



Sesame Family Newsletter

November 30, 2005

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

[How Children Think](#)
by *Jordan Brown*

A preschooler's logic can be amusing and amazing.

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Games and More: Brain Power

Put your thinking skills to the test.

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From the Workshop



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Sesame Store



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Did you know that sleeping well plays a big role in a baby's development? That's why Pampers Baby-Dry Diapers have a contoured fit and UltraAbsorb(tm) Core to help keep babies dry overnight, giving them the rest they need to prepare for bright mornings. Plus, Elmo from Sesame Street appears on every diaper!

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How Children Think

CONTEMPLATING CANYONS

Seeing the world through my son Finn's eyes is one of the joys of being a dad. Finn will soon be five, and one of his latest obsessions is canyons. I'm not exactly sure how this interest began, but it has become a source of endless fascination. At the library, we read books together about canyons, and when Finn plays with clay, he'll often mold a canyon to fill with water. And then there are the questions: "Do sharks live in canyons?" "Did the Hudson River used to be a canyon?" and so on. At bedtime, he announces that he plans to dream about flying over the Grand Canyon, or eating a "canyon of chocolate."

Finn's curiosity about canyons feeds his interest in oceans, rivers, streams, and lakes. In his mind, every body of water in the world--from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea to the tiny rambling creek near our home--is somehow connected. Last week, we were looking at a big map of the U.S., and discussing how the Colorado River runs through the Grand Canyon. He wanted to know if the Colorado River is connected to the Mississippi River.

I squinted at the map, and said "I'm not sure."

Finn replied, "Of course, they are, Daddy!"



THINKING: BIRTH TO TWO
From day one a baby takes information through her senses; over time the brain's anatomy will reflect the learning process.

THINKING: TWO TO FIVE
By a child's third birthday, her capacity for abstract thought has increased. By age five a child starts to understand that actions have consequences.

THINKING: SIX TO ELEVEN
A school-age child can articulate his feelings; this cognitive capacity allows him to develop self-control.

A TRIP TO THE COOKIE STORE

Whenever Finn gets hooked on a new topic, it turns up throughout the day, often in surprising ways. It didn't take long for Finn's interest in canyons to become part of our after-preschool ritual. In hopes of catching a few snippets of Finn's school day while they're fresh in his mind, I take him to a pastry shop across from his school--a place Finn calls "The Cookie Store." The routine is the same: He and I each pick out a little cookie, and then enjoy it with a drink on the stoop outside the store.

One day a couple months ago, we were chatting, and nibbling cookies when Finn pointed to a gouged out part of the sidewalk, a few feet ahead of us. "Look, Daddy, a canyon!" He immediately emptied our water bottles over the



"WHY?...WHAT?...HOW?... BUT WHY..."
Questions, questions, questions!

edge of the stoop. He watched in awe as the water flowed over the "waterfall," then meandered in between the cracks of the sloped sidewalk, and finally traveled downhill to fill up his concrete "canyon." In the weeks that followed, Finn experimented with larger and larger water bottles to create his own waterfalls, rivers, and streams. Meanwhile, the other pastry shop customers always look on with amusement. Finn, of course, is too focused on his experiments to notice them.

Before Finn's interest in canyons, I had walked on that sidewalk countless times and never once gave it a second thought. Now, through the eyes of my son, I see the sidewalk's potential as a water wonderland.

FROM THE MINDS OF BABES

Much in the way that Finn is absolutely certain that all rivers, creeks, and oceans are connected, he often brings together ideas from different parts of his day--or even from previous days. In the morning, he and I might bake together, and then in the afternoon, as we're driving to my in-laws, he'll comment that we're "only a teaspoon away" from their house.

One day, my wife Ellen showed him how a sewing machine works, then the next day, while creating an art project with office supplies, he said, "Stapling is like sewing with paper." Ellen and I marvel at the imaginative analogies he comes with, such as the time he described a tree "as tall as a bully," or told me to run to the grocery store "as fast as a superhero."

Like many preschoolers, Finn's interpretation of events is often self-centered. The other morning, our one-year-old daughter Olivia was crying. I immediately recognized it as her way of telling us, "I'm hungry." Finn had another explanation. Emerging from under my desk, he told me that Olivia's tears happened because, "She saw my brown eyes in the dark, and thought I was a monster."

When Finn and I return home from school, he often needs a little time alone to unwind. One recent afternoon, after several meditative minutes, he came over to ask me, "Do you have to go to the bathroom before you die?" I realized this alluded to an impromptu conversation about death that we had that morning, when he noticed a dead squirrel on the ground, as we walked to school. For me, it was a passing moment. For Finn, it was obviously something that

CURIOSITY

[Take an age-by-age peek at curious minds.](#)



PLAY: TWO TO FIVE

[Fantasy play helps young children learn how to deal with their feelings.](#)

WHO DOES YOUR CHILD THINK SHE IS?

[A year-by-year journey into your child's self-discovery.](#)

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

[How emotional intelligence develops by age.](#)

he had mulled over during the day.

THINKING ABOUT THINKING

All this thinking about thinking got me, well, thinking. ...

What will Finn do with his marvelous mind when he grows up? What career will he pursue? What obsessions will intrigue and inspire him when he's an adult? These days, Finn and his friends dream of becoming fire fighters or police officers. Since my son was about two and began taking things apart to see how they work, many relatives predicted he'd become an engineer. Finn's intense introspective side suggests he might become a philosopher. But his irreverent silly side and delight in making others laugh suggests that perhaps he'll become a comedian. Whatever path he follows, I hope that Finn will continue to view the world with a sense of wonder. Albert Einstein believed that "Imagination is more important than knowledge." As your own children grow, may their curiosity and passion for learning remain as vast and deep as...what else...the Grand Canyon!



Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

Weekly Trivia

Did you know?

The letter "A" has sponsored Sesame Street more than 150 times? It's true. "A" has stood for acorn, abierto, ape, and astronaut.

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.

[Support the 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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