



Sesame Family Newsletter

October 26, 2005

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

Planning a Balanced Day

by *Jordan Brown*

Keeping kids active, but not overloaded

Featuring:

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- Bagels 'N Books
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Games and More: School Days

Sesame friends think school is cool.

- [Elmo's First Day of School](#)
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From the Workshop



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Street musical revues.

📖 [Read all about it!](#)

Planning a Balanced Day

RALLY THE TROOPS

Last week, my wife Ellen had to travel in Europe on business for several days. As part of her birthday gift, I encouraged her to take a mini-vacation in Paris the weekend before her business trip began. This meant that for almost a week I was on round-the-clock "daddy duty" for our 4-year-old son Finn, 1-year-old daughter Olivia, and dog Satchmo. During weekdays, when Finn is in preschool for six hours a day, this situation is no big deal. After dropping him off at school, Olivia naps for a couple hours while I catch up on email, get some writing done, and clean up the apartment. When she awakens, we play for while, have a relaxed lunch together, and then pick up Finn at school.

On weekends, however, my parenting abilities are pushed to the limit. Keeping everyone happy and safe from dawn to dusk can be stressful and requires a little strategic planning. Okay, a LOT of strategic planning. Over and over, I ask myself things like, "Who is about to meltdown?" and "Has it really been 10 hours since we walked the dog?"

Last Friday night, after the kids were asleep, I thought about the day ahead. What would we do all day? Finn recently commented, "On a day when I don't have school, I'm going to rescue a princess!" While I love this imaginative idea, I needed something a bit more practical.

I have found that balance is the secret ingredient to a successful day of parenting. Kids require a mix of high-action and low-key activities, inside and outside games, and a combination of parent-directed fun and downtime to "veg out" and follow their whims. If I let any of these variables get out of balance--such as forgetting to give the kids enough unstructured time--the results can be disastrous. But with balance, flexibility, and a sense of humor, things work themselves out.

Here's what happened on Saturday...

Soon after the children awoke, I announced that we were going out to the local bagel shop for breakfast. Finn was thrilled. I knew this would motivate him to get dressed and brush his teeth. Then I craftily inserted the two chores we had to do first: walk the dog, and start the laundry. Neither was a hard sell. Finn enjoys running around the block when we walk 'Mo. He also loves doing the laundry because it means a "field trip" to the basement of our apartment building. Plus, I let him put the quarters in the washers and dryers, pour the detergent, sort the clothes, and so on. To keep things from getting tedious, we play "laundry catch"--I throw clothes to Finn and he "dunks" them in one of the machines. As for Olivia, bless her heart, she's a happy



A GREAT DAY WITH YOUR CHILD

[Making a fun-filled plan that works.](#)

JUGGLING ALL DAY

[Tips for parents with more than one kid.](#)

LAUNDRY SORTING PARTY

[Make laundry time learning time.](#)

camper as long as she's part of the action.

BAGELS 'N BOOKS

After breakfast, I suggested we go to the library, a few blocks away. On the walk over, Olivia dozed off in her stroller. Not only would she get some rest, but it allowed me to give Finn my full attention for an hour or two.

At the library, I told Finn he could pick out five books to bring home. He chose some of his old favorites--such as *ABIYOYO* a folktale by Pete Seeger about a mischievous kid who uses magic and music to make a giant disappear, and *I STINK!* by Kate McMullan, a picture book told from the point of view of a proud garbage truck. Intrigued by the illustrations, Finn also selected a book of silly poetry entitled *IT'S RAINING PIGS AND NOODLES* by Jack Prelutsky, and *I, CROCODILE* by Fred Marcellino, a book about feisty croc in 18th century France. Finn rounded out his selections with a non-fiction book about volcanoes.



THREE CHEERS FOR THE LIBRARY!

There's no better place to help your child learn to love books and reading.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Olivia woke up from her nap during our walk home from the library. When we reached our apartment, I told Finn that after we took the dog for a quick walk, he could play a game, read a book, or work on one of his projects while I prepared lunch. I could tell Finn was semi-pooped, and needed some time to do something he chose.

"You know what I'm going to make?" Finn said with a sly smile.

