

‘For-Now Parents’ and ‘Big Feelings’: How Sesame Street Talks About Trauma

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ASTORIA, NEW YORK—Inside the *Sesame Street* studio in Queens, Elmo is playing “monsterball” with his friend, a new Muppet named Karli who has lime-green fur and two ponytails. (Monsterball, for what it’s worth, appears to be the same as soccer, but with a furry ball.) Puppeteers, with their hands raised high and their heads cranked to the side to stay out of the camera’s shot, run around, making Elmo and Karli kick, laugh, and throw the ball.

Outside, it’s a chilly gray December Monday, but on set the monsterball park is brimming with plant life, and butterfly puppets held up on long metal wires flap their wings. Looking on are Elmo’s dad—yes, he has a dad now, as of 2006—and two of what Sesame Street calls “anything Muppets,” puppets with no particular character attached that are made as templates and can be adapted as needed. These Muppets—a fuzzy teal monster in an athletic jersey and a gray monster with pink and purple feathers for hair—have become Karli’s foster parents, Clem and Dalia.

In between cheering for Elmo and Karli, Elmo’s dad (whose name is Louie) asks Clem and Dalia: “How has everything been going, since becoming her foster parents?”

Clem hangs his head and sighs. “Changes like this can be really rough for kids. And for adults, too,” he says.

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In the final version of this video—part of [Sesame Workshop’s new set of materials on foster care](#), released today—Clem’s head is held high, and a measured acknowledgment that sometimes things can be tough gives way to excitement when it’s decided that Elmo can join Karli, Clem, and Dalia for “pizza-party Tuesdays,” because as Louie says, “everything’s better with a friend by your side.”

The foster-care resources—which include an interactive storybook and printable activities, as well as videos featuring Muppets—are the latest in a series of packages that Sesame Workshop is producing to support kids going through traumatic experiences. These online resources—which won’t be featured on the television show—are intended for use by parents and caretakers, and also by therapists, social workers, and anyone else who works with such kids.