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behind Sesame Street and so much more



## Sesame Family Newsletter

May 22, 2008

### Small Choices, Big Consequences

by Jordan Brown

Fleeting decisions can have a lasting impact.

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#### Featuring:

Tantrum Trouble? Just Add Water!

Flushed With Embarrassment

Beware of the Butterflies



### Games & More

Groovin' with Grover

- [SUPER GROVER IN THE NICK OF RHYME](#)

Save the day with Super Grover by rhyming words.

- [GROVER GOES OVER AND UNDER AND THROUGH](#)

In this story, you get to choose if Grover goes over, under, or through!

- [GOOD NIGHT GROVER](#)

What will happen in this good night story? You decide!

- [WEEKLY TRIVIA](#)

#### Helping Children the World Over

Sesame Street is committed to giving children around the world the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

[You Can Help](#)

#### Parent Survey

Help us make the Sesame Street site even better for your child! Take our survey and tell us what you think.

[Take the Survey](#)

### The Electric Company Lights Up!



The Electric Company is coming soon and fans, parents, and educators can't wait! Read *The New York Times* article touting the hip new literacy series.

[Learn More](#)

## TANTRUM TROUBLE? JUST ADD WATER!

About a year ago, on a stormy spring day, I took my children to the public library. Most of the kids there were engaged in literacy-related pursuits, while my son Finn (then six) and daughter Olivia (then two) were busy pushing the limits of "appropriate library behavior." As I quickly shuttled them out of the library -- before their behavior completely spun out of control -- I spotted one of my all-time favorite movies on the DVD shelf, *Singin' in the Rain*. Given the inclement weather, I had a hunch that this movie might provide a much needed diversion to help Finn and Olivia settle down for a



#### [MEMORY](#)

A through-the-years look at

much-needed diversion to help Finn and Olivia settle down for a while. Back at home, we whipped up a batch of buttery popcorn "the old-fashioned way" (no microwaves involved), and pushed "play" on the DVD player.

Both Finn and Olivia were entranced with Gene Kelly's ebullient singing and dancing, and howled with laughter when he wildly stomped his feet in the puddles. A few days later, I returned the DVD to the library, and wondered if my children might ask for it again. Weeks went by with no mention of the movie.

Fast forward two months: Finn, Olivia, and I are flying kites in the park when suddenly it began to pour. (No, I hadn't bothered to check the forecast, and, no, we didn't have any umbrellas. Am I a prepared parent, or what?) I feared the worst. Our car was a good distance away, and I was sure I'd have at least one tantrum on my hands. Sure enough, Olivia's smile vanished and the tears began to flow.

Then something wonderful happened. In an effort to cheer up his sister, Finn danced around in the puddles, and sang his own version of *Singin' in the Rain*. Olivia instantly cheered up and joined in. They urged me to do the same. The three of us eventually managed to get to the car, drenched but happy. Since that day, whenever we're caught in a rainstorm, my children tend to react with joy rather than annoyance. The rain means they might get to splash around while singing one of their favorite songs. And all this because I stumbled upon an old movie at the library.

We parents spend lots of energy helping our children learn the "big stuff" -- walking, sharing toys, etc. -- not realizing that sometimes it's the small actions -- the quirky little ways we show our children love and support --that can make the greatest impression of all.

memory.

#### [EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: BIRTH TO AGE TWO](#)

You can help nurture your baby's blossoming feelings.

#### [EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: AGES TWO to FIVE](#)

Preschoolers learn to play alongside pals, teachers—and you.

#### ["IT'S IMPORTANT" VIDEO](#)

Search the word "important" in Sesame Workshop's video player to see Cookie Monster talk about a very "important" word.

