



Sesame Family Newsletter

July 4, 2007

The nonprofit organization behind Sesame Street and so much more



For Parents

[The Quest for Sibling Revelry](#)
by *Jordan Brown*

Ways to have fun with different-aged siblings.

Featuring:

- "I'll Always Be Older Than You!"
- Fun for Everyone
- Making Messes Together
- Time for a Change
- His Sister, His Pal

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Games and More: The Great Outdoors
Get up-close to nature!

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From the Workshop



[Become a Hero! Vote for Sesame Workshop through the American Express Members Project.](#)

Sesame Store



[Get Sesame Street ringtones and wallpapers for your cellphone at Sesame Street Mobile!](#)

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For years, Sesame Street has nurtured the wellbeing of children through learning, laughter and wonder. [McDonald's](#) is happy to be a sponsor, hoping to inspire kids everywhere to learn and to live more balanced, active lifestyles.

 [Read all about it!](#)

The Quest for Sibling Revelry

"I'LL ALWAYS BE OLDER THAN YOU!"

Eavesdropping on your kids' conversations is one of the benefits of parenthood. Children's unique combination of blunt honesty, unbridled enthusiasm, and irrepressible imagination often makes their comments priceless. On a recent trip to the supermarket, my son Finn (age 6) was chatting with my daughter Olivia (age 2), as I pushed them in a car cart through the aisles. They appeared oblivious to my presence.

Finn: (bragging) I'm always going to be four years older than you, Olivia. When you are 40, I'LL be 44.

Olivia: No, YOU'RE not 44. I'M 44!

Finn: (laughing) No, silly, you're not. You're two and a half. You're still a baby.

Olivia: (laughing) No, YOU'RE the baby. Hey, let's drive super fast, OK, Finn?

Finn: OK!

Finn and Olivia: Vrrrrrrroooooommmmm!

After we all take a quick race through the frozen food aisle...

Finn: Guess what? When you're 50, I'LL be 54.

Olivia: No, I'm two and a half. Let's crash into something!

Finn gladly obliges. They howl with laughter, and make dramatic sound effects as they pretend to smash their car into a display of breakfast cereal. A few minutes later, Finn surprises me by continuing his earlier thoughts.

Finn: And, Olivia, when you are 100, I'll be dead...

Olivia: (matter of fact) You're not dead, Finn. You're six. And I love you SOOOO much!

Finn: Love you, too, Olivia. Hey! Let's crash into something else!

This was definitely one of those moments when I thought it best to remain a wallflower, and let Finn and Olivia enjoy their special brother-sister time. When my children play together, there's often a delicate balance between rivalry and revelry. One moment, they appear on the verge of having a tear-filled argument; the next, they are delighting in each other's company. And vice versa. Moods can change on a dime, so my wife Ellen and I feel like we're constantly preparing for "the perfect storm."



SIBLINGS

[Our three experts explain how sisters and brothers help each other grow.](#)

BIG BROTHER, LITTLE SISTER

[A 4 year old discovers the joys and challenges of a new sibling.](#)

YOU LOVE HIM MORE!

[Sound ideas for soothing sibling rivalry.](#)

A BUNDLE OF STICKS

[This Kenyan fable highlights the power of sibling unity.](#)

SOLVING SIBLING SQUABBLES

[When not to "stay out of it."](#)

FUN FOR EVERYONE

Before I had children, I couldn't fully appreciate comedian Jerry Seinfeld's humorous observation: "There's no such thing as 'fun for the whole family. '" Children of different ages enjoy different challenges, and find different kinds of activities engaging. But to be fair, there are certain activities that almost always appeal to a wide range of kids.



On hot summer days, for example, we can occupy Finn and Olivia with just three words: "Just add water." All Ellen and I have to do to keep our kids happy for hours outside is to let them play water games. This usually involves their running through the sprinkler, blowing bubbles, smashing water balloons on the driveway, or grabbing the hose and playing a rousing game of "Let's Soak Daddy!" After playing hard in the sun, they are eager to come inside, eat a hearty lunch, and watch a video, or play quietly by themselves.

