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The nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



## Sesame Family Newsletter

March 5, 2008

### "No, Chocolate isn't a Vegetable"

by Jordan Brown

Persuading picky eaters takes creativity, humor, and patience.

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#### Featuring:

Veggies? No Way! (Yes Weigh!)

Tips from the Battlefield

When Jesting Leads to Digesting

### Games and More

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- [Cookies Can't Laugh](#)  
Cookie Monster learns all about friendship in this interactive story.
- [Let's Make Breakfast!](#)  
Help your Sesame pals start their day with a yummy and healthy breakfast!
- [Cooking with Rosita](#)  
Learn the Spanish names for food items, and how to count them!
- [Martians at the Market](#)  
Help the Martians find hidden foods and other items at the market.
- [Weekly Trivia](#)

#### The Road to Peace

Our programs shatter stereotypes, expose prejudices, and build understanding to create a hopeful future for all children.

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Waiting around can be difficult for the most patient child. *Sesame Street's* fun, educational podcasts are a great way to pass the time!

This week's word: Angry

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### March is National Nutrition Month



Sesame Workshop is dedicated to helping children reach their highest potential. In honor of National Nutrition Month, we're highlighting our Healthy Habits for Life initiative. Our comprehensive resources aim to teach children and parents about living a healthy, active life.

[Learn more about Healthy Habits for Life](#)

Check out our [Happy Healthy Monsters DVD](#)



#### Earth's Best: A Proud Sponsor of Sesame Street

Earth's Best brings you fun, delicious, organic, healthy alternatives to kids' favorite foods with nutrient-rich Earth's Best Sesame Street breakfasts and snacks made from organic ingredients. Fortified with 8 essential vitamins, iron and zinc, Earth's Best helps to ensure that little tummies get the big nutrition they need.

## VEGGIES? NO WAY! (YES, WEIGH!)

When babies are born, relatives love to claim responsibility for physical similarities. "Look!" a grandmother might gush, "Christine has my sparkly blue eyes!" Or a father might look into the crib and crow, "See Xavier's thick curly brown hair? Mine!" I know my 3-year-old daughter Olivia has inherited many traits from me. One of the most pronounced is her passion for sweets. Her sweet tooth, like mine, is roughly the size of Mount Rushmore. Stick a chocolate chip cookie or a big bowl of ice cream in front of us, and we become glassy-eyed zombies. "Must eat more... Must eat more..."

If chocolate were a vegetable, we'd have no trouble getting Olivia to eat a balanced diet. Alas, she has a love-hate relationship with most vegetables. By that, I mean she LOVES to tell me how much she HATES them. (Ba-dum-bum.) To my relief, she's a big fan of broccoli, but that's about it. Beans? Nah. Salad? No thanks. Tomatoes? Forget it. Fortunately, Olivia enjoys a variety of fruits, like strawberries, cantaloupe, oranges, apples, and blueberries.

Still, I often wonder if Olivia's diet is skimpy on some necessary vitamins and minerals. In honor of National Nutrition Month, I thought I'd write and think about this very important topic. But first a story. On a recent snowy morning, Olivia and I were in the produce section of the supermarket. We'd been shopping for a while, and I could see Olivia was getting fidgety. Just as some animals can sense an imminent earthquake, I had a hunch that any minute a tantrum might unfurl. To avoid this disaster, I suggested that we play one of our all-time favorite supermarket games: "Heavy or SUPER Heavy?!" Olivia's mood instantly brightened. The goal of this game is simple. I help Olivia put a big piece of fruit or large vegetable on the hanging scale. and we see if the needle moves just a little or spins all the way around. If it does the latter, we gleefully shout, "Super Heavy!" And then we go on a quest to find produce that's even heavier. For some lighter-weight produce, we'll put multiple examples on the scale -- until we get the dramatic result we're going for. At the end of this game, Olivia chooses one new kind of produce to try at home. As a result of our little game, I've been able to get Olivia to try cucumbers, red peppers, asparagus, and cauliflower. (Important note: While the "Heavy or SUPER Heavy?" game is a delightful distraction when played with eggplants or grapefruit, a father can get in trouble with the supermarket staff when attempting it with watermelons and pumpkins... so I'm told!)

## TIPS FROM THE BATTLEFIELD

As the supermarket story illustrates, one way to get reluctant eaters to try new foods is to involve them in the process of selecting them. Trips to the supermarket can be fun, and can motivate a child to experiment with a variety of fruit and vegetables. I suspect that part of what is frustrating for children is that parents often take the whole "eat healthy" issue too seriously.

I've recently talked with other parents about strategies they use to lure their kids to the world of vegetables. I've also consulted a few cookbooks aimed at persuading picky eaters. Here are some strategies that have worked for my family. I hope you find helpful, too.

- **MAKE 'EM HUNGRY** -- When they are very hungry, my children are willing to try healthier foods. Near dinnertime,



### [EATING](#)

Our three experts explain how children gain control over the eating process.

