



Sesame Family Newsletter

June 20, 2007

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

Potty Talk

by *Jordan Brown*

Saying goodbye to diapers takes patience and a sense of humor.

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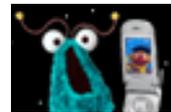
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Read all about it!

Potty Talk

OLIVIA'S MAGIC WORDS

WARNING: This Family Newsletter is loaded with "potty talk." Let me assure you, though, that any reference to "poop" or "peepee" is included strictly for educational purposes--to help beleaguered parents (such as myself) tackle a tricky topic. Whether you're the President of the United States, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, a mafia kingpin, or just a regular parent like me... if your mission is to help your child learn the "ways of the toilet," you're going to spend a fair amount of time graphically discussing various bodily functions and their output. It comes with the territory.

Many new parents get anxious about toilet training. Some folks prefer the term "toilet teaching" to "toilet training" believing that "training" is for dogs, while "teaching" is for kids. Based on my years of experience with my son Finn, I actually prefer the term "toilet torture." But more on this later. Right now, I'll share our experiences with our second child, Olivia, now 2 and a half years old.

Anytime Olivia says the Magic Words, my wife Ellen and I drop everything, and rush to her. The Magic Words, as you may be wondering, are not "I love you," "Read to me," or "The couch is on fire." These days, the words that instantly grab our attention are "I gotta go potty." When Olivia says this, we quickly pick her up, rush her to the nearest bathroom, and let her do her business. Sometimes, she'll just sit there, do nothing, then after a few minutes say, "I'm done." That's fine. At this stage, the goal is just to get her to think about going to the toilet rather than automatically relying on her diaper.

I can't remember exactly when Olivia's potty training began. However, I do recall a few milestones. Last summer, when Olivia was about 18 months old, we pulled Finn's old "mini potty" out of storage, and put Olivia's stuffed animals and dolls on it, to demonstrate how it works. She also tried sitting on it with her clothes on, but never used it for peeing. Then last fall, around her second birthday, we bought her a little small toilet seat that fits on top of our regular seat. She responded to this much more enthusiastically. Part of the reason is that she could now use the "real potty" like her big brother and mommy and daddy.

Olivia's potty training is progressing nicely. I think this is partly because we don't push it. We're letting her let us know when she's ready. We gently encourage her efforts, but don't make a big deal when she prefers to use her diaper. Olivia's preschool teachers are also a big help. At her preschool, whenever Olivia or one of her friends tries to use the toilet, the teacher rewards them with a sticker on a



LOOK, MOM, NO DIAPERS
[Recognizing readiness and tips for success.](#)

THE P WORD
[It's potty time!](#)

colorful chart. Many of the toddlers in her class are well on their way to becoming toilet trained.

LOOK WHAT I MADE, DADDY!

During diaper changes, Olivia discusses her body parts, and often asks to look at the contents of her diaper. While not directly related to potty training, I understand that this is all part of the process of helping our daughter become comfortable with the topic of going to the bathroom. Here's a recent diaper-changing conversation (and don't say I didn't warn you!):



ME: Hold still, Olivia. You have a VERY poopy diaper. Don't move, honey. I'm trying to keep your dress clean.

(I successfully remove her old diaper, clean her up, and put on a fresh diaper. I'm about to throw out the old diaper when...)

OLIVIA: I want to look at it!

(I let Olivia peek inside of her old diaper. Her eyes widen with surprise and pride.)

OLIVIA: It's a BIG one!

ME: Yes, you're right.

(I close up the diaper.)

OLIVIA: It's not a small one.

ME: No, definitely not small.

OLIVIA: I want to look at it again.

(I re-open the folded up diaper, and give her another glimpse inside.)

ME: Yes, sweetheart, you made a BIG poop.

OLIVIA: (the word "big" inspires Olivia to sing part of one of her all-time favorite songs, "Moon Moon Moon" by Laurie Berkner) "It's big and round / and I have found / that it looks just like a pizza pie."

ME: (joking) Is your poop as big as the moon?

OLIVIA: (smiling) Noooo!

ME: Is it a "crescent poop"?

OLIVIA: (laughs) Noooo! (holds out her hands, like holding a ball) It's a FULL poop!

While I'm eager for Olivia to become diaper-free, there are some of the sweet and silly parts of the diaper-changing experience that I'll miss.

A FLASHBACK AND A CONFESSION

As I mentioned before, helping my son Finn (now age 6) say goodbye to diapers took a very long time. (Such a long time, in fact, that I wrote two newsletters about the experience: see the links for "The Potty Chronicles" and "Saying Goodbye to Diapers.") As I mused in my first newsletter, I wondered if Finn would be out of diapers before I was wearing Depends. To any parents who are in the same boat, take heart: With patience and persistence, all things are possible on the potty front. When we began the process with Finn, many cautioned us against putting too much pressure on our son. Several parents liked to say things like, "Don't worry. No kid will still be wearing diapers by the time they're in high school." Ellen and I found that small incentives, like stickers and small treats, helped from time to time. And once Finn got the knack of using the potty, using it became its own reward.

Time for a quick confession: I wasn't completely toilet trained until shortly before I started nursery school. According to my parents, when I was almost 4, I used a urinal for the first time during a family trip to a children's museum in Boston. Talk about a hands-on learning experience!



THE POTTY CHRONICLES
[A father wonders if his son will ever be out of diapers.](#)

SAYING GOODBYE TO DIAPERS
[It ain't over 'til it's over \(a sequel to the above newsletter\).](#)

TOILET TRAINING
[Don't stress out if your child is a slow toilet trainee.](#)

TOILET TRAINING TRIALS
[What's to be done when a 3-1/2-year-old child shows no interest in learning to potty?](#)

DIARY OF A POTTY-TEACHING MOM
[One mother's journal of the joys and dejections on the road to potty autonomy.](#)

HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE DIAPERS

Now that summer is here, Ellen and I are eager to take Olivia's toilet training to the next level. In particular, we're planning to experiment with having her not wear a diaper for a few hours at a time, and encouraging her to tell us when she has to go. There may be accidents along the way, but that's to be expected. Olivia is eager to show us that she can do the same things that her big brother can do. We're hoping that this will include using the toilet.



While you're in the "toilet-training trenches," it might seem like there's no light at the end of the tunnel. If this is the case, I would urge you to keep a little journal of your experiences with your child--your own "potty chronicles." It might help you keep your sense of humor about a challenging task, and will enable you to remember the details and the stories long after your child is out of diapers.

Good luck!

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

Weekly Trivia

How many ladybugs are counted in the song "Ladybug Picnic"?

- A.six
- B.eight
- C.ten
- D.twelve

Thinking caps on? The correct answer is (D) twelve.

FROM THE WORKSHOP

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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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