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## FLUSHED WITH EMBARRASSMENT

Keeping with the water theme, I'll share a story that happened just last week. I was turning onto our street after picking up my kids at school, when my cell phone rang. My mother was calling to say "thanks" for her Mother's Day gift. I explained that I couldn't talk because I was driving, and handed the phone to Finn in the back seat. Finn launched into an elaborate story about Darth Vader and the Force. When we pulled into the driveway, Finn continued his phone conversation as I helped Olivia out of her seat and unpacked the car. During one of my trips between the car and the kitchen, I noticed that Finn was no longer on the front lawn talking on the phone. I called his name. From his muffled reply, I discovered that he had run inside to use the bathroom. What I didn't realize, at first, was that Finn was STILL in the middle of his phone conversation with my mother.

Suddenly, from the other side of the bathroom door, I heard, "Oops!" Then silence.

"Finn, is everything okay?" I asked.

"Um, Daddy, I accidentally dropped your phone in the toilet."

I hoped and prayed this was one of Finn's pranks. I peeked inside our toilet (which, thankfully, Finn hadn't begun to use). Sure enough, there at the bottom, was my cell phone. I yanked it out and tried to dry it. No signal. No luck.

I was definitely concerned but realized this was an honest mistake. I'd done many klutzy things when I was a kid. (My parents still love to tell about the time I accidentally leaned so hard on a bedroom window that my tush broke through the glass.)

As I looked at my son's stunned expression, I realized this was a great "little thing" moment. I wasn't happy about the prospect of having to buy another phone, but I also knew that the phone-in-the-toilet event presented a perfect opportunity to remind Finn of three important ideas: (1) It's an unavoidable fact of life: accidents happen. (2) Things like cell phones are nice, but they are just things; people's feelings are what matter most; and (3) I will always love him dearly, even when he makes mistakes.



#### [OOPS! I MADE A MISTAKE!](#)

Help your preschooler learn to handle goofs and disappointments.

"Don't worry, accidents happen," I reassured Finn with a hug. "It could have been worse."

"Yeah," Finn answered, relieved. Then, with a devilish grin, he added, "There could have been POOPY in there!" (Yuck!) "Or diarrhea!" (Double yuck!) As I held my soggy cell phone, I had to admit he was right.

"Or your COMPUTER could have fallen in the toilet!" joked Finn, as he conjured up more and more outrageous examples of my possessions that might have met a watery demise. He even suggested we should have a funeral for my phone and bury it in a tiny coffin. As we laughed, I hoped that Finn would grasp the bigger life lesson I was trying to convey. Maybe the next time I accidentally step on one of his beloved Star Wars action figures, he'll remember how I responded to this incident and will let humor and compassion triumph over a grouchy fit.

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## BEWARE OF THE BUTTERFLIES

Thinking about how minor events can have long-lasting effects, I am reminded of a short story my parents read to me when I was a dinosaur-obsessed 10 year old. In *A Sound of Thunder* by Ray Bradbury, a man travels back in time millions of years to hunt a Tyrannosaurus rex.

In this sci-fi story, the time-travel tour guide explains to the hunter that he must be very careful about where he steps in the past. "Stay on the path," the guide advises. Otherwise, this man's inadvertent actions in the past might lead to a domino effect on the future. The hunter, of course, decides to walk off the path. When the story fast-forwards to the present again, the hunter thinks his walking off the path didn't matter. But, then he looks at the bottom of his shoe and spots a dead butterfly. He discovers that a small, simple action -- squashing a single butterfly -- that occurred millions of years earlier somehow alters important events in the future.

I think of this story when I have one of my "imperfect" parenting moments, like when my kids push all of my buttons, and I lose my temper. When this happens, I always make sure to apologize immediately, and reassure them that I love them deeply even when they drive me crazy! I want to make sure that a small mistake (my yelling) is corrected right away, so it doesn't impact the future.

Wishing you and your children many wonderful "little moments" together.

Jordan D. Brown  
Sesame Workshop



### LIKE PARENT. LIKE CHILD

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

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## WEEKLY TRIVIA

**Secret Sesame Street Fact:** Super Grover's secret identity is Grover Kent, ace doorknob salesman for Acme, Inc.

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## 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).

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