

Subj: **Spring Celebrations: Enjoying the warmth and love of traditional holidays**
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Sesame Family Newsletter

April 8, 2009

Spring Celebrations

by Elana A. Halberstadt

Enjoying the warmth and love of traditional holidays

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Featuring:

Spring Holidays
Celebrating Passover
Celebrating Easter
Honoring the Past, Living in the Present



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[Kids with Wings](#)

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SPRING HOLIDAYS



[Expose Your Child to a World of Diversity](#)

Help your child get along with others.

[Count Me In](#)

A song about differences

[Same and Different with Ernie](#)

In some ways, Cookie and Ernie are the same.

Tulips and daffodils are coming up and so are Passover (April 8) and Easter (April 12). The sun is shining, trees are budding, and I'm looking forward to celebrating one of my favorite holidays, Passover, with my 2-year-old son Max.

The spring holidays celebrate renewal and rebirth, but they also feature some heavy fare: Slavery, Freedom, and Resurrection, to name a few. How do I explain *that*? Do I even need to? Games and playing are still the best teaching tools for Max, so I'm going to be playful with the holidays, too.

Luckily, there are kid-friendly customs to help. For Passover, there are gifts, eggs, sweet treats, and a ceremonial meal, called a Seder. For Easter, there are bunnies, egg hunts, sweet treats, and big family feast. The two holidays have a common thread -- celebrating life and enjoying time with family.

How the holidays are celebrated (or not) is unique to every family. But big or small, gathering together is the key ingredient. I love spending time with my loved ones. I love delicious food and singing out loud. It's all about the love. That's what I want to give Max. Love -- and lots of it.

CELEBRATING PASSOVER

Our family is Jewish and we celebrate Passover. My husband Andy and I are committed to passing on our customs and traditions to Max.

This year we are excited because for the first time, Max is at an age where he can begin to participate in the Passover Seder (the celebratory feast that features a retelling of the Passover story). By participating, I mean he can listen to the story, and have fun with the different traditions that are part of the holiday.

We're going to our cousins' Seder, which begins this year just before sunset on April 8. With over 40 people of all ages, it's a boisterous bunch. The kids run around in a kind of controlled chaos and their presence is what makes it fun for everyone.

For children, the highlight of the Passover Seder is the hunt for the hidden matzah, a kind of flat bread. Traditionally, a grown-up hides the matzah somewhere in the home at the beginning of the evening. Later, the children search for it. To conclude the Seder, the children must find the hidden matzah and return it to the grown-up, who rewards the children with a small gift.

CELEBRATING EASTER



[Understanding Differences in Others](#)

Self-esteem helps children get along.

[Same and Different](#)

Abby and Elmo find ways they are the same and different.

[Healthy For Life](#)

Tips on exercise and nutrition

Andy and I are also interested in exposing Max to Easter, since some of Andy's cousins are Christian. This year, we'll spend Easter Sunday with this part of our extended family. Just like the matzah hunt is part of Passover, the traditional Easter egg hunt is one of the activities I know Max will love. What could be more fun than running around the yard, searching for the hidden (but not too hard to find) colorful eggs filled with treats. Exercise and fresh air before (and after) the sugar rush is one way to ease a parent's guilt about all those sweets. Yup. That's what I'm telling myself.

I can't wait to see Max's reaction when he finds his first egg and then discovers that it's filled with CHOCOLATE. Yum. His favorite and mine! Too much sugar isn't good for him (or me), so we're going to fill some eggs with healthier options. Maybe carrots? Yeah, that should work well... in my dreams, that is. I can hear him now, "Mommy, more chocolate!"

HONORING THE PAST, LIVING IN THE PRESENT



[Empathy in Children Aged 2 to 6](#)

Identifying with other people's feelings

[Music, Culture and Communication](#)

Musical activities to explore diversity

I grew up in Israel and have wonderful memories of celebrating Passover with my grandparents at their idyllic cottage. The house sparkled from my grandmother's thorough cleaning, and smelled heavenly from cooking and baking. My grandfather led the ceremonial Seder (the Hebrew literally means "order"), telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The meal ended after midnight, with everyone tired but happy from eating and singing together. I want Max to experience the warmth and love associated with traditional holidays, just as I did growing up.

Passover celebrates freedom after slavery. At the Seder we attempt to remember the story as if we ourselves went through this ordeal. We also remember those who are suffering today. Max is too young to understand the symbols and deeper meanings. But, he can understand when someone is hurt, sad, or needs help. He comforts others with, "Ouch, Max kiss boo-boo." I'd like to think this is the beginning of him learning about other people's feelings.

Whatever we're celebrating, Passover or Easter, the most important part is being with family, and what could be more fun than that? And, in the process, Max learns about different traditions and cultures of our world. Plus, with family around, he gets more tickles, attention, and love. Now that's something to celebrate -- whatever you call it!

Wishing your family healthy, happy, and playful holidays!

Elana A. Halberstadt
Sesame Workshop

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

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