



## April Fools Fun



*Wipe that smile off your face! Parenting is **SERIOUS** business... well... sometimes. **Jordan D. Brown** lets his kids play pranks on him, nurturing their senses of humor, and giving them the gift of laughter.*

### Driving Me Crazy (In a Good Way)

Even without the wonderful excuse of April Fools' Day next week, my children Olivia and Finian leap at any opportunity to make mischief--especially when the joke is on me!

On a recent morning, as we were rushing to get out of the house, I felt my blood pressure rise. Why were we running late *again*? As I locked up the house, my children zoomed into the car. Settling into the driver's seat, I sighed and thought, "It's going to be one of those days."

Then I heard giggling behind me. I inserted the key into the ignition, heard them snicker, then "Shhh... Shhh..."

"What did you two do?" I asked, wondering what else could go wrong.

"You'll see, Daddy," 5-year-old Olivia replied playfully.

Sure enough, when I started the car, the windshield wipers began wiping at full force (despite the sunny day), the radio was blaring, the directional signal was blinking, and the fan was humming. I also noticed that all the visors were pulled down.

"Ha! We pulled pranks on you!" my daughter gushed.

"You got me!" I said, as I laughed along. I felt like I was part of [an Ernie and Bert routine!](#)

While I reset everything back to normal, I said in mock indignation, "Wait till your father gets home!" then added... "Oh, wait, I am your father! Never mind."

### If It's Laughter You're After

My wife Ellen and I make a point of nurturing our children's senses of humor, recognizing that their days can sometimes be stressful. Following adult rules and learning new skills can be challenging. That's why we often take breaks from all the "seriousness" of the day. It not only helps [boost their mental health](#)--it's fun!

Adding humor to the day doesn't have to be complicated. When Olivia was about 3, she and I came up with silly wintertime game we call "This Snowball Doesn't Go Away." Even two years later, it's one of our favorites: First, I make a snowball and hold it proudly in front of me. With pride, I announce, "THIS is the kind of snowball that doesn't go away."

Olivia grins and says, "Daddy, I think you should take a nap."

"Good idea!" I say, yawning, closing my eyes, and pretending to snore. Olivia then smashes my snowball.

## Store

Elmo turns green in this DVD!



## this week on the street



### [Elmo's Goofy Gallery](#)

Explore this silly pictures gallery.



### [Be Doodle Dee Dum](#)

Elmo sings a silly song to get happy.



### [Make Elmo a Hat](#)

Design silly hats for Elmo.

## related links

### [Tell a Joke](#)

In this classic video, Harvey Kneeslapper sings about telling jokes.

### [Silly Singing](#)

A playlist to help your little ones "shake their sillies out."

"Daddy, Daddy!" she shouts. I "wake up," rub my eyes, and say, "What? What?!"

Olivia says, "Your snowball!"

I look Olivia in the eyes, and calmly say, "Don't worry, it's still here." After a moment, I look down at my glove, and shriek, "Aaaaaahhh!"

For preschoolers, this is great comic material. And, surprising for me, its appeal is never diminished by repetition. Much the way multiple rounds of peek-a-boo are a hit with an infant, our snowball game's repetitive quality has a lot to do with its success.

No matter what the weather, there's no better way to liven up a day than by [tickling](#) your kids--or having them tickle you back. Looking for other ways to "get silly" with your kids? Go online together and sing and play along with the [Silly Singing playlist](#).

## And THEN What Happened...?

Making my children laugh is easy, but getting them to share the details of their school day is not. General questions like, "How was school today?" usually get me nowhere. But when I ask for the "crazy version" of their school day, I'm often treated to a stand-up comedy routine.

Last week, for example, while enjoying an after-school snack together, I asked Olivia about her classroom's pet fish: "So, did you get to feed Lenny and Nemo today?"

"Yea," she said. That was it. But when I asked for the "crazy version," Olivia's eyes lit up, "Guess what? My friend Joey hit the tank really hard, and all the glass BROKE.

"Oh, no!" I reacted with mock shock. "And THEN what happened?"

Wide-eyed, she responded, "And then... and then... the classroom FILLED with water!" Olivia ran with it. "Nemo held his breath and swam down the hallway... and actually got on a SCHOOL BUS!" She puckered her lips, to make a fish-mouth, and pretended to turn a big steering wheel.

As her story grew more and more zany, we both laughed until we had tears in our eyes. I egged her on to embellish the story, and she rose to the challenge. Then, after creating the wacky version of her school day, Olivia was much more open to sharing the details of what really happened.

## "Laughing At" versus "Laughing With"

As our children grow, Ellen and I hope they continue to develop their senses of humor, and spread good humor to others. In particular, we want to encourage them to realize that mistakes are a natural part of life, especially when trying to learn something new. By laughing at our mistakes, we can show our kids that goofs are a part of daily living. On the other hand, as parents, we want to help our children understand that laughing AT other's mistakes is cruel and can hurt feelings. Check out these tips for [handling delicate or hurtful situations](#).

A few days ago, my children were bouncing off the walls with energy--and pushing my buttons repeatedly. I felt like I was losing my mind. Then, I checked my email and my perspective instantly shifted. A friend who was having a similarly frustrating time with his kids, passed along this marvelous couplet by poet Robert Frost: "Forgive, o Lord, my little jokes on Thee / And I'll forgive Thy great big one on me."

Wishing you a fun-filled April Fools' Day loaded with belly laughter!

Jordan D. Brown

## [Handling Delicate or Hurtful Situations](#)

Tricky situations and suggestions for dealing with them together.

## [Healthy for Life](#)

Nurturing your child's growing body and mind.

## [Ticklish](#)

Howie Mandel talks about the word 'ticklish.'

## [It's Funny](#)

Polly Darton sings about laughter.

## [Banana in Ernie's Ear, Part 1](#)

Bert tells Ernie he has a banana in his ear.

## [Banana in Ernie's Ear, Part 2](#)

Ernie pulls a joke on Bert.



## [Sesame Street Parents](#)

Visit our Parents page for more tips and activities for you and your child!

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