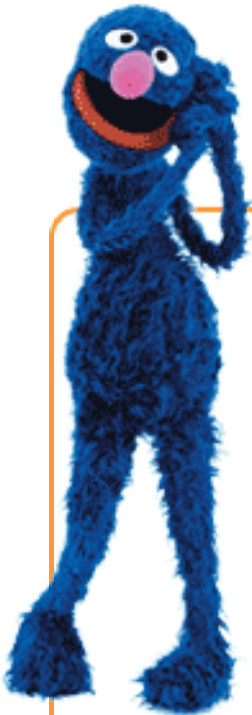




# Sesame Family Newsletter

October 11, 2006

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



## For Parents

[Handling Temper Tantrums](#)  
*by Jordan Brown*

Cooling off your kids before they melt down.

**Featuring:**

- [Tic...Tic...Boom!](#)
- [Ten-Second Cool Down](#)
- [Other Tricks of the Trade](#)

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**Games and More: Grover's Birthday Celebration!**  
Celebrate this supermonster's birthday with these fun games.

- [Let's Groverize](#)
- [Dress Grover Party](#)
- [Greetings From Grover](#)
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

### From the Workshop



[How can the world's most-watched children's television show bridge cultures while remaining socially relevant?](#)

### Sesame Store



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

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**Cooperation is key for kids with asthma.** If your child has asthma, and nebulization is part of your control routine, you may want to know more about helping your child sit still through this treatment. For tips and advice, visit [Everydaykidz.com](#), a place to learn more about your child's asthma.

Read all about it!

## Handling Temper Tantrums

# TIC...TIC...BOOM!

"I am **NOT** having a tantrum, Daddy. YOU are!!!"

These charming words were uttered by my 5-year-old son Finn last week in the middle of a big department store. How could I have forgotten one of the cardinal rules of taming tantrums? Never say the word "tantrum" to your kid when he's having one. It always backfires.

Actually, I should have seen it coming. Finn was exhausted after a long day of kindergarten, and he had just given his all at a martial arts class. But I made the fatal error of squeezing in "just one more errand" before returning home. Now I was facing the consequences of this decision. Fortunately, my wife Ellen was also in the store ("Oh, could you hear us on the other side of store, honey?!"), and together we helped calm down our son.

I find coping with tantrums one of the most challenging aspects of parenting. Even watching one of my children's friends have a tantrum can be upsetting. At such times, I wish I could magically press a "reset" button on the child to get them back to normal.

Three years ago, when Finn was about 2 and a half, he experienced one of his worst meltdowns on his first day of preschool. Ellen and I had taken a number of steps to prepare our son for this event. In the weeks beforehand, we had visited the school together with Finn to meet his teacher. At that meeting we discussed what Finn could expect on the first day. Ellen and I also explained that one of us would stay with him until he felt comfortable. Finn seemed nervous but excited. When the day arrived, however, all of our preparations seemed to go out the window. At the start of the day, when all of the other children sat around the snack table chatting away, our dear boy was huddled UNDER a nearby table, screaming "Noooooo!! Nooooo!!!" -- refusing to come out. Of course, he did--eventually. And little by little, over the next couple months, Finn became completely comfortable at his preschool, and his daily tantrums there stopped.

A tantrum on the first day of school wasn't a complete shock. But sometimes tantrums seem to erupt out of nowhere. You might be at the supermarket, or the playground when suddenly your kid--who had been happy-go-lucky moments earlier--suddenly starts freaking out, pulling out all the stops to make both of your lives miserable. More often than not, all this kicking and screaming happens in a public place when you are in a rush to get somewhere. And, of course, to make you feel extra pathetic as a parent, there always seem to be other super



## ANGER

[A look at anger in children through the years.](#)

## SELF-CONTROL

[How children learn to manage their impulses.](#)

## AFTER-SCHOOL MELTDOWN

[When good kids let off steam.](#)

angelic children nearby.

Several years ago, our pediatrician reassured us that tantrums are a natural part of childhood. She encouraged us to read some articles, and talk with other parents to find ways of preventing and defusing tantrums.

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## TEN-SECOND COOL DOWN

**Finn, now 5, recently started taking classes in Hapkido, a type of martial arts.** Each week, in addition to learning physical self-defense techniques (kicking, punching, balancing) and ways of handling bullies, the instructor has Finn and his friends practice taking a "Ten-Second Cool Down." Here's how it works:

Finn and one of his classmates sit opposite each other and one of them pretends to start an argument. His classmate might say something as simple as, "Hey, you took my truck!"

Finn might reply, "No, I didn't. You put it down."

His classmate might escalate the argument by responding, "Give it back NOW. It's mine!"

Then Finn is expected to hold up his hands in front of him, and say, "STOP! I'm too angry to talk right now. I need to take a cool down." He then counts to ten.

