

The potty training Guide



THE ULTIMATE POTTY TRAINING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Do you want the straight “poop” on potty training? This book isn’t just a bunch of “cookies”. You won’t be “peeing” away your time reading it. OK, now that I’ve got the cute euphemisms out of the way, let me start out by saying that for parents, potty training is very serious business.

It’s a time in your child’s life when they transition between baby and land firmly into toddler-hood. They start to realize that there’s something important about this bowl-thing that swirls water down a hold when you push a lever.

Some parents don’t like to think about this phase in their child’s life. They’re growing up and that’s a difficult thing to swallow sometimes. But potty training is only the beginning, so if you’re one of those parents, let go of those thoughts.

Kids have all kinds of firsts in their lives – even when they’re adults, and potty training will start the process of discovery off in a great and healthy way. Often, it’s difficult for them to start. They may have difficulty understanding their body’s feelings and might not realize fully what is supposed to be happening.

Classically, this process has been a source of headache and frustration for parents and caregivers. Accidents happen all the time, and when you’ve cleaned up your third pair of soiled pants in the course of a day, you might be wondering whether or not you can even do this and not scar your child emotionally for life.

We’re here to tell you that YES, IT IS POSSIBLE to potty train your child without pulling your hair out. You can help your child cooperate with you and make this a wonderful, easy experience that both of you can enjoy – that’s right, we said ENJOY!

When you decide your child is ready to be potty trained, you’re bound to get all sorts of advice from everyone – your parents, your siblings, friends, co-workers, possibly even the postman. Some of

what they have to say will be good advice, and you will want to take some of it - but not all of it.

You see, potty training is a very personal experience and it's not the same for every child. When you can effectively read the signs and signals that your own child exhibits, you will be well on your way to successful potty training.

That said, you may be wondering how we can give advice to you in this book. Well, what we've done is bring together hundreds of tips, tricks, and pieces of advice for you to read. You obviously won't use all of them. What we hope, though, is that you'll find just the right pieces of advice for you and your child.

Potty training can actually be fun, so read on and get started - TODAY!

IS YOUR CHILD READY?

This is perhaps the most hotly debated part of potty training. Over-anxious parents who don't want to deal with the bother of diapers anymore often try to force their child into using the toilet before they are ready.

This can be highly detrimental to them, however, and you must wait until your child shows signs of readiness before you begin. If you don't, this will be a very long process filled with frustration and headaches for both you and your child.

There is no magic age when potty training should begin. As we've already said, every child is different. With my own children, my daughter was going on the toilet consistently and staying dry at night at 18 months. My son, however, showed absolutely no signs of wanting to use the potty until well after he had already turned three. My grandson also wasn't interested at all until just before his third birthday.

In general, most kids are ready around the age of two or two and a half and girls tend to train before boys do. Boys are often able to gain control of urine but have problems with bowel control. Here are some common signs that your child might be ready to use the potty.

- Bowel movements occur at about the same time every day
- He or she can stay dry for a few hours at a time or wakes up from sleep dry
- Your child begins to talk about using the potty and knows when they have to go to the bathroom.
- They are able to tell you when they have a soiled diaper.
- They can understand the association between dry pants and using the potty.
- He or she understand the terminology such as "poop", "pee", "dry", "wet", "potty", etc.

Independence is also an important aspect of being ready for the potty. If your child can understand simple commands like "Let's go to the potty", then readiness is also imminent. There are other things to watch for as well.

- Your child can pull his/her pants up and down.
- They begin to imitate other members of the family.
- He or she watches you on the toilet and asks questions.
- Your child wants to do things by herself/himself.
- He or she enjoys washing his/her hands.
- They get upset if their belongings are not in their proper place.
- Your child wants to please you.

Toddlers are classically fussy little people. At a certain point in their upbringing, they will refuse to do absolutely anything for you when asked. When they have progressed beyond this stage sufficiently enough to obey simple commands, potty training can commence.

Now, don't think that this whole process is completely in your child's hands. There are some steps you can take before the actual potty process begins to prepare your child for potty training.

HELPING THEM GET READY

There is much to be said for setting the stage well before you begin toilet training. Few children train themselves. They need to know what's expected of them! They need and deserve your help and guidance.

A child who has become familiar with bathroom procedures and equipment is more likely to become trained quickly and easily than one who has not. How can you best do this?

First, take your child into the bathroom with you. It's especially helpful if fathers and brothers set the example for boys, and mothers and sisters set the example for girls. Brothers or sisters are often pleased to act as role models.

Some adults have a real problem with people being in the bathroom with them – even if it is your own child or grandchild. My husband is like this. When my daughter began to potty train our grandson, it was very important to him that he see Grandpa going potty. The bottom line is that he basically “got over it” and let Conner in with him.

Of course, there are always other children who would like to show off their potty skills to your child. If your child is in day care, they can watch how their peers use the potty and will most likely imitate them. In fact, this can actually speed up the process significantly.

Try to help your child recognize the sensations of "being wet," "wetting now," and "about to be wet." Encourage your child to talk about these sensations -- especially "about to be..." sensations -- without pressing your child to be toilet trained.

Comment on signs you notice, such as the child's pausing in play or walking as if he or she is uncomfortable after elimination. Use statements such as, "You are going poop," rather than asking the general question, "What are you doing?" Asking your child to let you know when the diaper is wet or messy is another way of increasing awareness.

Let your child go nude in appropriate settings to help the child "see" what he or she is doing, and to help make the mental connection between the words and what they refer to.

This was especially helpful with Conner. Potty training started in the summer when we were outside a lot. He took great joy in "peeing on a tree" and off the back deck. We live in the country, so we didn't have to worry about inappropriateness.

We let him run nude in the house as well which was alright because it was hot outside and being naked gave him the freedom to use the potty without worrying about soiling his pants. Of course, there were accidents, and I invested in a cheap carpet cleaner to take care of that!

Changing a diaper in the bathroom will also associate the process with the place. Children over age 2 should be off the changing table for exactly this reason.

Although much ado has been made about using the proper terminology for body parts and functions, you should use the words that come most easily to you and your child. "Peeing," for example, may be more effective than the term "urinating" if the latter is a forced term.

However, you SHOULD use specific terms. "Going to the bathroom" is too vague. "Go pee on the potty" is not.

Try not to use words that will make your child think of his or her bodily functions as being dirty or disgusting. Avoid saying things like "dirty," "stinky," "yucky," etc.

Help your child learn the meaning of the terms "before" and "after" by using them yourself in other contexts such as, "After I eat

dinner, I've got to clean up the dishes."

Talk about the advantages of being potty trained: no more diaper rash, no more interruptions for diaper changing, and the pleasure of being clean and dry. Discuss training as an important stage of growing up. If your child is truly ready to use the potty, he or she will be able to understand you.

Let your child practice lowering and raising training pants sometimes, or putting them on and taking them off. Pull-ups are great for teaching them this concept.

You will want to consider buying "big boy britches" for boys or "pretty panties" for girls before starting the process. By this, we mean actual underwear with a favorite character on them or frilly, lacy panties that can make your girl or boy feel special. Using this tactic also helps them embrace the desire not to soil their special pants.

Have a potty chair handy on which the child may sit even with clothes on perhaps while you are in the bathroom yourself, but only if he or she wants to. The intent is not to get results, but to provide familiarity with the equipment.

Some children won't use a potty chair at all, but having one available is a good idea anyway. There are all sorts of fun potty chairs on the market today, so find one that your child can be proud of and identify with.

The idea is to have your child sit on the potty chair and become comfortable with being on their own little throne. If they want to haul it into the living room and sit there while watching TV, let them. Don't get all caught up in appropriateness when potty training. You have to relax just a little bit and let your child lead the way – at least for a little bit!

Let your child flush the toilet for you to help him or her get used to the noise it makes and avoid possible fear later on. We found it helpful to "wave bye bye" to the pee or poop as it drained out. This made it fun for him!

Explain the way things should be to your child. At the start, explain to your child that it's time to put her "pee-pee" and "poo" in the potty. Tell your child that when s/he feels the need to go she should hold it in just long enough to walk to the potty, sit down, and let it go.

Talk to your child about the advantages of being trained: no more diaper rash, no more interruptions for diaper changing, and the pleasure of being clean and dry. Discuss training as an important stage of growing up.

Sit your child's favorite doll or action figure on a pretend toilet, explaining "the baby is going pee-pee in the potty." Put diapers on his favorite stuffed bear. Then graduate the bear to underwear.