"What?" I asked.

"It's a surprise!" he replied.

Five minutes later, Finn popped into the kitchen to present me with an elaborately wrapped present. "You'll never guess what it is!"

Lately, he's taken tremendous joy in experimenting with our various office supplies. The present he gave me looked suspiciously like our stapler wrapped in about five sheets of paper, surrounded with what looked like 50 feet of adhesive tape. On the top, for a bow, he had attached a binder clip.



IN PRAISE OF DOWNTIME
Set aside the schedule and have some fun.

"PICTURE THIS" PAPERWEIGHT
Make a rock paperweight for Dad with a smiling face from a favorite photo.

COUNTING SCRAPBOOK
Counting is as easy as one, two, three with this colorful

After lunch, at Finn's request, we whipped up a batch of homemade play dough using flour, salt, water, and food coloring. Finn then shaped it all into a large volcano, which we filled with baking soda. As you might guess, we doused it with vinegar and watched the fizzy eruption.

[numbers book.](#)

MAGAZINE MENUS

[Your child can create a restaurant all her own.](#)

CARDBOARD KAZOOS

[Kids love to play the pied piper on a homemade instrument!](#)

A PUMPED-UP PLAYDATE

Finn helped me clean up the kitchen, as Olivia played in her high chair. After, I asked him if he wanted me to call one of his friends for a playdate. Finn enthusiastically said "yes!"

So, I called his friend Aijun's mother to see if they were free. Fortunately, they were and were excited about coming over. Unlike Finn's first playdates when he was 2, I knew that this one didn't need to be a carefully planned event. Finn and Aijun click on many levels, so all I have to do is bring them together, and make sure their silliness didn't escalate to the point when they'd accidentally hurt themselves. Aijun's mother and I chatted as the boys danced to the upbeat CDs, leapt from couch to couch, played trains, and enjoyed a game of hide and seek. After about 90 minutes, I sensed that the boys needed some rest (and Olivia definitely needed a diaper change), so we said farewell to our guests.



RECIPE FOR A GREAT PLAYDATE

[Cooking up cooperative fun for the little ones.](#)

PERK UP A PLAYDATE

[Five quick ways to save the day when the fun fizzles.](#)

DO THE JITTERBUGGY

[Crank up the tunes and encourage your child to wriggle, flutter, and buzz about!](#)

WIND DOWN WITH MR. ROGERS

After Finn's friend went home, Olivia dozed off for her afternoon nap. I suggested to Finn that we watch a video. "Ice cream factory! Ice cream factory!" Finn shouted. This request referred to a Mister Rogers' Neighborhood episode I had recently taped. In this show, Mister Rogers and Mister McFeeley visit a creamery to see how strawberry ice cream is made. Even though Finn has seen this 5-minute video many times he still loves to watch it, and repeats every step to me after it happens, as if I'd never seen it before. "That's not milk, Daddy, that's cream!" Finn then watched SHREK as I quickly tidied up the apartment from the playdate, and prepared dinner.



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.](#)

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.](#)

FOCUSING ON TOTS' TV VIEWING
[Why it's important to limit TV time.](#)

SOME TIME TO MYSELF

After dinner, we took Satchmo for one last walk around the block. At bedtime, we read one of the books from the library, and Finn was off to dreamland. Olivia and Satchmo followed shortly after.

As I watched TV and enjoyed a late-night snack, I felt proud and relieved. Juggling the needs of a preschooler, an infant and a cocker spaniel isn't easy, but somehow I had pulled it off. My last thought as I dozed off was, "At least I don't have to do it again until...tomorrow."

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop



Weekly Trivia

Did You Know?

Sesame Street has been broadcast in more than 140 countries! Some countries air the original American show, while other countries create new versions in their own languages. More than 120 million children have seen Sesame Street around the world!

FROM THE WORKSHOP

From the United States to Bangladesh, Sesame Workshop is using the power of media to allow children to learn about the world around them and acquire the skills they will need to succeed in it. Whether it's letters and numbers or a concept like sharing, with kind words and the humor of puppets, the laughter and the learning are the same all over the world.

[Learn how you can help Sesame 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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