In Hapkido class, this works like a charm. The intention, of course, is for Finn to use this technique outside of class, whenever he feels frazzled. However, in real life, when Finn gets very frustrated or angry, this strategy is unfortunately the last thing on his mind. As mentioned earlier, the tricky part of getting him out of a tantrum is getting him to admit that he's having one. And dealing with a strong-willed child who is screaming or kicking is bound to raise your own blood pressure. So, when Finn starts to meltdown, the secret is for ME to take a Ten-Second Cool Down. That way I can offer Finn the best help to get him back on track. (To use an analogy--you know how the flight attendants on the airplanes tell you that, in the event of an emergency, you should first put on your own oxygen mask before you fix your children's? Well, the same goes for tantrums. It is not possible to help your child cool his temper until you are level-headed yourself.)

When Finn has a tantrum, I'm usually able to control my own temper. I do all I can to figure out what's causing the tantrum: *Is he hungry? Jealous of the attention I'm giving his*



### SELF-CONTROL: TWO TO FIVE

[Preschoolers are better at reigning themselves in.](#)

### THE DANGEROUS EMOTION

[The effect on children when a grown-up loses his temper.](#)

### ANGER

[Our experts explore how children cope with angry feelings.](#)

### THE DANGEROUS EMOTION

[Ways to express anger without harming your child.](#)

*baby sister Olivia? Overtired?* But let's be honest. There have been times when Finn has really made my blood boil. On occasion, I've responded to his shouting by shouting myself. This only throws fuel on the fire, and makes us both feel worse. When this happens, I immediately apologize to Finn for losing my temper, and calm him down. Later, when we have both calmed down, I make a point of apologizing again to Finn for losing my temper. I reassure him that I love him so much, and remind him that even mommies and daddies sometimes get upset and need to calm down.

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## OTHER TRICKS OF THE TRADE

**Every tantrum situation is different, so I find it helpful to try a variety of strategies.** Here are some that have worked at one time or another with my children.

\* **Get a Kid's-Eye-View** - So many decisions are made for children by their parents and other caregivers (e.g., what and when to eat, bedtimes, when playdates are possible), which results in children sometimes feeling powerless. When frustrated and overtired, Finn will sometimes say, "No, I'M going to tell YOU when it's time to go home." When this happens, I try to validate his feelings ("I know you'd like to play more..."), and suggest something else fun that he can do at home. ("We can go home and play on the computer, and make smoothies!")

\* **The Power of Distraction** - If you can anticipate when your child might start to get upset or throw a fit, try to shift the focus. My daughter Olivia, a toddler, loves to stand on a stool and play at the bathroom sink. She'll pour small cups of water back and forth, and make little splashes. Unfortunately, we can't always indulge her when she says "Water Game." Ellen and I know that just telling her "You can play Water Game later" won't work, and she'll start to protest. But if we're crafty and happen to mention "Elmo video," she'll often forget about the water game, and happily sit in front of the TV with us, and watch her favorite red Muppet sing and dance.

\***Give Enough Warning** - To help Finn prepare for a transition in activities, I find that giving a five minute warning works. He recently learned how to ride his bicycle without training wheels--something he is very proud of. So, once Finn starts pedaling, it is hard for him to stop. About five minutes before he'll have to stop, I'll say something like "Five more minutes left, then we have to go in for dinner." I know that once the five minutes have passed, Finn will



**TIME-OUT TACTICS**  
[Should time-outs be your first choice when disciplining a preschooler?](#)

**FIVE DISCIPLINE DILEMMAS**  
[How to scold children without getting into a battle of wills.](#)

**TURKEY, TRIMMINGS AND....TANTRUMS?**  
[Here's how to help your child avoid those holiday meltdowns and have a stress-free season.](#)

invariably request, "A bonus minute, please!" And, of course, I'll give it to him.

Good luck taming those tantrums!

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

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## Weekly Trivia

### Did you know?

Grover shares his birthday (October 14) with Roger Moore (of James Bond fame), designer Ralph Lauren, and Mahatma Gandhi? It's true. No wonder Grover's such a peaceful and stylish adventurer!

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## FROM THE WORKSHOP

Sesame Workshop, the organization behind Sesame Street, and an international team of Muppets tackle the world's most challenging issues for 3- to 5-year-olds, including: the stigma of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, post-conflict resolution in a divided Kosovo, and access to school for kids in Bangladesh where many start working when they are 5 years old. **THE WORLD ACCORDING TO SESAME STREET** a presentation of Participant Productions, explores the dramas, challenges and complexities behind producing international versions of the beloved Sesame Street.

[Check local listings on PBS](#)

[Support the Workshop today!](#)

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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](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)

Sesame Workshop

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