Make a big deal about throwing away your child's diapers. Tell your child that they won't need the diapers anymore because they will be big kids now. You can even have your child throw their own diapers in the trash can and commemorate the event with a special crown or treat!

You can start reading "potty" books to your child or watching potty videos. In fact, books and videos can really make the whole potty process a lot easier!

VIDEOS AND BOOKS CAN HELP

Not only can videos and book help before beginning toilet training, they can help during as well. This is especially true when your child doesn't seem to be making a whole lot of progress toward completely becoming potty trained.

Kids love to be read to, and they love watching videos – especially videos with favorite characters. Luckily, there are all sort of these on the market ready for you and your child to enjoy – together!

Potty Training Videos

Let's face it: kids are just captivated by videos. So when it's potty time in your household, it makes sense to show a video about

potty training. You may find that once you introduce a video to them, they won't be able to get enough of it – even after they've mastered the potty!

Potty training videos work because they show real-life children or animated characters using the potty. They may also feature catchy, sing-along tunes. This type of entertainment can improve learning and help your child make the transition from diapers to the potty more quickly.

Does your child love to watch the same videos over and over again? I know Conner does! At this point, I can pretty much recite dialogue word-for-word right along with Marlin and Dorie in "Finding Nemo" and have ceased to get surprised anymore when Oscar slays the sharks in "Shark Tale".

But this actually isn't a bad thing! The more children watch a video, the more they repeat the actions and words from it. Conner is constantly spouting lines from favorite movies. It naturally follows, then, that when children watch a video about potty training, they are more likely to put into practice those behaviors that will help them overcome this difficult milestone in their development.

Just make sure to step out of the way when your child runs to the bathroom and says, "I want to go potty!"

Here are a few suggestions for you to look for when finding potty videos for your child:

- Potty Power
- I Can Go Potty!
- Once Upon a Potty For Him
- Once Upon a Potty For Her
- Bear In The Big Blue House – Potty Time With Bear
- Winston's Potty Chair
- Let's Go Potty

Even though we are in the DVD age right now, some of these titles may only be available in VHS, so break out that old VCR and hook it up to your TV.

[Potty Training Books](#)

Most children are fascinated with the printed word – especially when those words are accompanied by colorful pictures. Most children also love to be read to. If this isn't a regular part of your routine, you should really try to start.

The advantage to books over videos when potty training is that books can be read WHILE the child is sitting on the potty. Many, many adults like to read while "doing their business", it only makes sense that your child would like to do the same. Even if they can't read yet, they can look at the pictures while you read the words!

Following are some of the potty training books we've found to be especially helpful – and fun!

- Once Upon a Potty For Him
- Once Upon a Potty For Her
- Too Big For Diapers (featuring Sesame Street characters)
- The Potty Book for Boys
- The Potty Book for Girls
- A Potty for Me
- It's Potty Time
- Toddler's Potty Book
- What Do You Do With a Potty?
- My Potty Book
- Dora's Potty Book (featuring Dora the Explorer)
- A Baby's Got to Go (featuring The Rugrats)

Since we're talking about tools that will help you during potty training, choosing the right potty chair can be a pretty big ordeal too!

FINDING YOUR CHILD'S THRONE

Some people think that having a separate "facility" for your child to go in will only confuse him or her. Sometimes the whole potty training process involves introducing a potty chair and mastering that, then moving on to an adapter seat that fits over the regular toilet progressing to actually using the big toilet all the time.

This, however, isn't written in stone, and many people go about this process in different ways. Having a potty chair readily available is a great tool when teaching your child about toilet habits. It's

something that is all their and no one else's which gives them ownership in their young life.

Believe it or not, there are all sorts of different options when choosing a potty chair. And getting the right one can make all the difference in success during potty training.

Proponents of the potty chair say it allows a child to be more independent, since a parent doesn't need to lift the child to the toilet. It also allows a child to place his or her feet squarely on the floor when bearing down while pooping, and the child can also use the support of the chair's arms.

As we've said, because a potty chair is obviously the child's own, he or she will take pride in possessing it. Choosing the right potty chair should begin as soon as your child shows an interest in using the potty. Involve him or her in the process of picking out their own chair.

If you have a potty in the bathroom, you and your child can go to the toilet at the same time. For some adults, this is a frightening thought as their privacy means the world to them, but it can make all the difference during the training process.

One disadvantage is that a boy will not be able to pee standing up -it will be too difficult, and there will be too much splashing. Another consideration is that it needs to be cleaned out by you or the child. In the beginning, cleaning out the pot will be fun. With experience, it loses its appeal for a child -- and probably for you, too.

If the thought of using a potty chair appeals to you, you should get one before you start training, so it becomes a familiar piece of equipment for your child. In fact, you may even let your child shop for the chair with you. You can narrow the choice down to two or three styles, and let you child choose from among those. This can make the child all the more anxious to try it.

Personalizing a potty chair will also make it more unique and interesting. You can do this by adding a few stickers or decal of your child's choosing. Or, you could also use press-type letters and spell out your child's name.

Let your child know that it's okay -- for now -- to sit on the potty with clothes on to get used to it, but when he or she is ready, it will be used like "Mommy and Daddy use the toilet." Avoid using the seat at other times so as not to confuse the issue.

If you opt for a potty chair, you will probably choose a miniature version of an adult toilet, a molded one-piece style chair a child straddles, or a plastic molded stool-type chair. Many potty chairs today convert to adult toilet seat adapters as well.

Before purchasing a potty chair, check to see how the pot is removed. If the pot is hard to get out or has to be tipped, don't buy it.

If you want a urine deflector, look for a removable one to be made of flexible plastic. Potties with deflectors seem to be easier to find than those without them, but if your child is hurt by one when trying to seat himself, he may refuse to use the seat.

Buy a floor model that won't slide around and is stable.

Consider buying more than one potty chair, especially if you have more than one bathroom or a two-story house. The extra one can always be used for car travel or left at Grandma's.

Be aware that if you get a potty chair with a tray, lifting it up will be one more step your child will have to master.

Look into the possibility of buying an adult camping portable potty for a child who's larger than other toddlers.

Believe it or not, there are some amazing "special" potty chairs that can make going to the bathroom a fun and interesting experience for your child. A friend of mine bought a race car potty for her grandson that made racing noises when he peed or pooped in it.

There are potty chairs that play music, too, when the child goes. Some potties have shapes in the bottom of the pot that change colors when the child pees. One product on the market right now comes complete with a handle for flushing and makes the sound that the big toilet makes when it is flushed.

When considering this type of potty chair, keep in mind that eventually, all of the bells and whistles can tend to get old quickly. This is especially evident when you find your child thinks it's fun to pour water in it just so they can hear the fun sounds.

Expect to spend anywhere from \$12 to \$100 on a potty seat. The cheapest ones you will find are plain, white types that don't have any optional features, but they do get the job done. The high priced potty chair is usually made of wood, and can even look like a replica from the Victorian age!

Whatever type of potty chair you choose, make sure your child likes it. I think one of the reasons Conner disliked sitting on his potty chair was because it didn't hold any interest for him. It was just a generic style chair with a lift able lid and removable bowl. I wonder how much easier our experience with him would have been if we would have invested in a Nemo or Sponge Bob chair!

When you buy a potty chair, you should really have one for every bathroom in your home. Some people even go so far as to have a chair in every room of the house. While we think this is a bit of overkill, if you're having trouble, this could actually be a great tool.

We definitely advocate having your child with you when you are picking out a potty chair. Once you get it home, introduce it in a casual way. It's alright if your child wants to play with it a little bit. Show your child how it works and talk to him or her about how they are supposed to use it.

Make a big deal about the fact that your child has something of their own that they can use and should use! You may want to try putting the potty in a room where they play often – even in the kitchen where you can supervise.

Encourage use of the potty chair by putting a chart up on the refrigerator. Explain to your child that each time they use the potty chair, they will get a sticker. This will be an incentive for using the chair. Kids love earning rewards, but we'll get to that in a later chapter!

Potty chairs aren't your only option during potty training.

TOILET ADAPTER SEATS

Another type of toilet training device is a separate seat that fits over the regular toilet seat making it easier for your child to sit on the big potty. These types of seats can make your toddler feel much safer when using the potty, but keep in mind that they still have little legs.

Getting up on the toilet might be a problem, so invest in a stool that they can use to step up on. Stools can also help kids to be able to push with their legs when having a bowel movement.

As with regular potty chairs, there are also adapter seats that come built in with step-stools in the style of a folding ladder. If this works for your child, by all means, take advantage of this technology!