Rainy days can be trickier. The kinds of indoor activities that thrill Finn are not necessarily the ones that are appropriate for Olivia. For instance, Finn enjoys doing science experiments with his electricity kit, such as building simple circuits that cause lights to flash, little plastic fans to spin, and small speakers to play music. Even though Olivia would love to join Finn in these pursuits, she isn't old enough yet to understand how it all works...even if Finn is in a sharing mood. Similarly, Olivia is just learning to cut with toddler scissors, so she sometimes finds the act of cutting up a piece of paper deeply engrossing. Finn? Not so much.

Two activities that are always a hit with both Finn and Olivia are playing with play dough and baking. (In fact, thanks to a Sesame recipe--see the link at the right--we sometimes combine these activities and bake a batch of play dough.) Playing with play dough or clay is an excellent activity because each child can enjoy it at his or her own level. Finn creates elaborate replicas of King Kong (his latest obsession), while Olivia has fun simply rolling out the dough and making shapes with cookie cutters. I've learned the hard way that Olivia also loves to discreetly feed these play dough cookies to our dog Satchmo under the table. Finn likes to teach Olivia new "play dough skills," and she loves learning from her big brother. She delights in saying to me, "No, you don't teach me. FINN teaches me!"

MAKING MESSSES TOGETHER

When we bake together, I know that everyone will have a good time if I accept that things will get messy. .. very messy. Watching children learn to crack eggs is always a great source of amusement for all, as well as an opportunity to teach persistence and point out that everyone makes mistakes. I also make sure that both children gets lots of turns adding and mixing ingredients. A tip I learned from Olivia's preschool is when baking with a bunch of children, divide the tasks into mini-tasks. In other words, instead of having one child pour in 2 cups of flour at once, have several kids take turns using a tablespoon to pour in the same amount of flour. The task lasts longer, but everyone gets a chance to try it. Baking is also a good opportunity to pass along lessons about safety in the kitchen, and the importance of cleaning up.

Another potentially messy activity that both Finn and Olivia love is painting. Usually this project begins quite civilized with the children painting designs on large pieces of paper. When they start to get bored, and if I've laid out enough newspaper, I will sometimes channel their creative energy by allowing them to paint their arms and faces--using non-toxic paint, of course. Invariably, they are so covered with paint, that a bath almost always follows.



HOMEMADE PLAY DOUGH
Cook some up in your kitchen!

BUBBLES OF FUN
Mix up a batch of bubble stuff and let your children make their own blowers.

TOYS FOR TWO
Sharing can be frustrating for siblings, but you can make it work.

BROTHER SISTER FAMILY TREE
Brothers and sisters work together to create a unique family tree.

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Bath time usually ends with this ritual. Olivia gets out first, and says, "Wrap me up like a sausage, Daddy!" I tightly swirl the towel around her. Finn always requests a "bonus minute" in the tub, which I allow him. After he gets out, both kids get a kick out of watching the whirlpool of water go down the drain. Then I usually get Olivia into her clothes, while Finn dresses himself.

Last week, though, Finn insisted on helping Olivia get dressed. He wanted to do everything. Olivia was very excited about her big brother helping her put on her clothes. Finn announced, "Olivia! We need to get you a new diaper!" He ran into her room. He ran back a minute later and whispered to me, "Daddy! Where are her diapers?" Realizing I had forgotten to refill her regular diaper holder, I said, "Let me show you where I keep the extra diapers." Olivia happily played with a stuffed animal, as I helped Finn



get the diaper.

When we returned to Finn's room a moment later, Olivia announced, "Finn, I just peed on your floor. Sorry!" Finn took things surprisingly in stride, and helped me clean it up. Then, with minimal assistance from me, he helped put on Olivia's clothes. Olivia beamed. "Thanks, Finn. I love you!"

