

December 17, 2010



Create a New Year's Time Capsule!



Looking for fun ways to ring in 2011? **Jordan D. Brown** discovers that one secret of success is putting the children in charge. Cue the confetti.

Goodbye 2010, Hello 2011

When you're waiting on line at a supermarket or bank, with a couple children in full meltdown mode, a minute can seem like an eternity. But throw 525,600 of these minutes together in a package we call a "year," and they seem to fly by remarkably fast. I can't seem to wrap my head around the fact that in just a week, I'll have to say farewell to 2010. I looked back at my list of "resolutions" for this year, and I'm surprised how many I've not accomplished, let alone totally forgot about. (Was this really the year I was going to explore French cooking, repair that fence, get to the gym daily, organize my office...?)

However, instead of focusing on all the things that didn't go according to plan, I want to take stock of all the inspiring and interesting parenting moments from the past year. For example, 2010 is the year that my 5-year-old daughter Olivia learned to master the monkey bars at the local playground... a feat I have yet to conquer. It's also the year that she overcame her fears of swimming underwater and riding the school bus. In 2010, Olivia and I shared the joys of reading Pippi Longstocking books together... and so much more. Many of these "Olivia stories" I captured in earlier editions of this newsletter. Still, many of the good times with my daughter are now buried somewhere in my subconscious, forgotten forever. I should have written down more. *sigh*

Enough of this doom and gloom! I want to share an idea I have for this New Year's Eve. In an effort to help Olivia and her older brother Finian recognize how much they'll change over the next year, I plan to have them each create a New Year's Time Capsule... to be opened January 1, 2012.

No, Not the Bologna Sandwich!

A few nights ago during dinner, I shared my Time Capsule idea with Olivia and Finian. I explained that I'd give them each a plastic container about the size of a shoebox. They can fill it with lists of their favorite things (TV shows, books, toys, foods), or goals for the year (things they'd like to learn, toys they'd like to save up for, skills they'd like to master). I also said it was OK to put in any photographs, drawings, or tiny toys that

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would be fun to see again 365 days later. The only request I denied outright was Olivia's wish to include a bologna sandwich. "Come on, it would look REALLY interesting in a year!" That it would. Some scientific mysteries, however, are best not explored. I told Olivia, "Honey, when they made you, they broke the mold. I just don't want any of it growing back in our home."

Finian requested that we bury these New Year's boxes in the backyard, which I seriously considered until I discovered that the ground had already frozen for the winter. Instead, I decided to put the boxes in the back of a closet in my bedroom.

Let's Plan a Countdown Party

To make the New Year's Eve celebration meaningful for my kids, my wife Ellen and I get them involved in the planning. For inspiration, we looked at some [videos](#) of how New Year's is celebrated around the world. Olivia and Finian both love painting and dressing up, so my request for them to design the party hats and other items for New Year's Eve was greeted with enthusiasm:

"Can we use glitter?" (Of course. What would a kid craft be without stuff that will stick to our rugs for decades to come?)

"Let's make a party hat for Tanner, too!" (I'm guessing our dog won't go for it, unless it's made of bacon.)

"And, of course, we'll need confetti. We can use the hole-punch in your office, Daddy." (A creative idea, I think, and one that our vacuum will enjoy as well.)

"Let's make up a New Year's Eve song—about all the great things we did this year!" my son suggests. (Great idea, I think.)

A party needs refreshments, and [cooking with kids](#) is always messy fun. Lately, Olivia has enjoyed making homemade guacamole, especially removing the avocado pit with her fingers.

End of a Year, End of an Era

I've been writing Sesame Family Newsletters for eight years, since 2003, when Finian was 3 years old. Now that Olivia is in kindergarten, the time has come to pass the baton onto another parent with younger children. What I'll especially miss as I move forward is the monthly excuse to document the quirky details of my children's lives. When I look back at my newsletters from when Olivia was born, I marvel at how much she's grown and learned over five years. I am frankly a little nervous about the day when Finian and Olivia discover the archive of my more than 50 newsletters. They'll probably say, "You wrote WHAT about my toilet training!" If either becomes a writer like me, they can tell their side of the story some day.

While being a parent can be an exhausting, time-consuming job, I would urge you to make your own ongoing time capsule. For example, keep a daily notebook, computer file, or [blog](#) in which you make quick note of the funny or fascinating things your children say and do. These charming little details usually vanish forever if not documented. Looking back on these sorts of things even months later can be a remarkable experience.

Happy New Year! May 2011 be filled with marvelous memories and interesting adventures with your children.

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'Til Next Year

The Sesame Family Newsletter writers are looking forward to relaxing with their families during the holidays. You will receive the next newsletter on Monday, January 3, 2011. Please note that beginning in January, newsletters will arrive on Mondays.

Jordan D. Brown

Sesame Workshop

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