Adapters are lightweight and portable and have the additional advantage of direct flushing, so there is no extra cleanup necessary. However, adapter seats can be a nuisance for the rest of the family if there is only one bathroom and the adapter is in the way and must constantly be removed and replaced in innovative ways. Some styles have tried to overcome that complaint.

Many of these seats come with vinyl straps implying that a child is left alone on the seat and needs extra safety protection. In the early stages of training, a child should not be left alone. No child should be strapped in place and then left!

That is likely to feel like punishment to a child. Stay with your child. If you haven't gotten the desired results within three to five minutes, you aren't going to. As children take on the responsibility of using the toilet with an adapter, they will be on and off by themselves in no time, and the strap is unnecessary.

You may wish to consider buying an inflatable or folding adapter seat for use when traveling or shopping, regardless of the method you opt for at home.

Using an insert type potty chair can make cleanup a lot easier, since all you need do is flush the toilet and perhaps wipe off the seat. Many parents also like the fact that these inserts are portable and easily moved from place to place. One of the big drawbacks, however, is that many children are fearful of the toilet insert at first. On the plus

side, these inserts are generally quite inexpensive, so it may be worth a try.

Some parents wonder why they need all of these separate devices to ultimately teach their child to actually just go on the big toilet. They may be right. Potty chairs and adapter seats give the child a sense of safety. For a little one, the adult world seems very, very big, and that can scare them.

However, you may have a child like our Conner who refused both potty chairs and adapter seats. How do you teach your child to use the big potty?

DIRECT TOILET USE

While we might be jumping ahead of ourselves a bit, at this point in the book, we do feel like we should address the best ways to use the regular toilet during toilet training.

When your child wants to use the big potty, he or she is exerting independent tendencies, and you can encourage this tendency. It will, however, take some attention on your part, too!

It is perfectly acceptable to have your child learn to use the toilet without any special equipment. Obviously, the longer you wait to train your child, the bigger he or she will be and the more likely able to sit on an adult seat without any aid except possibly yours.

Remember the adult toilet can seem like an abyss to a child. But certain techniques can make a child feel more secure.

Teach a boy to urinate sitting down backward on the toilet, straddling it, and pointing his penis downward. If he is distracted while standing, he might forget to aim.

Teach a little girl to sit sideways or backward on the big toilet. A little girl should also "sink" her bottom low enough so urine does not go through the seat ring and bowl rim. In the beginning, removing underwear and pants will lessen chance of them getting wet.

Hold your child securely on the seat's edge yourself. They trust you anyway, so having you there with them will give them the sense of safety that they really need.

Now that we've covered tools you can use during potty training, it's time for us to look at what time is the right time.

THE RIGHT TIME TO START

Your child's readiness is the main consideration, but there are also some other suggestions we have as far as the time frame you should think about for toilet training.

In general, you should undertake this huge task during a time when there is little conflict and not much activity. Potty training around Christmas or Thanksgiving can be distracting. You need to devote a lot of attention to your toddler, and with so much going on during the holidays; you probably won't be able to do that.

However, if you have a long holiday weekend without having to worry about work, working on potty training during this time could be a great time to start.

Make potty training a top priority on a consistent basis when you have the emotional and physical energy to do it. Even if your child shows signs of potty training readiness, you may not be ready for it as a parent.

Clear your schedule and be ready for anything! Select a time to begin the potty training when your family's routine is least likely to be disturbed with house guests, vacations away from home, a move, and so on. Make sure you're not pre-occupied with other major commitments such as work, either.

You may want to get out a calendar and talk with your child about a good time to start intensive potty training. Ask your child when s/he wants to begin to learn how to use the potty. Circle the date in a bright color and keep reminding her/him that "potty day" is almost here

Other less-than-ideal times to begin potty training are during stressful situations such as when traveling, around the time of a birth of a sibling, or when making another huge life adjustment for your child such as taking away the bottle or changing from a crib to a bed.

Take these factors into consideration when you plan to introduce toilet teaching. It may be better to postpone it until your child's environment is stable and secure.

Also, though some experts may recommend starting the process during summer because children wear less clothing, it is **not** a good idea to wait to start if your child is ready.

Of course, teaching your toddler to use the potty isn't an overnight experience. The process typically takes between 3 and 6 months, although it may take more or less time for some children.

And although some little ones can learn to both make it through the night without wetting or soiling themselves (or the bed) *and* use the potty around the same time, it may take an additional 6 months to 1 year to master staying dry at night.

There are some people out there who will offer "systems" that can help you teach your child to use the potty within three days – or even less. They may help, but potty training is a long, learning process that takes complete dedication.

Children can experience stress too. Trying to potty train while your child is under a certain amount of stress for whatever reason can be frustrating for both of you. Avoid this huge step during times like this.

Toilet training is a learning process, not a disciplinary process, and a complicated one at that! Your child has to understand what you want, and then has to learn how to do it. In addition to understanding the bodily sensations, getting to the bathroom and getting clothes off, a child must first constrict sphincter muscles to achieve control, and then relax them to eliminate. Obviously there is a lot to learn. Gaining bowel and bladder control is a skill and fortunately children usually like to learn new skills.

The mastery of skills usually follows a pattern. First is bowel regularity often followed *by* bowel control. Daytime bladder control

often comes next but for many children this can happen simultaneously, and finally later (often much later), comes nighttime bladder control

And, of course, there are children who achieve daytime and nighttime control simultaneously. With the swing toward a more relaxed approach to toilet training from the previous generation, children tend to be trained later and more frequently their bowel and bladder functions come under their control at the same time.

Some parents elect to take a more laid-back approach towards toilet training. They let the child go when they want to and if they have an accident, they just gloss over it with little reference. For some people, this can work, but it's bound to take a lot longer than traditional toilet training.

If you do choose a passive, more laissez-faire attitude about toilet training, keep in mind that children still need to know what it is that is expected of them. You are not necessarily "pushing" your child by providing direction and expectations. Some children really are ready to be trained early, so you are not "pushing" if you are meeting no resistance. Let their resistance be your guide. Children really do love learning grown-up behavior, so don't deny them their opportunity, if it fits their readiness.

So, are there ways you can help along the process? You bet!

BLADDER CONTROL

Some parents prefer to begin toilet training in the winter or rainy months when it's hard to get out of the house, but it might be easiest to begin toilet training in the summer, if this fits your schedule. Summer clothes are light and can be removed quickly. And when accidents do occur, you'll have fewer layers of clothes to launder.

If possible, plan to devote at least three days in a row to begin bladder training and give your child your complete concentration. During those days you must be able to drop everything when a child has to go.

Tell your child that you expect to be told if there is a need to go. The idea behind this is to let your child be in charge of as much of the toilet training process as possible.

Put your child on the toilet first thing in the morning, before naps, after naps, after meals, after being dry for two hours, and before bedtime. Initially a regular schedule can help with this process.

Keep them company while they're trying to do their business. You can use this time for reading or just talking. Books about potties are appropriate selections to keep in the bathroom! But we've already said that, right?

Praise all progress. For some, sitting more than 10 seconds may be progress. Try turning the water on and letting it run for inspiration. Have you ever really had to go to the bathroom and heard running water making it difficult to hold your urine in? The same concept can apply when it comes to your child.

Running water can be a great way to inspire your child's bowels to let go. Just don't let it run forever. If they're gonna go, they're gonna go. If they're not, they're not. Know when to stop; otherwise, it becomes a game!

Offer more fluids when you are actively involved in training. The more a child drinks, the more a child will need to urinate and respond to body signals. Occasionally say to your child, "It's time to try now."

Set a timer to remind your child when it's time to go potty rather than doing all the reminding yourself. Use the reminder as a "before" condition: "After you use the potty, we will ..."

Consolidate success by maintaining the same routine for several weeks. Keep in mind that even children who have mastered the bathroom procedure may wet their pants during the day for several weeks or months.

If you have followed all reasonable steps for some time without success, stop! Try again in a few weeks or months.

BOWEL CONTROL

Bowel control is often achieved before bladder control. Parents can usually tell when a bowel movement, or BM, is about to happen. When they suspect a BM is imminent, they can bring their child to the potty to see if the child is able to relieve themselves there. However, potty training is a very individual process, and some children may achieve bladder control before bowel control. Ultimately, you'll find what works best for your child.

At some point your child will no longer have bowel movements during the night. They become a daytime process for most children. The more regular your child is, the easier it will be to start bowel-control training. Children often stop playing when they are having a BM. Some even hide in a favorite spot. Others just grunt or get red in the face. Saying, "I see you're having a BM" helps a child identify what is occurring and associate those sensations with the process.

