



Sesame Family Newsletter

September 13, 2006

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

[Taming Nightmares](#)
by *Jordan Brown*

Soothing kids' fears after bad dreams.

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Games and More: Sweet Dreams
Sweet games for sweet dreams.

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From the Workshop



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Nighttime asthma symptoms can keep your child awake.

If your child has asthma and wakes up coughing or wheezing, [Everydaykidz.com](#) is a place where you can go for information on how to help prevent symptoms that keep you and your child from a good night's sleep.

[Read all about it!](#)

Taming Nightmares

ROBOT GIRL IN TROUBLE

Every night after our 5-year-old son Finn has been tucked in, hugged and kissed, my wife Ellen or I sit on a chair near his bed, and ask him two questions: "What was your favorite part of the day?" and "What are you going to dream about tonight?"

Finn's answer to the first question might be, "Playing with my airplanes," or maybe "Doing that baking soda and vinegar experiment." But he always answers the second question the same way: "I'm going to dream about flying!" Each night, Finn hopes to dream about soaring like a superhero over the tallest trees, the biggest canyons, and even up into outer space.

Occasionally, however, Finn has dreams he most definitely did NOT wish for. Last week, for example, he ran into our bedroom in the middle of the night. "Daddy, I'm scared! I had a bad dream."

I hugged him, and then took him back to his bed. Finn was too upset to go back to sleep right away, so I turned on the light, and asked him to tell me about the dream. He explained, "I was swimming with a girl robot in a 100-foot pool. And a rocket took us to outer space, and we fell into a black hole. And then we heard this really scary 'Sshhhhh' noise and we couldn't move. Then I woke up."

Finn's dream combined a number of his current interests and obsessions (robots, space, and swimming) in frightening and unusual ways. I reassured him that what happened in the dream wasn't real, and that Mommy and Daddy would always do everything we could to keep him safe. I sat quietly on his chair. Eventually he dozed back to sleep.

Before returning to bed myself, I wondered if there was anything else I might have done or said to put Finn at ease about his nightmare. The next day, I read some online articles, and spoke with some other parents of children Finn's age.



CHILDREN NEED LOTS OF SLEEP

A good night's rest is the basis for a good day.

DAD'S BEDTIME STORY

My night-nights aren't the same as Mom's.



BAD DREAMS, BACK OFF!

The parents I consulted had some creative ideas for taming nightmares. One dad keeps a jar of "Sweet Dream Cream" in the closet. (It's actually just a jar of moisturizing cream.) When his young children have nightmares, he rubs a bit of this "magical" cream on their foreheads, and that seems to do the trick. When another parent's daughter wakes up from a bad dream, she soothes her to sleep by gently rubbing her back, and helping her think about something fun they'll do together in the morning.

One of the best pieces of advice I came across suggests that children use the power of their imaginations to battle nightmares. If a child has a bad dream, parents can help him or her figure out ways of fighting off the imaginary creatures, or escaping the scary situations. In other words, kids need not sit back and let dreams terrify them. With a grownup's help, they can figure out ways to tell their nightmares, "Leave me alone." If a child has a recurring nightmare about monsters, for example, then a grownup might suggest that when the child wakes up, he could say a magical chant like, "AlakaZAM! Alaka ZAY! You Scary Monsters, Go Away!"

A few nights ago, I had a chance to try out this technique with Finn. He woke up very early one morning, saying he had a bad dream about a scary skeleton chasing him. I asked Finn if he thought King Kong would be able to handle scary skeletons. He answered, "Kong can beat up anything he wants." I took one of his Kong toys from his shelf, and asked Finn to show me how Kong would conquer a skeleton in battle. His melodramatic demonstration, complete with sound effects, made us both laughed. Then he held the Kong toy close, as he went back to sleep. I said, "So if those skeletons start to bother you, you tell them that Kong will get 'em." I gave Finn a kiss on the forehead, and he went back to bed with a smile.



THE NEXT DAY'S PLANS
[Looking ahead helps ease some kids into bed.](#)

'ROUND MIDNIGHT
[How to help your child get to sleep and stay asleep](#)

SOOTHING STRATEGIES
[How readers comfort their kids in the middle of the night.](#)



OLIVIA'S RESTLESS NIGHTS

When Finn's baby sister Olivia, now almost 2, wakes up at night crying, Ellen or I wait a few minutes to give her a chance to fall back to sleep by herself. This works most of the time. But when her crying is more intense, we immediately go to soothe her. Although Olivia doesn't know the words "bad dream" yet, we suspect that this is what's going on.



Music is one of the most effective ways to get Olivia back to sleep after what we think is a nightmare. I sometimes sing one of her favorite songs, such as "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," "Hush Little Baby" or "Moon Moon Moon." One of our friends quietly plays classical music on a CD player in the child's room to help him sleep.

If all else fails, we have a few of Olivia's stuffed animals give her special good-night kisses. Each one says, "Night-night, Olivia! I love...YOU!"

Wishing you and your children sweet dreams.

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

Weekly Trivia

Which of the following parodies never actually ran on Sesame Street?

- A. A Catfish Called Wanda
- B.M*A*T*H
- C.As the Worm Turns
- D.The Search for the Holy Pail

Thinking caps on? The answer is (A)--Sesame Street ran 'A Fish Called Wanda' spoof, but it was called 'A Fish Called Elmo'!

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.

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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

Sesame Workshop

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