. "You've got your babies with you." To sweeten the deal, I add, "Don't worry. I'll sit right in the chair until you fall asleep." Bleary-eyed, I sit in the chair near her bed, and start to doze off myself.

But Olivia doesn't go for it. Seconds later, she bolts out of bed and runs over to me. She sweetly says, "Daddy. More hug." I sigh, and wonder if I should be tough and say something like, "No, Olivia. If you want me to stay in your room, you will HAVE to get into your bed." But eager to return to sleep myself, and avoid a tantrum that might awaken my 5-year-old son in a nearby room, I cave and rest Olivia's head on my shoulder, wrap a blanket over us, and together we drift off to Dream Land. I awaken about an hour later, gently transfer my sound-asleep daughter back into her bed, tuck her in, and finally return to my own bed.

This situation wouldn't have been a problem if it didn't happen again three more times before sunrise. Each time Olivia has a special request. "Daddy, I need milk!" "Mommy, I need my `spoony"! (a favorite measuring spoon that comforts her) "Daddy, sing `Edelweiss!" and so on. Whenever it is my turn to go to her room, I take the line of least resistance, and give her whatever she wants, praying she'll go back to sleep. At some level, I know that I am encouraging bad sleeping habits. I should really help her learn to go back to sleep on her own, I think. But I desperately need to get some rest or I'll be a total zombie the next day. And, to be honest, having a cute baby snooze peacefully on your shoulder is one of life's greatest pleasures.

Whenever I hear a parent gloat about how their children have been sleeping through the night since they were newborns, I am deeply envious and curious. What is their secret? How do they do it? Has my daughter passed the point-of-no return, or is there still hope she might someday stay asleep until the morning?



SLEEP

[Our experts explain how sleep issues change during childhood.](#)

'ROUND MIDNIGHT

[How to help your child to get to sleep and stay asleep.](#)

YOU'RE GETTING SLEEPY?

[How do you get your child to go to bed on time?](#)

LITTLE NIGHT OWLS

[Bedtime strategies from A to Zzzzzz.](#)

DAD'S BEDTIME STORY

[My night-nights aren't the same as Mom's.](#)

A "BIG GIRL BED" AND OTHER STRATEGIES

After chatting with other parents and our pediatrician, as well as consulting some books and Web sites, we found a number of solutions for Olivia's sleep problems. Our pediatrician, suggested something called the "Ferber method," which involves putting babies of six months or older in their bed awake, and let them fall asleep on their own, even if they cry. According to this strategy, if the baby doesn't fall asleep in ten minutes and is still crying, the parent should return to the baby's room to soothe the child briefly, and then leave the room again for another ten minutes. This ritual is repeated until the baby eventually falls asleep himself. We tried this technique with Olivia, and it worked sometimes. Ellen and I would lie in bed, hold hands and grit our teeth, as our dear daughter cried out for us. But then eventually, she would fall asleep. Sometimes when we tried this method, Olivia became so upset that she vomited in her crib. (Wow, I wonder, as we clean up. We just let our beloved baby scream until she puked her guts out--does life get any better than this?) Later, I read more about the Ferber method, and discover that it is not that uncommon for babies to vomit occasionally as they learn how to put themselves to sleep. Even so, we decided to explore some other solutions.

A more effective strategy that has helped Olivia's sleeping problem was switching her crib for a "big girl bed" (a box spring and mattress). Around the time that Olivia turned 2, we wondered if she might get less panicked in the middle of the night (and vomit less!), if she felt that she could get out of the bed if she wanted to, rather than being confined to a crib. It turns out that this tactic has been very successful. In general, when she wakes up in the middle of the night, her calls for help are less frantic. If she feels she needs us, she usually walks calmly into our bedroom, and asks for help. One downside of the "big girl bed" is that we cannot try the Ferber method when she awakens. Basically, if we don't go to her, she hops out of bed and comes to us.

Some parents I spoke with described the importance of ritual and routine when trying to get their children to fall asleep. For example, if every night a child knows that after dinner, he or she will take a bath, get into pj's, read a bedtime story together, and hear a lullaby--the child will become primed to doze off when the time is right. Other parents warned against the dangers of letting our little one stay up too late and become overtired. Another parent joked, "You really ought to stop feeding her cappuccino before bedtime."

One friend suggested limiting Olivia's daytime naps. In



SOOTHING STRATEGIES
[How readers comfort their kids during the middle of the night.](#)

TAMING NIGHT TERRORS
[How to cope in the moment and how to prevent them.](#)

particular, she advised that we don't let her nod off anytime after 3:00 PM. That way, she'll be good and tired when its bedtime. The wrinkle in this otherwise fine suggestion is that Olivia is often in the car after 3:00, accompanying her brother to one of his post-school classes. The vibrations of the car encourage her to close her eyes. Invariably, she catches a few zzzz's during this time. From the driver's seat, I shout, "Wake up, honey!" but often she's out like a light.

Several baby books praise the virtues of finding Olivia a "lovey"--an object that can comfort her in the middle of the night. Many children, including Olivia's older brother Finn, have a favorite security blanket, or a beloved stuffed animal. Even though Olivia has a menagerie of stuffed animals and several super-soft blankets, Ellen and I have had zero luck helping Olivia find a special "lovey."

THEY SAY I'LL MISS THIS SOME DAY

Ellen and I are deeply grateful to have such a vivacious, bright, and healthy daughter, but we sometimes wonder if Olivia will EVER sleep through the night. Then we remember that our son Finn also had difficulty sleeping uninterrupted when he was her age. Eventually, once he gave up daytime naps, he instantly became a member of the Look-at-Me-Sleep-Through-the-Night Club.

I'm sure that once Olivia gets into a groove with the Sand Man, part of me will be relieved, and will look forward to more sleep myself. Sleep deprivation is definitely a drag. But another part of me will miss the ritual of those sweet middle of the night calls, "Daddy, I need you, a hug!"

Here's wishing sweet dreams to you and yours.

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop



Weekly Trivia

How many pairs of eyes does Sesame Workshop use for their Muppets each season?

- A.100
- B.113
- C.194
- D.219

Pencils down! The answer is D. 219 pairs per season. That's a lot of eyes on you!

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.

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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