Constipation, if part of your child's history, may actually delay toilet training for your child. This is not anything to be worried about, but just one more variable you can be sensitive to.

Explain to your child that you will be taking him or her to the toilet or the potty chair and that you expect the bowel movement to go there rather than in diapers. "This is what Mommy and Daddy do, what grown-ups do and now what you should do because you're getting so big and grown up" is the kind of language to use.

Give advance notice as to when this procedure will start. Children need to hear what you expect in pleasant tones and words. They can't read your mind. Your attitude, your anticipation, your relaxed tones will also convey much of the message.

If your child has a regular time for a bowel movement, choose that time to go to the bathroom. If they have no regular time, try within 30 minutes after a meal. When the stomach is full, the colon is often stimulated to empty.

As we've said before, be prepared to sit with your child to keep him or her company. Don't insist your child sit for more than a few minutes but only as long as he or she is comfortable.

At the same time, know that some children need to be alone to have a bowel movement. Bright bathroom lights and too much conversation may inhibit them from relaxing their sphincter muscles.

Praise your child for every bowel movement made in the potty or toilet. Also praise a child for even sitting and trying to go.

If your child will still be wearing disposable diapers at this point, you will be involved in getting them on and off. Keep masking tape on hand to refasten clean ones. In general, we don't advocate keeping diapers on children who are learning to use the toilet. This just sends a mixed message, but in the event that is the route you chose, there you go!

It is not uncommon for boys to achieve bladder control before -- sometimes long before -- bowel control. Parents sometimes feel that a child with belated bowel control is unwilling, uncooperative, or just plain stubborn but that's rarely the case. Again, patience is called for.

A reluctant-relaxer may require different approaches until you find one that works. Consider breaking the task into small, slow steps. Encourage a child to sit on and use the potty (or toilet) with clothes and a disposable diaper on to begin with. After a child is comfortable with this procedure, progress to going with only a disposable diaper sides ripped open.

Then you can move from sitting with a disposable diaper across the seat to just using toilet paper across it. Other children may be able to relax and void (just remove feces quickly with little fuss) while in a warm bath before making the transition to the potty chair or toilet. Or insist, that even using a diaper, a child stay in the bathroom when having a BM and then empty diaper into the toilet and flush.

Constipation is most often a factor in belated bowel control. A child who cries, screams, or kicks when urged to use the potty may

be doing so because of the discomfort or pain experienced due to constipation. In this case, it is not stubbornness, but fear (real or imagined), that is keeping the child from doing what you ask and holding back. Some even believe there can be an inherited tendency towards constipation.

Constipation is NOT diagnosed by infrequency of bowel movements, but by the hardness and character of the stool. Dry BMs that don't stick to the diaper can be a description of constipation. And what may be considered hard to pass by adult standards is not the same for children.

Whatever makes passing stool difficult or painful for a child will inhibit a child from wishing to repeat the procedure thus compounding the problem. Avoid suppositories and enemas as they will be seen as an "assault" by the child.

If your child cannot gain effective control of his or her bowels, there might be a medical reason. Consult your doctor if there seems to be a really huge problem with your child's BM.

Encopresis is the term used for lack of control of bowel movements for anyone over the age of 4. It is NOT uncommon. In fact it is reported that 1%-2% of children over age 4 are known as "fecally incontinent." For unknown reasons it is more common for boys than girls.

It has incorrectly been assumed that this is the result of emotional disorders (which are more often the result-not the cause-of it) or by lax toilet training. A child can also be born with poor muscle tone in the bowel or anal sphincter.

It seems, however, the majority of cases are the result of chronic constipation, though, of course, it can be complicated by other stresses in either toilet training or life situations. With chronic constipation, colon tissue can be stretched to the point that nerves fail to receive proper signals and the muscles no longer contract properly so that a child no longer feels the urge to go.

A child may even have no awareness of when stool pushes out into the underwear. Watery stools can also seep past harder stool, soiling pants without a child being aware of it until after the fact.

Regardless of the basis of the problem, both parents and children need to know they are not alone here and no one is to blame for this problem.

Not all doctors are trained in successful therapy for this problem so look for one who is, as this problem needs to be approached medically as well as psychologically. If your county medical association can't help, seek out a children's hospital or university teaching hospital. Encopresis is treated by a gradual retraining of the bowel which includes dietary changes, supplements, and behavior modification. There is not an overnight cure for this condition.

The first step toward treating constipation should be changing your child's diet. What do you need to know?

DIET ALTERATIONS FOR BOWEL CONTROL

Sometimes, your child is simply not able to gain control of his or her bowels. Much of this might have a lot to do with his or diet. If you alter the diet, you may have a better chance of helping your child be able to poop effectively on the potty.

Here are some dietary changes that you may want to look at:

- Decrease milk products (milk, cheese, ice cream, etc.). If a doctor recommends eliminating milk products for any length of time, a calcium supplement will probably be recommended.
- Decrease or eliminate apples, bananas, rice, and gelatin. These are binders. Opt for peaches, instead.
- Chocolate is a constipating food especially when consumed in quantity. Some medications are, too.
- Increase whole-grain breads, cereals, muffins, and any other bran foods. Try adding bran to other foods. If your child will only eat bran cereal with milk, and you're trying to cut down on milk, dilute the milk with water first. Offer graham crackers

rather than soda crackers. Roughage, such as lettuce and carbs helps.

- Possibly decrease fluid intake (milk, juices, sodas) to increase a child's appetite for bulkier foods. However, remember that fluids are important if you are dealing with constipation and shouldn't be drastically reduced. Encourage your child to drink water.
- Try prunes -- the old stand-by, and dried fruits (if you can get your child to eat them!). Prune juice can be mixed with a small amount of milk. Encourage your child to eat fruits and vegetables with skins on, seeds, and berries for the fiber value. Fruit nectars are good, too.
- Expect to wait two weeks or so before seeing a noticeable change in bowel movements after starting a new diet. Don't resume bowel training until such a change occurs.
- Very loose stools can also inhibit bowel control but are often a sign of other problems (infection, milk allergy, etc.) indicating that a physician should be consulted. Food allergies causing chronic diarrhea can also cause "wear and tear" making it difficult to have bowel movements.

A diet change may be recommended, but it should be done in conjunction with medical advice. But first just try eliminating apple juice--and other sweet juices -- especially if your child drinks a lot, to see if that helps firm them up.

For some children, they can naturally have problems letting go of their feces. They can often feel like it is something they have made and they don't want to see it go down the drain – so to speak. Take heart and listen to what your child is telling you and how they are telling you what they need to express.

Often, your child can benefit from a routine when it comes to potty training.

STAYING DRY IN THE DAYTIME

Your first goal during potty training is to help your child stay dry through the daytime hours. Nighttime dryness will come a little later since they won't be in control of their bodily functions while they're sleeping.

A routine will help in making your child more confident and comfortable during potty training. In fact, having your child on a schedule before potty training time can actually make the transition easier.

By the age of one, your toddler should be on a regular schedule of eating, sleeping, playing and having diaper changes. These regular diapering times will prepare your toddler for a regular potty schedule in the future. This doesn't mean that you have to maintain a rigid schedule for years, but your toddler should know that he or she has a regular, natural pattern to each day. This sets your toddler up to succeed when the time is right for potty training.

Make frequent trips to the bathroom. You can't force your child to urinate or produce a bowel movement, but you can encourage him to practice. Have your child sit on the potty for 2 to 4 minutes every hour or so. Schedule these sittings close to times your child usually has a bowel movement or urination, such as just after a meal, snack or nap. Remember that you cannot control when your child urinates or has a bowel movement.

You really need to know when it's time to stop. Don't expect performance at first. If your child can't urinate or produce a bowel movement after 2 to 4 minutes, it's time to try later. If your child protests strongly when you suggest s/he return to the potty, don't insist. Such resistance may mean that it is not the right time to start training.

Let your child learn from you and those around him or her. Children are often interested in their family's bathroom activities. It is sometimes helpful to let children watch parents, older brothers and sisters, trusted friends, and even relatives when they go to the bathroom. Seeing these people use the toilet makes children want to do the same.

Make sure your child is an active participant in getting himself or herself dressed and undressed. Let your child practice lowering and raising their underwear or training pants sometimes, or putting them on and taking them off.

As far as the bathroom is concerned, take steps to keep the door from closing or locking. To prevent children from locking themselves in the bathroom or closing the door on their fingers, put a towel over the top of the bathroom door. This will stop it from closing.

Potty training boys can be much easier than potty training girls. Have them try sitting on the toilet before making them stand. This will minimize sprays and dribbles on the walls and floors – not to mention all over the potty chair!

