



Sesame Family Newsletter

May 4, 2005

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

What Personality!

by *Jordan Brown*

A father ponders his son's personality.

Featuring:

- The Hug Monster Goes to School
- The Beat of a Different Drummer
- Natural Born Prankster?
- Like Sister, Like Brother?

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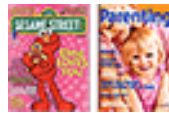
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What Personality!

THE HUG MONSTER GOES TO SCHOOL

To beat the boredom that comes with being stuck inside on rainy days, my 4-year-old son Finn plays a game called Hug Monster. The rules are simple. We yank all the cushions off the couch, and Finn curls up in a little ball in a corner of the room. Then I surround him with the cushions so he's totally hidden. I stroll casually around the room, whistling, as if I hadn't a care in the world. Without warning, Finn bursts out, with his claws poised to get me. "Oh, no!" I yell. "It's the Hug Monster! Run for your lives!" Finn chases me from room to room, growling fiercely, until he finally catches his prey. He wraps his arms around me, and squeezes, until we both fall on the floor in hysterics. It's a delight to see Finn so joyful, so confident, and so happy-go-lucky.

This bubbly, ebullient side of Finn's personality, however, vanishes when my wife Ellen or I drop him off at his nursery school. The walk to school always starts off great. Finn races alongside his 6-month-old sister Olivia, as I push her in the stroller. But, as we approach the gates surrounding the school's playground, Finn goes through a visible transition. Suddenly, he's timid. "You go first, Daddy. I'll go behind you."

As we enter the playground, we notice a bunch of kids running around, rolling down the hill, and having a great time. Several of Finn's friends run over to say "hi," and invite him to play. Finn rarely returns these greetings, and stares, like a deer caught in the headlights. Even though my son knows the other fourteen kids in his class really well, he acts as though it is the first day of school. As a parent, it is painful to watch. Gradually, over the next half an hour or so, Finn emerges from his shell. With gentle encouragement from myself and the teachers, my little Hug Monster joins in the fun.

Watching Finn and his classmates play, I'm fascinated by the variety of personalities. Some kids are social animals, wildly gregarious by nature. They intuitively know how to inject themselves into social situations, are happy to share their toys and take turns. Other kids, like Finn, are much more reserved--comfortable observing from the sidelines, or quietly playing a game by themselves. While I admit there are times when I wish my son was more self-confident in social situations, I accept it all as part of the marvelously unique package that is Finn.



THROUGH THE YEARS: PERSONALITY

Understanding and supporting your child's unique qualities.

SHYNESS

How can I encourage a shy child to be more independent?

DR. BALTER CRACKS THE CASE OF THE BOY WHO KEPT TO HIMSELF

Why did he pull a disappearing act whenever other kids wanted to play?



THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

For as long as I can remember, Finn has been a quirky kid. You might think, "That's not a very nice thing to say about your son" but I mean it in the nicest, most loving way. Quirky can mean strange and bizarre but it can also mean original, creative and innovative. By "quirky" I mean that, in many ways, Finn doesn't act like other kids his age. For example, he didn't start talking until he was about 2 and a half. Today, at 4, he can be a motor mouth, joyfully showing off his impressive vocabulary, as he spins wildly imaginative stories.

Finn is also incredibly strong-willed. If there's something he doesn't want to do, forget it. Last year, when Finn started nursery school, he had a very hard time settling in. At snack time, he was the only kid in his class who wouldn't sit down at the table as the teacher passed around juice and crackers. As long as the teacher let him stand in front of a chair at the table, he was a happy camper. For four months, he did this. Then, after the winter break, without any fanfare, he started sitting down during snack, as if he'd been doing so all along.

Remarkable sensitivity is another of Finn's personality traits. This can be a heartwarming characteristic when it comes to comforting a classmate who's having a rough day. However, it can also be frustrating when he regards the loss of a toy as a traumatic event. Recently after playing in the sandbox in the playground, we were collecting his toys, and couldn't find his small blue rake. We looked everywhere but realized that some other kid must have accidentally taken it home. Finn bawled about how the rake was "his best toy." I reassured him that we would look for another blue rake in the store, but it took a while to calm him down.



TEMPERAMENT

How your child's unique personality grows and changes.

TAMING THE "TYPE-A" KID

If your child is a perfectionist, he might have a type-A personality.

NATURAL BORN PRANKSTER?

Another unique aspect of Finn's personality is his sense of humor. As I mentioned in my April Fools Day newsletter, Finn is a little prankster. He gets a kick out of pushing the limits of appropriate behavior. One night while I was helping him brush his teeth, I reminded him, "When you rinse your mouth out, please try to get it in the sink."

Finn then brushed his teeth carefully, swished a cup of water in his mouth, and spit it, as I'd asked, in the sink. Finn then asked me, "Hey, Daddy, want to see a whale spout?"



NATURE, NURTURE, OR NEITHER?

I smiled, and said, "Sure," having a hunch where this was leading. Finn poured another cup of water, swished it in his mouth, and then spit the water upward in a stream all over the bathroom mirror, cracking up as he completed his trick.

"Oh, no," I said in mock shock, "Now, I'm going to have to get a ladder to clean that up."

Finn ran out of the room to share his news, "Mommy, mommy. Daddy's going to have to get a LADDER to clean up from my whale spout!"

I wonder where Finn gets his vibrant sense of humor. Is it something that's hard-wired in his personality, or is it something that thrives because Ellen and I nurture it? Like most aspects of personality, the answer is probably both.

[The latest theories on what it takes to shape a child.](#)

LIKE SISTER, LIKE BROTHER?

When Ellen was pregnant with Olivia, friends with older children often reminded us, "Every kid is different. Your next child may be nothing like your son." So far, it seems they are right. While it's difficult to compare the personality of a 6-month-old girl with a 4-and-a-half-year old boy, it seems as though Olivia is much mellower.

As Finn and Olivia grow, they'll discover that the world is filled with a marvelous assortment of personalities. Some of their friends will be outgoing and adventurous, while others will be more reserved and thoughtful. They'll discover that different personalities sometimes clash, while in other cases, "opposites attract." Truth be told, everyone's personality is a little "quirky." When Finn and Olivia grow up, I hope they'll embrace the quirkiest aspects of what makes me unique, and say, "Oh, that's just part of Dad's personality."

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop



Weekly Trivia

Who is the nasal-toned host of the Nestropolitan Opera's "Live from the Nest" series?

- A.Phil Harmonic
- B.Beverly Windosills
- C.Placido Flaming
- D.Allistair Cookie

And,the answer is (drum roll, please)(A)Phil Harmonic!

FROM THE WORKSHOP

For over 35 years, Sesame Street has been touching the lives of children all over the world. Now you have a chance to help Sesame Workshop, the non-profit organization behind Sesame Street, reach out to more children and more countries than ever before. From Afghanistan to South Africa, the Workshop, with your help, will use media to help children reach their fullest 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

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