### [WINNING OVER PICKY EATERS](#)

A father helps his son develop healthy eating habits.

### [EWWW! I'M NOT EATING THAT!](#)

The dish on how to handle your picky eater.

### [TELLY'S LUNCH](#)

Search the word "sandwich" in Sesame Workshop's new online video player to see this funny clip.



### [TO YOUR HEALTH!](#)

A mom's tricks and tactics for helping finicky eaters.

### [NUTRITIOUS NIBBLES](#)

Get smart snacking strategies from other parents.

### [PICKY EATING](#)

Help! My 4-year-old child's diet

after an hour of lively dancing, Olivia might call out, "Daddy, I'm starving!" Cue the broccoli! After my son's swimming lessons, I know that he'll eat virtually anything I put on his plate. A corollary to this tip is, "Time release the meal."

When I'm trying to get Olivia to try a new food, I make sure to serve it first, by itself, for a few minutes before I bring over the "old favorites." She sometimes balks, "I'm NOT eating red pepper, Daddy!" But then I step away for a few minutes, and sure enough she at least takes a few bites.

- **STAY FLEXIBLE AND PATIENT** -- Seven years ago, as a new parent, I often worried about making each meal perfectly balanced. This led to more conflict than was helpful. On the advice of our pediatrician, I now look at my kids' diet on a weekly basis rather than a meal-based one. If one of my kids eats almost nothing for lunch, I know that he or she will eat a good dinner. If they don't feel like eating their veggies on Tuesday, I've learned that they'll make up for it by Friday.
- **BE SNEAKY** -- One of the cookbooks I read *Deceptively Delicious: Simple Secrets to Get Your Kids Eating Good Food* by Jessica Seinfeld) suggests pureeing veggies and mixing them into sauces. Spaghetti sauce, for example, might be nutritionally boosted with a small amount of pureed carrots or squash. There is even a recipe that suggests hiding mashed chickpeas in chocolate chip cookies!
- **SET A GOOD EXAMPLE** -- If your kids never see you eating a food that you're encouraging them to eat, they are likely to be suspicious. Even if you're not especially fond of a particular food, you might try it in front of your kids. Or make it a fun challenge. "I bet you can't eat more bites of this carrot than me!" I've found that there are very few foods that children aren't willing to try, when they are presented with the right sense of fun. My son Finn has had an aversion to peas since he was about three. (He went so far as to tell his preschool teacher, "It turns out I'm allergic to peas!") We don't push it; we just encourage the good foods that he does like.
- **'C' IS FOR COOKING** -- When you have the time (and the patience), let your children help you make a meal. My kids love to chop fruits and vegetables (with kid knives). Any time I can let them get their hands messy (making dough, for example) I know they will have a great time -- and will eagerly taste the ingredients. Cooking together is also an opportunity to reinforce other skills, such as counting and measuring. Since Finn was about four years old, he has loved "inventing" in the kitchen. As long as he doesn't waste too many ingredients, I let him go hog wild. Some of his creations are really quite good. Some are... less so. On a "snow day" from school a few weeks ago, I let Finn and Olivia create their own "cooking show," which I recorded with our video camera. Finn told the camera about the virtues of each of the ingredients as he poured them in the pot. Olivia just had a grand old time cracking eggs, squishing flour between her fingers, and more. On a day when I was in a rush, this literally would have been a recipe for disaster. But when looking for a productive fun way to spend time with my kids, this worked like magic.
- **GO FOR QUALITY OVER QUANTITY** -- As I mentioned earlier, Olivia loves chocolate. A few times a week, when I indulge this passion, I buy her a small chocolate truffle at the grocery store. It costs about the same as a large bag of some other candy, but I know that she'll enjoy it more, and will end up eating much less sugar.

consists solely of cereal, instant oatmeal, vanilla pudding, pretzels, and French fries!

#### [WHEN KIDS WON'T EAT](#)

My two year old eats very little. Is there anything I can do to encourage her appetite?

#### [FOOD EQUALS ENERGY](#)

Search the word "energy" in Sesame Workshop's new online video player to see this song about

## WHEN JESTING LEADS TO DIGESTING

The other night at the dinner table, Finn told a joke he'd heard from his teacher in school that day. I later learned that she told the joke in the context of a lesson about making healthy choices. Here's the joke: "A man goes to the doctor, and says, 'I feel terrible!' The doctor notices that the man has a small carrot sticking out of his nose. In each ear, he has a piece of broccoli! The doctor tells the man. 'I think I've found the problem -- you're not eating right!'"

Best of luck getting your children to try new foods and discover the benefits of a balanced, healthy diet.



Jordan D. Brown

Sesame Workshop

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## WEEKLY TRIVIA

What is Cookie Monster's favorite saying?

- A. Time to eat!
- B. Me want cookie!
- C. Hello Wisconsin!
- D. Adios, amigos!

The answer is (B). Cookie Monster constantly craves one thing: cookies!

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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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