You should take steps also to respect your child's feelings and privacy. Even though they are little people, they do have these feelings. Potty training focuses on the most personal and private parts of your child's body so proceed in a dignified respectful manner. Some children need privacy and will not go if anyone is looking or is in the bathroom with them. Respect this.

Expect some fooling around by toddlers. For example, when they go through the phase of saying "no" to everything, their "no" does not always really mean "no." In short, if you ask your toddler if s/he needs to go potty and are met with a resounding "no," this response may sometimes have little to do with your question. This is all part of learning to read your child and becoming familiar with all forms of communication.

In the beginning phases, take your child to the bathroom every hour and then after meals, snacks, and sleep. The obstacle a lot of parents face is that they get into the habit of asking their child if they have to use the potty. Instead, try telling them and then take them. Initiating is often the last step in the process.

Remember that this is probably not going to be an overnight process. Be patient with your child and back off if it really doesn't seem to be working.

We agree with experts that a reward system is almost necessary during this important time.

GIVING REWARDS

Some people don't agree with rewards when it comes to children. They feel like they shouldn't be given a treat for performing

a task that they should be performing anyway. However, it has been proven that using some type of a reward system will help reinforce behavior and bring about desired results.

Rewards don't have to be anything huge and amazing. Remember, you're dealing with a little person here who thinks it great fun to spin around and around to get that dizzy feeling – they're easily impressed – especially if you are with them.

Parents who've been through potty training successfully report using all sorts of different methods that work. Your reward system will have to fit your child's personality and contain incentives that will be important to them.

We mentioned before placing a potty chart on your refrigerator or in your bathroom. When your child successfully goes on the potty, let them place a sticker on the chart. If they reach a certain amount of stickers, give them a small prize or a special trip.

Instead of a chart, make a picture of a road leading to a specific place ala the game "Candy Land". The idea here is to make it down the road by going on the potty. When they get to their destination, a special treat is given. Involve your child in making this poster. It can be a really cute way to teach your child about staying on track while trying to reach a goal.

Of course, candy is a big winner when it comes to potty rewards. We gave Conner M & M's each time he would go and this seemed to work quite well. Other parents use Skittles, small size candy bars, gum, and suckers. It doesn't really matter what you use as long as your child really desires it!

If you are unsure about what will work as an incentive, ask your child what s/he would like as a reward. They know what they like the best and if they want it bad enough, they'll sure work hard to get it!

My son will be mortified to know I'm going to share this, but to illustrate how subjective rewards can be, I want to tell you what worked for us when potty training him. When he was small, back in the early 90's, his idol was Pee-Wee Herman (I know, I know!) He watched "Pee Wee's Big Adventure" and "Pee Wee's Big Top" over and over again until I thought I would scream if I had to hear that guy's laugh just one more time.

My mom was shopping the clearance aisle of a discount store when she spotted a talking Pee Wee Herman doll. Now this doll was a little disturbing looking, but very life-like and uttered Pee Wee's famous catch phrases when you pulled the string on his back. My son was enamored.

We let him have the doll to play with for just a day before we put him up on a shelf in the bathroom. We told him that when he went potty like a big boy, he could play with Pee Wee for a half hour. That was all he needed. Two days later, he was fully trained.

So Pee Wee taught him to "pee pee". Sorry, I just couldn't resist!!!

Gradually phase out the rewards as your child's visits to the bathroom become routine. If you continue to use rewards once they have mastered the task, they'll start to expect them and may go more often than they really need to.

Keep in mind that rewards don't always work. As we've said before, every child is different and you have to find what works with yours!

Rewards are great, but the ultimate reward for a toddler can be your approval.

GIVING PRAISE

Praising words can serve many functions for your toddler. It can boost their self-esteem, raise their confidence, and be a huge motivator for them. It can also promote an atmosphere of comfort for them.

Dole out the praise as often as you can – not just during potty training. But this book IS about potty training, so here are a few things to remember when giving positive reinforcement with your words.

Some people feel you shouldn't make a HUGE deal out of using the potty, but when you're trying to reinforce a positive behavior, it has to be up to you. We made a REALLY big deal every time Conner went on the potty. It worked for him.

Give physical reinforcement in the form of hugs while you're giving out that praise. Clap and say words like "Good for you", "What a big boy/girl", "You went on the potty – YAY!" and such.

Don't just congratulate your child for going on the potty; praise them when they stay dry too. Check his/her pants every hour or so and let him/her know how great it is that s/he's stayed dry.

Some parents have created elaborate song and dance routines to let their child know how pleased they are. Kids love to be silly, and many adults like to be silly too. Use this time to explore your own inner child when potty training is occurring.

Praise for jobs well done should be second nature. It's just too easy to see the "bad stuff" children do when in reality they're doing a lot more "good stuff" than we give credit for. When it's time to introduce the potty to your toddler, give it a sunny spin. Make it sound wonderful to be old enough to sit on the potty chair.

Accidents are going to happen. If your child has an accident, don't make a big deal about it and don't get angry. If you do this, it will chip away at their morale and could start making them feel like they really can't do the job they're expected to do.

If your child has an accident, just help them get cleaned up and forget about it. You may want to say something encouraging like, "It's alright, and you'll make it to the potty next time."

Praise your child even if he or she just goes and sits on the potty but doesn't go. This will likely occur early in the process, and is a positive behavior that should be acknowledged.

Another important part of potty training is teaching your child about good hygiene.

GOOD HYGIENE DURING TRAINING

The business of "doing your business" can be a messy proposition – especially with toddlers. Good hygiene consists of much more than just washing hands.

First, when it comes to the potty chair and the removable bowl, you may want to show your child the correct way to clean it out and have them do it themselves.

Change your child's underwear or training pants as soon as possible after soiling so s/he doesn't become comfortable with or even enjoy, being soiled.

Soiled underwear falls into one of two categories: save or trash. When it is just urine, a run in the washing machine will make it smell like new. When it is a bowel movement, it depends. Most likely, if the BM is wet or mushy, pitch the underwear in the trash. But there may be occasions when few or no traces of BM are apparent and the underwear can be saved.

Encourage your child to wipe the seat when he or she is done. Since germs can be sprayed from the toilet flushing process and settle on the seat, teach children to wipe the toilet seat with toilet paper. Germs can be present whether the seat is wet or dry.

Teach your child how to wipe properly. Girls should wipe thoroughly from front to back to prevent bringing germs from the rectum to the vagina or bladder. Teach your little girl to go "pat, pat, pat" instead of wiping hard. This will help eliminate irritation or possible rashes.

Buy products that are gentle on children's extra sensitive skin but also are strong and absorbent. For example, pre-moistened wipes are ideal for young users because they gently and effectively clean children's delicate skin while providing the strength and absorbency to accomplish the task.

There are now tons and tons of these products on the market, so finding one shouldn't be too difficult!

Show your child how to wash their hands. Hand washing and other hygiene practices actually do reduce the spread of disease. Use antibacterial soap and warm water. Scrub hands for about 15 seconds.

Some say that reciting the ABC song fully while washing your hands will get them clean enough. You can also teach your child to count to ten or say a rhyme while washing hands to help them gauge the right amount of time.

They should dry their hands on a towel (which should be laundered at least on a weekly basis). Hand washing should be routinely done, even if your child didn't actually "go" in the potty. And don't forget to wash YOUR hands, too.

Children need repeated reminders to close the toilet lid before flushing to avoid contact with germs that might spray up.

For easy potty chair clean up, place cling-wrap or a coffee-filter in the bowl before your child sits down. When they're done, there's minimal mess - just lift the wrap or filter out and throw it in the trash. Don't flush the wrap and filter because it's not biodegradable like toilet paper.

Clean the potty periodically with a bleach/water solution after each potty training session. To avoid cleaning carpets, place the potty on an easily cleaned floor or invest in a mat that can be cleaned to avoid any spillage on the carpets. One mom puts down painter's plastic which is cheap to buy and easy to discard.

Your child may be curious and try to play with the feces. You can prevent this without making him or her feel upset by simply saying, "No. This is not something to be played with."

While potty training, it's a great time to teach your child (especially if a boy) to lower both the seat and the lid when they are finished as a necessary part of the ritual. Their future wives will you!

Washing hands can be difficult for your little one. They probably won't be able to reach the bathroom sink, so that's where the stool we talked about before can come in handy!

After your child has mastered daytime potty habits, it's time to work on staying dry throughout the night!

NIGHTTIME TRAINING

Nighttime training is more difficult because it depends on your child's ability to hold the urine for an extended period of time and how deeply s/he sleeps. The urge to go may be difficult for them to notice when sleeping, so getting up in the middle of the night may not happen for them.

