

Around the World

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The Whole Child

## Sesame Family Newsletter Archive

News and Notes from the Workshop  
Posted by Jordan Brown

SESAME FAMILY NEWSLETTER---Making Sense of Humor  
March 31, 2004

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\*\*\*MY SNEAKY SON

My 3-year-old son Finn loves acting sneaky. Every day, soon after sunrise, his wily ways begin. When I tell Finn that it's time to wake up Mommy for work, he grins devilishly and slyly crawls down the hall to our bedroom.

When he is just a few inches from my wife's head, he screams, "It's morning time, Mommy!"

Pretending to be shocked, my wife Ellen screams "Oh my gosh, you scared me, Finn!"

Laughing hysterically, he says, "Again, again." Finn proceeds to "surprise" Ellen by "waking her up" 7 or 8 times. Each time, our son's delicious laughter fills our home.

Knowing that Finn gets a kick out of playing tricks, you can imagine his reaction when I told him about April Fool's Day. A child after my own heart, I told Finn some stories about my favorite childhood April Fool's Day pranks. I recounted how I put Saran Wrap on the toilet seat, and mixed green food coloring in the milk carton.

As it turns out, telling my son about April Fool's Day was a MEGA-mistake. The misguided mischief began just after Finn and I baked chocolate chip cookies. I was about to clean up the mess when I noticed that Finn was quietly playing with trains on the kitchen floor. I grabbed this opportunity to take a quick shower. (Ah, the things I took for granted before parenthood.)

No sooner had I put shampoo in my hair when I heard Finn calling for me. He came running into the bathroom, out of breath, carrying a bag of flour--an EMPTY bag of flour! He was covered from head to toe. Beneath his flour-covered face, I could make out a wild grin, and he was laughing. . I chuckled, too, until Finn said the words that nearly gave me a heart attack: "Daddy, Daddy! I did an April Fool's on your computer!" Realizing I had left my laptop on the kitchen counter, I leapt out of the shower, and dashed to the kitchen. HOLY YOU-KNOW-WHAT!!! I had no idea that a 5-pound bag of flour could cause that much damage.

Before I tell you the gory details of what happened next, I must point out one important fact. Tomorrow is April Fool's Day. Guess what? That last paragraph starring Finn, my computer, and a bag of flour

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didn't actually happen. I totally made it up. April Fool's, dear reader!

While looking for articles about humor on Sesame Workshop, I found these funny essays written by two parents who use humor to spread joy in their family.

#### THE JOY OF COOKING

What's cooking? Don't ask!

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=711>

#### GROSS-OUT!

Road Kill Bingo is a gross-out but it keeps the kids quiet.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=959>

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

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

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=74380>

#### \*\*\*THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

As parents, Ellen and I make a point of nurturing Finn's sense of humor. We realize that much of his day involves learning to follow the rules of the adult world. It can be very stressful, and we don't want him to take himself too seriously. One way we encourage this is by acting silly ourselves on occasion.

This winter, my son and I created this ridiculous game we play in the snow. My son insists that we play it exactly the same way each time.

First, I make a snowball and hold it proudly in front of me. With pride, I announce, "THIS is the kind of snowball that doesn't go away."

Finn grins and says, "Maybe Daddy takes a nap."

I yawn, close my eyes, and pretend to snore. Finn smashes my snowball, and shouts, "Daddy, Daddy!"

I wake up, rub my eyes, and say, "What? What?!"

Finn says, "Your snowball!"

I look him in the eyes, and calmly say, "Don't worry, it's still here." After a moment, I look down at my glove, and shriek, "Aaaaaahhh!"

For a 3 year old, this is great comic material. At age 2, Finn guffawed when he hurled food off his highchair. At one, my son cracked up at peek-a-boo. Who knows what will make him laugh when he's 4 or 5? Take a look at this Workshop article to learn how sense of humor changes as children get older.

#### SENSE OF HUMOR

Laughter helps children cope. Our experts look at the lighter side of growing up.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=738>

#### \*\*\*HUMOR AS A SURVIVAL TOOL

Humor not only spreads joy in our lives, it can also solve problems. When Finn was a little over two years old, he rejected his stroller. When we tried strapping him in, he kicked and screamed until we took him out. My wife and I grew exhausted as we found ourselves carrying Finn more than we liked. We kept telling him that he was a "big boy" and he could walk for himself. Some of the time he would do this, but most of the time not. Then, about a month ago, I found a silly solution that has worked beautifully ever since. We pretend that we're flying in a helicopter, or riding a motorcycle--any mode of transportation BUT walking.

With this new playful approach, getting Finn to walk is a breeze. We both make loud motor sounds, as we zoom along the sidewalk. Playing into Finn's sneaky side, I stumbled on the idea of telling him NOT to

push certain buttons on our pretend vehicles. Of course, all I have to do is tell him NOT to push the "Extra Fast" button, and you know what he does. Same goes for the "Emergency" button, the "Super High" button, and the "Wiggly Giggly" button (don't ask).

In short, when Ellen and I find ourselves in a struggle with Finn, we often take our cue from Mary Poppins. We dig into our imaginations, and try to find the silly spoonful of sugar that will help the medicine go down.

For years, Sesame Street Magazine has invited parents to share stories about funny things that their children did and said. Some of these stories now live on the Workshop's Web site.

#### COMIC RELIEF

From the mouths of babes come the funniest stories.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=978>

#### COMIC RELIEF

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

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=1010>

#### COMIC RELIEF

Form of...ice cream! Shape of...a triangle! Kids' perspectives transform the mundane into the mirthful.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=1112>

#### \*\*\*SESAME STREET MUSIC WORKS

Most of the time, Finn's charming personality brightens our home. This, of course, is not the case when we try to awaken him after a nap. For these tricky tasks, we play his favorite songs to get him going. We've found that picking songs that match his mood sometimes helps. On Sesame Street Radio, Finn enjoys "The Grouch Song," which begins...

If you wake up in the morning mean and grumpy  
And you frown at ev'rybody that you see  
If you like your oatmeal nice and cold and lumpy  
Then you're a grouch like me!

For this song, and other silly classics, such as "The Honker Duckie Dinger Jamboree," go to:

#### SESAME STREET RADIO

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=105602>

#### \*\*\*THE LAST LAUGH

As Finn grows older, I hope that he'll continue to value humor, and seek out silliness. I can only imagine the kind of practical jokes he'll pull on us when he's ten. I'm sure his April Fool's Day pranks will become more elaborate and devious. If he ever reads this column, I'm in serious trouble. I'd better hide the flour...

Hope your April Fool's Day is filled with laughter!

#### \*\*\*SESAME STREET BEAT

In an upcoming episode of Sesame Street, Telly and Baby Bear are playing basketball when Telly accidentally hits Baby Bear in the nose. Gina takes a look and says Baby Bear will be just fine. But Telly is petrified of playing with Baby Bear because he's afraid he will hurt him again.

Will Telly ever play with Baby Bear again? 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 4

How many apples does Cookie have in this printable? <http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=3095>

ELMO GOES TO THE DOCTOR

See Elmo's doctor visit come alive in this interactive storybook!  
<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=108867>

SOUNDS AROUND TOWN

Hit the keys on the keyboard to hear some neighborhood sounds with Telly and Baby Bear!

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

Did you know?

Telly is president of the Triangle Lover's Club, Club 40 and the Bobketeers? What a resume!

Jordan Brown  
Sesame Workshop

Comments? Questions? Tell us what's on your mind. Kindly note that we are unable to respond to every email received.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=11155037>

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