HIS SISTER, HIS PAL

Olivia idolizes Finn, and she will attempt almost any activity her big brother enjoys. Although he won't always admit it, the hero worship often goes both ways. Now that Olivia is old enough to talk, and run (and scheme), Finn loves nothing more than getting Olivia to join his merry band. While he seeks the approval of his peers, he also does everything he can to keep Olivia happy. At times, of course, he needs to be reminded that he's the older sibling, and that just because Olivia does something doesn't make it OK for him to do so.



I sometimes wonder what would happen if Finn and Olivia weren't brother and sister, but were same-aged children, meeting each other at the playground. Would they hit it off? I suspect the answer would be yes. Their personalities are a good mesh; Finn is more reserved but has a real prankster side when he warms up. And Olivia is quite gregarious but loves being a supportive when someone else takes the lead. I'm sure as both kids get older, some of these differences will vanish, and they'll truly see each other as equals. I'm sure Finn will continue to boast, "But I'll ALWAYS be four years older!"

Best of luck turning sibling rivalry into sibling revelry.

Jordan Brown

Sesame Workshop

Weekly Trivia

What floor do Ernie and Bert live on?

- A. basement
- B. first floor
- C. second floor
- D. third floor

Stumped? The answer is (A) basement. The Robinsons live on the first floor, the Rodriguez family lives on the second floor, and there is no third floor at 123 Sesame Street.

FROM THE WORKSHOP

Free & Easy Way to Help Sesame Workshop Support Military Families

Beginning July 3rd, American Express Cardmembers who register at www.membersproject.com will have the chance to rate projects that will help make the world a better place. American Express will donate \$1 for every Cardmember who registers; the winning project will receive up to **\$5 million** to help bring it to life. Please take a moment to vote for **Project #01372 "Helping Military Families with Deployment."**

Your vote will make you a hero! Right now more than 700,000 American children under age five have a parent deployed in military service, the most since World War II. As a result, there is a vast and growing population of service members with young children facing unique challenges including stress or anxiety surrounding homecomings and the added emotional stress related to a parent returning home changed due to combat related stress or injury. These children are our forgotten heroes of military engagement. They need to be reminded that they are safe, they are not alone and most of all, that they are loved. Who better to relay that message than Elmo and his friends on Sesame Street!

Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organization behind the acclaimed Sesame Street will continue its support of military families by creating a bi-lingual multi-media experience using trusted and loved Sesame Street Muppets to offer a sense of stability, build resilience, and encourage children to share their feelings while providing parents and caregivers with strategies that foster communication with their child.

Help Sesame Workshop provide:

- An engaging research-tested outreach kit with a DVD featuring Elmo and his friends and other resources designed to support and comfort military families in times of deployment, reunion, and when a parent returns home "changed"
- An online community to facilitate communication so that spouses and children of military personnel can reach out to other families for support and coping strategies
- Educational media featuring real-life stories of military families struggling to cope with repeated deployments, homecoming and combat related injury
- Family events at military hospitals, bases, and in highly-impacted communities

Become a hero to 700,000 young children today! Help military families struggling with challenges related to having a parent deployed for military service and the possibility of them coming home changed forever.

Registering for the Members Project is FREE, easy, and it only takes a moment! Just follow these simple directions:

Step 1. Go to www.membersproject.com

Step 2. Click on Register

Step 3. Follow the instructions on the screen

Once you have registered:

Step 4. Enter project ID# 01372 in the search box in the upper right corner.

Step 5. Click on "**Helping Military Families with Deployment!**" (Health and Fitness)

Step 6. Click on "Rate this project" - **and give it a 5 star rating!**

Step 7. Your comments count! Please write a few words about how this project can help hundreds of thousands of military families deal with the challenges of deployment.

This is a multi-phase selection process to narrow it down to one winning idea. We'll need your help two more times before August 7th to win--please continue to vote for this project when you receive our email alerts.

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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