This was something that my own mother struggled with during my own toilet training phase so many years ago. I was a chronic bed wetter, but my problem was medical. Some children will have physical problems, so if bed wetting becomes a real struggle after a certain period of time, you may want to consult with your doctor.

Start by limiting fluid intake right before bed. While some people don't feel like this should be done, the reality is that if there's nothing in their little body to expel, they won't go. If you haven't ended night bottles, now is probably the time to do so.

Don't deny a thirsty child a drink of water. Some say that going to bed thirsty just fixes a child's mind on water and increases the chances of nighttime wetting.

Keep bedtime calm. The risk of bedwetting can be increased if your child engages in lots of rough housing or even an exciting television program close to bedtime. When kids are excited, they tend to produce more urine. Keep her/him calm by having a quiet conversation or reading a story to her/him.

Before your child goes to bed, have her try to go to the bathroom one more time. Even if she says she doesn't, try anyway. Your child might SAY one thing but when they sit on the potty they GO!

Consider not using training pants at night. Although you did not intend it, continuing to put your child in training pants for bedtime and expecting her not to have "accidents" may be sending her a mixed message. Initially, you should probably start with a diaper at night with praise in morning for a dry diaper, but soon after that, put them in regular underwear at bedtime.

Be alert for unexpected nightly visits. While your child gets used to underwear at night, s/he may have an accident and then wake up before you do. S/He will be uncomfortable and will either call out to you or get out of bed and pay you a visit.

Make sure the way to the bathroom is lit, even if only with night-lights. Draw a map with your child showing the way from the bed to the bathroom to help form a visual image. You may want to invest in an automatic sensor light in the bathroom that comes on automatically when someone enters the room.

Keep the house warm enough so the child won't avoid getting up because it's too cold. You can return to energy savings later.

Consider keeping a potty chair near your child's bed if that will make things easier.

Practice "positive imagining" as you put your child to sleep. Help a child imagine staying dry all night and waking up dry in the morning. Talk about the pleasure of feeling dry, in control and grown-up.

Try whispering "dry" ideas into the ear of a sleeping child. This is something psychologists say children are often receptive to such "idea planting" during certain periods of sleep.

Let your child know that you know that he or she will stay dry at night II soon," like other big kids. It is important to set up the expectation, but don't subject your child to heavy pressure.

Remove diapers and replace them with training pants, cloth soakers, or disposable Pull-Ups only after a week or so of dry nights.

If your child does have an accident, try not to make a big deal about it. Reassure them that accidents do happen. Some psychologists recommend having the child clean up their own mess. This includes stripping the bed and placing the soiled sheets in the laundry bin as well as putting new sheets on the bed.

During this whole process, don't focus on the accident and don't make your child feel guilty for having an accident.

A plastic sheet under the regular sheets also will help you save the mattress.

Night time dryness does not always immediately follow day time dryness and could often take up to a few months or even years. It's not uncommon for pre-schoolers and even some elementary schoolers to wet the bed at night. Just practice patience and be sure that there isn't a medical reason for this problem.

Another issue during toilet training is how to maintain progress while traveling.

TRAINING ON THE ROAD

If you need to leave home for an extended period of time for any reason, know that traveling makes potty training much more challenging. While you shouldn't schedule any long vacations during your expected training period, sometimes things come up and you must travel.

Perhaps your toddler is taking a long time getting used to the idea of using the potty all the time and they aren't completely trained when you need to travel. That's where this section would apply as well.

Have your child leave home empty. That means to go potty before leaving and no liquids on the road – well, minimal liquids. Resist the urge to put them in a pull up. He or she is a big kid now. Putting a diaper on him or her now can only confuse.

Take along the potty chair or adapter seat. Little bladders can require frequent pit stops and you want to be prepared. Anywhere you go, look for the bathrooms first. Make note of rest areas along the way where you may be able to stop for a potty break.

Carry extra tissues and sanitizing gel for strange bathrooms. You don't want to be caught short. I always liked to have an extra roll of toilet paper in my purse along with a huge bottle of Germ-X. You never can be too sure what type of situation you'll be getting into.

Always choose the handicap or family bathroom. You'll have extra room if you use the stall for people with disabilities, but the seat may be elevated and your child will need more help.

Shopping malls and many other places are now building unisex family bathrooms specifically designed for parents. These bathrooms are as large as handicap bathrooms, private, and can be stocked with needed toiletries like Kleenex and wipes.

Teach children to line public toilets with strips of toilet paper as an added barrier of protection if toilet seat liners are not available.

Always, always accompany your child into public restrooms. Safety is nothing to take for granted – even while potty training. Never, ever let your child go into a public restroom alone. Don't even

let them go with an older sibling. Have them accompanied by a trusted adult – at all times!

Pack a waterproof sheet, small plastic tablecloth, or heavy plastic bag to cover mattresses, or a rubber-backed bathroom rug that rolls up easily for travel. Hotel staff will be just as appreciative as relatives and friends.

Don't be surprised or upset if your child starts to have accidents. Revert to training pants for now; relax and enjoy your trip. Don't make your trip a battleground. Worry about training or retraining when you get back home.

Watch your child's diet while on the road. A change in diet during family vacations is likely to bring about a change in bowel habits, either constipation or diarrhea, and a corresponding slump in training progress.

I know this from experience. While potty training my dear daughter, she showed interest in the potty just prior to a trip to Florida with my in-laws. She was doing quite well – and then the road trip began.

The whole entire trip, she was unable to make it to the bathroom in time because she had diarrhea nearly the whole time we were gone. She was completely frustrated and mad at herself for not being able to continue what she had started at home.

Of course, once we got home, it was only a day before she was back in the old routine and completely using the potty consistently. I still wonder if, at that time in her life, she wonders why she couldn't be a big girl in Florida!

What about that child who just won't go no matter what you try?

HELPING THE CHILD WHO REALLY RESISTS

If you have been trying to encourage your child to go on the potty and they just won't cooperate, don't worry – you're not alone! Some kids just don't embrace the whole potty training experience. But there are some things you can do to help them along their way!

First, ask them why they don't want to use the potty. Sometimes, misconceptions or real fears stand in the way of successful toilet training. You may find that your child is simply intimidated by the whole process and wasn't sure how exactly to proceed.

If you get a response like this, you are in a prime position to help. You can start to teach your child how and when it's time to use the potty without the fears or trepidations that they might possess inherently.

What else can you try? Look at these time-tested tricks:

- Turn on the faucet. Some parents find it helpful in early training to try turning on the water faucet in the bathroom as a stimulus to urinate. Hey, if it works for adults it will work for kids.
- Try the "warm water" trick. Once the child is sitting on the potty, fill a large bowl or small bucket with lukewarm or tepid water. Place some new "potty" toys in the bowl and set the bowl of water in front of the child. When the child places his/her hands in the lukewarm water to play with the toys, they may nearly instantly go.
- Place targets in the toilet. This tip works best for boys. Many parents put objects in the toilet so boys have something to aim for. We've addressed this before, but having an "aim" to shoot for can be a huge motivator!

This challenge taps into their natural interest in hitting targets. Inexpensive and biodegradable targets include Cheerios, Fruit Loops, and squares of toilet paper with drawn-on "bulls-eyes." Some parents have been known to use glitter or sprinkles. One even pours a little bubble bath in the toilet and tells her child to make bubbles.

- Sing a song. Singing a song for your child will help you pass the time and keep them interested in staying in the bathroom.

Some parents go so far as to create a potty song to make their child feel more comfortable in the bathroom.

Try this parent's technique. This song is sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. It goes like this: "Tinkle, tinkle, little pee, in the potty you will be. Poopy, poopy stinky-o, in the

potty you will go."

- Let your child run naked. Allow your child to run around naked when you are at home. Having to deal with the urge to eliminate will be much more noticeable to your child when there is nothing to catch it in but the potty.

We are big fans of this technique. When children are feeling less constrained by things like clothing and diapers, they are more apt to try and get rid of their waste in the toilet.

- Try a pee-pee tree. For a resistant boy who refuses to go anywhere but his underwear or training pants, as part of the outside bare-bottom drill, paint a target on a tree and show him how to water it.

Again, we'll remind you that this worked wonders with Conner. Well, we didn't have to paint a target on a tree, but he took great joy in watering his friends that gave him climbing opportunities.

- If any concerns come up before, during, or after toilet training, talk with your pediatrician. Often the problem is minor and can be resolved quickly, but sometimes physical or emotional causes will require treatment.

