



Sesame Family Newsletter

November 1, 2006

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

Listen Up!

by *Jordan Brown*

Be careful what you say. Children are always listening.

Featuring:

- [Olivia Learns a New Word](#)
- "Donkey Sad"
- Sneaky Praise
- A Big Brother's Influence

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Games and More:
Happy Birthday, Cookie Monster!
Yum!

- [Check Out Cookie](#)
- [Cookies Can't Laugh](#)
- [E-mail Cookie](#)
- [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!](#)

Everydaykidz.com - A Proud Sponsor of Sesame Street



Asthma Care at Daycare. If your child has asthma, you'll want the staff at your child's daycare facility to be aware of his or her health needs. [Everydaykidz.com](#) is a place where you can go to learn more about your child's asthma.

Read all about it!

Listen Up!

OLIVIA LEARNS A NEW WORD

Last Monday morning, nothing seemed to go right. My pulse quickened when I glanced at my watch. In just 45 minutes the school bus would arrive at the end of our street, and I was neck-deep in chaos. My 5-year-old son Finn was getting dressed at a glacial pace, distracted by every toy in sight. Meanwhile, my 2-year-old daughter Olivia had somehow unscrewed the toothpaste while I was busy packing Finn's lunchbox. By the time I discovered her, it was too late. Bright blue gel was dripping down her shirt. "Pretty!" she announced gleefully. Olivia naturally pitched a fit when I took away the tube, and changed her shirt.

To make matters worse, the oatmeal and turkey sausages on the stove were burning. As I attempted to salvage breakfast, Finn ran over to announce, "Daddy, Satchmo pooped in the kitchen!" It wasn't our dog's fault. With all the distractions, I had completely forgotten to let our furry pal outside to relieve himself. Then, reaching under the sink for paper towels and the disinfectant spray, I smacked my head! Before I could stop myself, I exclaimed a four-letter word that I won't repeat here. Knowing that Olivia mimics almost everything she hears, I prayed she hadn't overheard what I'd said.

No such luck. For the next few minutes, Olivia pretended to hit her own head, and repeated that four-letter word over and over. Hoping not to reinforce this new word, I didn't make a big deal about it, and tried to distract her with other pursuits. Of course, Finn found the whole situation hilarious. And, frankly, had I not been in the thick of it, I probably would have laughed, too.

In any case, by some miracle, we made it to the bus stop on time. On my way back home, I thought about the song "Children Will Listen" from the 1987 Stephen Sondheim musical INTO THE WOODS. This song reminds us that even though our children often seem to ignore us, more often than not, they are acutely aware of what we say and do. That's why, whenever possible, my wife Ellen and I try to be on our best behavior, knowing that anything we say might soon come out of our children's mouths.



LIKE PARENT, LIKE CHILD
If you want your child to have a healthy self-esteem, start with your own.

SESAME SOLUTIONS
Best-selling authors of "How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk" offer communication advice to Sesame Street parents.

HEALTHY FOR LIFE
Nurturing your child's growing body and mind.

BRAVA, MAMA!
I sing out of tune, but my son listens anyway.



"DONKEY SAD"

At the end of the long day of kindergarten, Finn sometimes unwinds by watching a children's video. The other night, as Ellen was taking care of our bills, and I was cleaning up from dinner, Finn was watching the movie "Shrek" and laughing out loud. At times, he would run over to Ellen or me to recount the action. Meanwhile, Olivia was having a great time in the living room building tall towers, then knocking them down, not focusing on Finn's video playing nearby. Then the phone rang. I ran to answer it, looking over at Olivia every few minutes to make sure she was safe, and still engaged with her blocks.

When the call ended about ten minutes later, I went to the refrigerator to get Olivia a cup of milk. As I was pouring her drink, Olivia ran into the kitchen upset. When I asked what was wrong, she said, "Donkey sad." I consoled her, but was confused by what she was talking about. Then it hit me that she was referring to something from Finn's "Shrek" video. One of the characters is named Donkey. Even though she wasn't actually in front of the TV, she had overheard a heated scene, and had become upset.

Fortunately, Ellen and I were able to quickly cheer her up, and get her back to playing with her blocks. But we were reminded once again that even when young children appear to be focused on one activity, they often absorb other nearby sights and sounds. A fleeting moment in a TV news program or detective show can easily provide fodder for nightmares. Realizing this fact, Ellen and I wait until the kids are asleep in bed before we watch any programs that might contain disturbing sights and sounds.

To learn more about how TV and movies can affect children, I consulted the Sesame Workshop articles listed on the right.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING?

[The tide of violence on TV is rising, and new research points to growing dangers for young viewers.](#)

ANYTHING GOOD ON TV?

[The new rating systems won't tell you how to find quality TV programs for your preschooler, but this article will.](#)

PREVIEW THE SHOW BEFORE YOU GO

[Can your child handle the movie he wants to see? Here are 3 ways to check out a movie in advance.](#)

SNEAKY PRAISE

The other day Finn told me, "That's a BAD word. I don't like when you say it."

It's not what you're thinking. This time, I hadn't hit my head, nor had I accidentally cursed. What had ruffled my son's feathers was that I had used the word "proud." Finn had been doing a great job riding his bike without training wheels, and I had gushed with pride. While all children seek the approval of their parents and other caregivers, kids like Finn sometimes become self-conscious when adults praise their efforts. Aware of this, Ellen and I will sometimes



THE BEST KIND OF PRAISE

[A smart way to encourage](#)

acknowledge Finn's accomplishments discreetly, so that he can "accidentally" overhear us. We'll often do this in the car, knowing that Finn pays close attention to what Ellen and I say to each other.

[your child's efforts.](#)

A BIG BROTHER'S INFLUENCE

Olivia loves to imitate Ellen and me--singing songs, making funny faces, flushing the toilet, and so on. But the person she loves to imitate most is Finn. I try to take full advantage of this whenever possible. At breakfast, when Olivia is too distracted to eat and rejects all my efforts to shovel in some food, I'll whisper to Finn, "See if you can get Olivia to eat her eggs. I know if you do it your way, she'll want to do it, too." Most of the time, Finn rises to the occasion and skillfully gets her to focus on eating. Of course, he doesn't do it in a "boring" adult way. ("Come on, Olivia, PLEEEASE have some eggs.") No, he comes up with silly routines and moves. "Do this, Olivia!" he'll say, lifting his arm. "Now, do this!" he'll say, puffing his cheeks. Just when I think that Finn has forgotten about the task at hand, he'll steer his silliness toward the task at hand, and say, "Do this!" -- and Olivia will gladly take some bites of her breakfast.

At other times, when Finn uses "bathroom language" that many 5 year olds unfortunately find hilarious, I remind him that Olivia listens to everything he says. I suggest that instead he should try to teach her some of the great things he knows about sharks, for example, rather than teaching her words that might get her in trouble.

Like little sponges, our children take in all that we say and do. So, enjoy this time of fun and learning! Just be sure to watch those words.

Jordan Brown

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SIBLINGS

[Our three experts explain how sisters and brothers help each other grow.](#)

BABY TALK

[How your older child helps teach the baby to speak](#)

Weekly Trivia

The number of digits on both of Cookie's hands plus the number of digits on both of Big Bird's hands equals _____:

- A. 12
- B. 14
- C. 10
- D. 16

The answer is (D) 16. Cookie has ten fingers, and Big Bird has six.

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

Sesame Workshop

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