



OBSERVER

## The Kid-King of New York

By [Max Abelson](#) · 04/06/09 7:35pm



### **Location: Were you a precocious child?**

Mr. Seligman: I definitely wasn't an overachiever in school at all. I struggled in school a lot of the time, definitely had a hard time in certain classes, but if there was something I was passionate about, you couldn't stop me. I was just a very hard worker.

### **Did you have a happy childhood?**

I had an interesting childhood. My parents got divorced pretty early, I was going into the first grade, so I was young; but in New York, it's not uncommon to have divorced parents. And I moved from the city to Westchester.

**Did you get good grades?**

I would get on report cards, 'Definitely smart beyond his years but doesn't put enough effort in.'

**What were you like in high school?**

To transition from middle school into high school in the suburbs, it was a complete culture shock, to say the least. I was kind of an outsider. ... I remember the first day of school, everyone was like, 'What sports do you play?' or 'What teams are you going out for?' At my old school, we didn't have a team. It was definitely quite a transition. ... I went through an awkward stage. I was overweight. I was kind of all over the place.

**That's odd, you're very skinny. What happened?**

One day I definitely woke up and decided that I really wanted to get into better shape and take care of myself and have more energy.

**Were your parents surprised when you didn't go to college?**

Well, I was hired full time at a PR company when I was 17, when I graduated high school—sort of an intern or whatever, but I was working full time.

**Why did you leave PR for real estate?**

I was very young. I thought I knew a lot more than I did. ... I had a long talk with my boss—she kind of decided it wasn't the best fit. She actually said to me, 'I have no doubt in my mind in a decade you'll own a media empire, but right now ...'

**Laid off and not in college? Did you have an existential crisis?**

Oh, I was distraught. ... I was so young, obviously, people had major hesitations about hiring me, so I was debating whether I could afford to be one of those kids who do whatever they want and travel and have fun and party. I made a choice, I said, 'I'd always been thinking about real estate.'

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*'Worrying about what other people think is not what I really focus on.'*

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**Did you meet your future clients through that PR firm?**

Funny you should ask—we actually just had a closing this week to my old boss. It was a nice-sized apartment, over a million dollars.

**What do your parents do?**

My father owns an envelope and paper company. And my mother, actually, she just took her state [real estate] exam yesterday and it's soon to be, hopefully, a license. She lives in Westchester, and she's going to be working with a friend out there. She already has her personal assistant.

**You started with Citi Habitats and went to Corcoran, where you were apparently their youngest hire, top rookie and quickest promotion. Why did you leave three months ago for their rival, Elliman?**

You know, it's nothing too specific, but I knew a manager there and some other people. A lot of people that work there have always been like, 'Oh, you should come over here.' They just have such camaraderie.

**What does it mean that you're a senior vice president at Elliman?**

The title's just a title, to say the least. I think it gives me some credibility. When I started in the business, I was really hesitant to tell anyone how old I was. ... It's tough, you're buying and selling really expensive apartments, people's biggest decisions in their lifetimes—and you're so young.

**The Web site Curbed recently named you the broker of the year, and yet right now you have four listings, and three are below \$1 million. Are you nervous about living up to the hype?**

Worrying about what other people think is not what I really focus on.

**What can you do to get more listings?**

Obviously, this is not the time to go and sell your apartment and get the top price possible, so we took a few listings off the market and we rented some.

**Have you called up Elliman's biggest broker, Dolly Lenz, to introduce yourself?**

No... Of course, meeting anyone with such success in this business would be an honor and a privilege. I definitely look forward to, hopefully, doing some business with her.

**Would you want to be one of New York's big mega-brokers?**

At the end of the day, we're in this business to, in some way, help people. ... All that other stuff, if that comes with it? Great, but that's not why I'm here.

**Yet *Page Six* ranked you ahead of Alex Rodriguez on its 'Hottest Bachelors' list.**

When I saw that, I was just laughing hysterically. I couldn't believe that, and I had no idea how I made it to that list, or even before A-Rod, which is hysterical. I definitely think he's a more valuable bachelor than I am.

**Your clients reportedly include Kirsten Dunst, Nicole Richie, Ally Hilfiger, Margherita Missoni, Jessica Stam, Coco Rocha, Caroline Trentini, Hilary Rhoda and Lily Cole. Is that like being stuck in a Bret Easton Ellis novel?**

I definitely work with a wide mix of people. It's always funny to see a typical day. It's not uncommon to go from someone very young and with a very interesting profession to a family looking for a place for their kids. At the end of the day, we give the same service to everyone.

**Are you using the royal 'we'?**

Did I say 'we'?

**Have you always been friendly with models?**

In terms of interesting types of people, I've always been lucky where I've been surrounded by very interesting smart and talented and successful people. Growing up in New York City, regardless of where you were, you were always meeting interesting people.

**You were profiled in *W* magazine, and your last two birthday parties were both written about. Is that good for business?**

At the end of the day, that's just one little glimpse of one little thing. ... Sometimes the most exciting thing I do in the week is watch reality television.



**Brokering is slightly unglamorous; you're at the mercy of the market and of clients, and you have to be servile to others' needs. Would you want to go into, say, development?**  
I would love to learn more about development and get involved in, possibly, a creative project or two. ... My job is definitely not glamorous. Last night I got a phone call at 10 o'clock: 'Some water fixture broke in the bathroom, what do I do?' It's like, 'O.K.,' and you go over the steps one by one. ... I would love to definitely branch out one day, but right now I'm just focusing on this.

**What about returning to school?**

I've definitely thought about taking some classes; that's something I'm more than considering and would absolutely do in the near future. But in terms of stopping my work and going to school full time, that's just not something that I would ever even imagine. ... The thought of me not representing my clients is just something unheard of.

**Your biggest-ever listing was Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's penthouse at One Morton Square, which you listed in November 2007 for \$11.995 million, but the price went down to \$10.995 and \$10.495 and \$9.995 million. Then this January it was pulled from the market without selling. What went wrong?**

I think it's obvious 2008 was a big transition from a seller's market to a buyer's market, so many listings on the market at every price point saw a major shift.

**What's the biggest sale you've ever closed?**

I've brokered things to people from \$500,000 to in excess of \$10 million.

**How many \$10 million sales have you done?**

I don't think it's important to really comment.

**Would you recommend real estate to other 22-year-olds?**

It's funny, a lot of people come and see me or they'll write me emails about looking to get into real estate. But it's a tough business, there's no stability. ... Is it a career that I recommend to everyone? Absolutely not. This is tough, tough work.

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