Your pediatrician's help, advice, and encouragement can help make toilet training easier. Also, your pediatrician is trained to identify and manage problems that are more serious.

- Seek advice and support online. Talk to other parents about their success and failures on online discussion boards. Post a message, ask a question, and exchange information about potty training. It's a great learning experience!

If you are having an inordinate amount of problems with your child, you may want to consider that there is a physical problem that is inhibiting them from going.

PHYSICAL COMPLICATIONS

While we've already addressed the issue of constipation above, we still feel like this deserves a chapter of its own. Physical problems

can be confusing for your child. They know they should be going on the potty, but their body is just not cooperating.

If you suspect a physical problem, of course, your first line of defense is to take your child to his or her physician. My sister was having trouble with hard stools during her potty training. Her doctor prescribed strong stool softeners and my mother made dietary changes and eventually, the problem was rectified.

There are a number of things that could be going on when your child's body just isn't cooperating with his or her mind.

Consider the possibility of an allergy. Lactose intolerance (the inability to digest milk or milk products) is the most common, but other foods can cause allergies, too.

How much sorbitol is your child consuming in sugarless candies and gum? Sorbitol is a new culprit in chronic loose stools. It also is found naturally in pear juice and apple juice, which could make a difference if a child drinks lots.

Watch for signs of urinary infections. These include pain or burning sensations while urinating, straining to urinate, color changes in the urine, foul-smelling urine, frequent urination that produces very little, or a split stream of urine. Other signs could be abdominal pain or a fever of an undetermined origin. Such infections are not uncommon in small children.

Be aware that even after a urinary problem has cleared up, the child may still remember and fear the pain of urinating, and this may complicate potty training. Reassure the child and don't be impatient if it takes him or her a while to get over the fear.

Check a toilet-trained child who starts to have many urinary accidents, as well as a significant increase in urination for diabetes.

Remember that diarrhea can cause problems with bowel control. Persistent diarrhea is usually a symptom of a physical problem, and it should be treated by a doctor.

Remember that constipation could be keeping your child from wanting to move his or her bowels, because it is painful. If it's not chronic, you can help by keeping the children company while they're

sitting on the toilet, lubricating the anus with Vaseline, or even helping hold the "cheeks" apart to make it easier to move the bowels.

Dietary changes can also help. Chronic constipation can put pressure on the bladder and cause daytime, as well as nighttime, accidents in which case it's time to seek medical attention.

Some parents with special needs children wonder if there's anything out there that will help them toilet train their child too. There actually is some advice we can offer in this venue as well.

Regressing back to previous non-toilet-trained behavior is something that is very likely to happen – even after you have successfully trained your child.

REGRESSION

Life changes can be difficult for an adult, so they're even more difficult for a toddler. When changes occur during a child's life, often their way of dealing with it is to go back to a time when they were taken care of and didn't have to take control of things like their bodily functions.

Some of these events may include:

- Starting school or day care
- Moving to a new home
- Divorce or separation
- Birth of a new sibling
- A parent going to work outside the home

Please realize that this is not unusual and many children experience this type of setback. However, the setback is usually temporary and can be rectified within a reasonable time frame and actually quite easily.

At this point, if there are no other problems, you may just need to offer reminders to use the potty so that the bowel movement is done there instead of going on the floor. This is easy if he or she has BMs at about the same time each day, but even if he or she doesn't, you might have him or her sit on the potty for 4-5 minutes right after waking up and after meals. Those are times when most children are

likely to have a bowel movement. Even if he or she doesn't go, you can offer praise and extra attention simply for the fact that they tried.

Treat accidents lightly and avoid negative reactions. That means cleaning them up matter-of-factly and reminding your child that they are supposed to go in the potty. This is not a situation that generally requires any kind of punishment.

Be sure that you "don't overreact." You want to be careful that you don't reinforce the behavior, since any negative attention your child gets for doing this can reinforce it. And you don't want to make it a power struggle. With strong-willed children, reinforcing unwanted behavior will make them want to continue doing it. Yelling or punishment is reinforcing. Even though it's negative, it's still attention, and that's what they want.

Figure out why they are regressing. Talk to your child in a matter-of-fact way and ask them why they don't want to use the potty anymore. Children are very honest, and they will probably be "itching" to tell you!

If you feel you need to discipline, learn more about using effective discipline. Discipline isn't to be confused with spanking or time outs. Discipline is when the parent does what they plan and have said they would do. They follow through and remain consistent in encouraging desired behaviors. Routines will help during regression as well. Go back to where you were when you first established your potty routine and put it into play again. Stay positive and re-introduce the motivations you did before they were fully potty trained.

Talk to your child and listen to them even when you are not addressing them directly. Discuss their responsibilities for their waste and the consequences for not following through on those responsibilities. Be clear and matter-of-fact. Minimize your words during clean-up and stay calm. If you let this process become emotionally charged, that's where the focus will be and that is ineffective and negative. Make it clear that this is their responsibility and simply instruct them about what needs to be done during clean-up and then when they have to go potty again.

Often, distractions are a big part of regression. Some children get so involved in projects, books, TV shows, etc. that they "forget" to go and it just doesn't make much difference to them if they are involved in these activities. For example, if they are watching "The

Wiggles" and getting completely involved in dancing to "Do The Monkey" that they don't go to the bathroom, make them go before the show is on and tell them that way they won't have to worry about making an accident. If they have an accident after that, turn off the program until they can control their behavior.

Taking away something from a child when they have done something that is not a desired behavior can be a powerful motivator. Some parents think it's mean and unfair, but we're talking about a child here. They have to learn somehow, and this method works – mean or not.

Always follow up any discipline conversation with hugs and at least one "I love you". Remember that your child wants to please you. If they think that you might withhold love, you could have the opposite effect of what you want. Your child needs to know that you love them but are not happy with their behavior. This happens throughout raising a child, so practice it often.

As we've said before, learn why your child has stopped using the potty. It is easier for a child to learn the mechanics of going to the bathroom, but not so easy for him to accept some of the emotional issues that may come along later. And not all children are capable or willing to discuss it.

If your child wants to talk, be there for him or her. It may help you decide how to proceed if the accidents continue. If he adamantly does not want to talk, respect his feelings.

Maybe he or she is afraid. It was fun during the early stages, but now that they are trained, their little brains could start to introduce unfounded fears in their psyche.

Common toilet fears include fear of seeing his poop go down the toilet and losing that part of him, fear of getting hands dirty when wiping, fear of seeing or hearing a toilet flush, fear of painful bowel movement. Other reasons may include lack of desire to stop playing to go, loss of the excitement of this new 'game', associating toileting with 'growing up' and deciding it is more comfortable to just stay little.

There are some cases where children use toilet issues to express anger and aggression. For this, seek professional help.

A reward chart or chart where you place stickers for the days when he doesn't have an accident can also be helpful. As can reading some of the potty training books for children. Since he has been potty trained for so long, this is likely not a time to go back to diapers or pull-ups. You should also avoid anything else that makes him feel ashamed for having accidents. Remember that it is normal and common for children to have set backs with potty training.

If you have come to the realization that the accidents are not stopping and you have given your child the chance to work through it by themselves, you need to take a step back and look at all the information you have compiled throughout this process. Return to the days when you were just beginning potty training and start from square one.

You have choices. You need to decide how much you are willing to do in order to work this problem out. Do you want to obsess about it for weeks on end or just downplay it and let your child work his or her own way through the problem and get back to no-diapers or pull-ups?

Each child is different. What works for one may not be successful for another. That is why you need an arsenal of tools and tricks to get your youngster interested and keep him or her with the program until you have achieved that goal of independence.

Some children really want to continue toileting. Sometimes the parent is willing to do whatever it takes to keep the child with his toileting routine. If you decide it is best to try to keep your child on track, then gear up for retraining in a positive, loving and supportive way.

Prepare yourself for what can become a long, frustrating time. Your attitude is important - keep it fun and upbeat if you can. Never blame the child. Even the most even-tempered, devoted and selfless of parents have found their limits tested.

Frustrations can be minimized by planning to spend extra time with your child (preferably at home) observing when and why the accidents occur. Expect to deal with accidents and try to find a way to avert them. Could your child simply miss all that attention he used to get for toileting successes? If you find yourself becoming too frustrated with the situation to cope in a positive, loving and supportive way, consult your pediatrician, read and take parenting classes.

Do not allow a significant other, mother-in-law or neighbor (however well-intentioned) to interfere with your parenting choices. Pick your battles, and realize this one in particular can be a tough one.

If you decide to go for retraining you need to be prepared to follow through in a positive way. Read up, get support. If you decide this is not the best time to try to work through it that is OK. You and your child should decide together how to handle accidents. Whatever you decide, this is just one of many parenting decisions we must make with no clear-cut answer. It will work out no matter how you proceed, as long as you have the child's best interests in mind.

Above all, just have fun with this process – both during potty training and during regression. As you know, your child is growing rapidly before your very eyes. Focus on enjoying this age and stage with your child.

If you can keep a good attitude through all the trials, you will have given your child much more than basic toilet skills. Your child will learn he or she can trust you. They will know that they are important. They will learn how to communicate better. He will understand how you can help him when he is troubled. He will learn you will always love him, even when he messes up. That is what is really important.

If any concerns come up before, during, or after toilet training, talk with your pediatrician. Often the problem or problems are minor and can be resolved quickly, but sometimes physical or emotional causes will require treatment. Your pediatrician's help, advice, and encouragement can help make toilet training easier. Also, your pediatrician is trained to identify and manage problems that are more serious.

POTTY TRAINING THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD

The same training methods apply to special needs children as to other children. More record keeping may be necessary to find patterns such as in the time between eating and drinking and need to eliminate.

If advised by consulting physicians and specialists to toilet train the child, a great deal of patience and a longer time frame may be

necessary. Many other skills accompany even simple routines for children with physical or mental impairments.

As a parent, you are the only one who knows your child's abilities. You can gauge whether or not they are even near being able to grasp the thought or tasks involved in potty training.

Just like with all other children, you need to be sure that your child is fully able to understand his or her's bodily functions and what to do with those feelings when they arise. You have to let your child dictate to you when the time is right.

Once you reach that point, use the same techniques we've outlined throughout this whole book. Just because your child has special needs doesn't make them all that different from every other child. As you are well aware, potty training special needs children just requires a little adaptation.

You need to do a clear task analysis of each process that trainers and parents often take for granted. This may involve actually writing down every step taken in order to go to the toilet. The tasks might include some of the following:

- Recognizing when she/he has to go to the bathroom
- Waiting to eliminate
- Entering the bathroom
- Manipulating clothing closures
- Pulling pants down
- Sitting on the toilet
- Eliminating in the toilet
- Using paper correctly
- Pulling pants up
- Flushing toilet

- Washing hands
- Drying hands

You may notice that many of the signs outlined above are the same as any other child who is ready to begin potty training. Your special needs child is no different. You need to be aware of what to look for before taking on this difficult task and then start with the right attitude for both you and your child.

To see if your child is ready to learn toilet training, answer the following additional questions.

- Can the child follow simple directions? ("Come here.")
- Can the child sit in a chair for five minutes?
- Can the child wait at least 1-1/2 hours between elimination times?

Recognizing the signs that your child is ready for the potty is the best way to know when it's time to begin. You are no different than any other parent at this point in your child's development. Sure they might be a little older, but you still have to help your child travel this road with as little disruption and distraction as possible.

When you are focused on the job, they'll be focused on the job too. That will make the job easier on both of you!

What about multiples? When you have twins or even (gasp!) triplets, the issue of potty training becomes even stickier. But in actuality, you are going to have an easier time than you might think.

TRAINING FOR MULTIPLES

Potty training one child is a challenge. Potty training multiple children of the same age is like gearing up for an Olympic event. It involves more equipment, more training time, more mess, and parents who possess exponentially more patience.

You are bound to come up against many roadblocks. On the upside, you will have the advantage of peer pressure. Siblings can have a huge influence on each other – especially when it comes to toilet habits, so you're already one step ahead!

However, it won't be all sunshine and roses. You still will have some significant hurdles when potty training. Much advice is the same as with the individual child, but some applies specifically to multiples. Here are a few tips:

One potty chair won't be enough. Training is stressful enough as it is without asking your multiples to share the potty. When a child has to go, it's nearly impossible in the early stages to ask them to wait their turn. You could be taking steps back instead of forward.

Let each child have his or her own potty chair. Potty training is about the individual child, so have the chair represent them and give them a sense of ownership when they have their own piece of furniture that no one else can use.

Because establishing a routine is the best way to potty train your child, you may want to make it a fun game for your multiples. This will make it easier on you and make it a pleasant experience for them.

When you are trying to train multiples, don't let them go diaperless unless you have someone else there to watch them. You will likely find yourself doing little more than cleaning up accidents if you go it alone.

There is bound to be a bit of chaos in your house with toddler multiples, so it's probably going to be a bit difficult for you to get them to notice their body's signals that it's time to use the potty. Let them bring toys or books into the bathroom with them when they need to sit on the potty and focus.

What if you have one child who is interested in potty training and another one who isn't? This is where you need to be a little less enthusiastic about the process. When one child goes on the potty, DO give him or her praise, but dole it out and then move on.

Absolutely DO NOT make the other child feel inferior because his or her sibling is successfully using the potty. There is a certain

amount of competition that naturally exists with multiples anyway. Don't intensify that competitive spirit. They'll go eventually, just be patient.

You may also want to stay away from treats for using the potty in this situation. Toddlers have a difficult time understanding the sharing process, so when one child gets something that the other one doesn't, you may be faced with some pretty big temper tantrums and resistance.

You may also be faced with some regression issues with one of your children. Don't push in this situation. Your child may be having some real emotional issues with the idea of separation from their diapers and each other. Until both are ready, step back and let your children lead the way.

Structure is very important – especially with multiples. We're not just talking about potty time but all the time. Make potty time a daily ritual that is fun!

You may want to separate the kids as much as you can during training. Lessening the intensity that exists naturally between them will help all of you. Give them some one-on-one time and let them listen and focus better with your undivided attention.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you get too involved in the process, you may find your children resisting. When someone else is around to buffer the situation, you're much more likely to have a slightly easier time.

Try not to get frustrated and angry at resistant kids. All you can do when one or the other resists is to back off. If you push them too much, their natural urge will be to resist and you will have more problems than if you just let it go for awhile. They'll get it eventually.

Ultimately, to achieve peace, yours and your children's, let them take the lead. If they want to go on the potty, fine. If they want to wear diapers, that is okay too. They have to work out their ambivalence and all a mom can do (and this is the hard part) is wait patiently until they do.

Girls are generally a bit easier to train than boys, but the funny part is that when you are training boys, there are many more tricks to

getting them to successfully use the potty.

TIPS FOR THE BOYS

Girls just have to sit on the potty to pee or poop. Boys need to sit for pooping, but most will stand when peeing. Because of this small biological difference, encouraging and helping your boy child use the potty can actually be an easier task!

Here are a few ideas for you to think about:

- Aiming takes practice. When a little boy starts urinating in a standing position, be prepared to wipe around the toilet and on the seat – and often!
- Show the boy how to point his penis down to avoid spraying the room whether by sitting down or standing up.
- Teach the boy to aim accurately by having him sink floating objects in the basin. This can be a corner of an envelope or a piece of toilet paper, but we think it's much more fun to float Cheerios or Froot Loops and aiming for the hole
- Drain the water from the toilet bowl and paint a red target with fingernail polish or a red grease pencil on the porcelain toward the back. Have him aim for the bulls-eye.
- Urinating into the "blue" toilet bowl water will turn it green. (This works with girls, too, but it's harder to see.) You can also use food coloring in this process. Red or blue food coloring will turn orange or green when the urine hits it. This can be so much fun when your boy watches his own bodily fluids perform magic tricks!
- In the summertime, and in the privacy of a backyard or woods, let a boy practice his aim. Note my above story regarding Conner "peeing on a tree"!
- Let fathers and sons have a "*peeing party*."
- In the winter let a boy "*write in the snow*."
- If a little boy wants to stand but needs to be a bit taller, stand behind him and let him stand on your feet.
- Be sure the toilet seat can't fall down on a young boy in these early stages. Have your child check to be sure that the seat is up securely before he urinates.

- Start teaching your son NOW that the toilet rim needs to be placed down after he's finished.

Finally, we have some general tips that really don't fit into any particular category. If we repeat ourselves, well, we're sorry, but potty training is serious business, so they bear repeating!

IN GENERAL

Here are some ideas and thoughts that fall into that general miscellaneous category. In here is a plethora of information!

Watch tilting toilet seats. Some seats have a tendency to fall quickly when put upright. If the seat tilts or must be supported by hand, change it. The seat must be stay up so it doesn't fall down and strike a boy's penis when his is urinating standing up.

If your toddler likes to unroll the toilet paper, try this. Before you put a new roll on the roller, squash the roll so that the cardboard roll inside is no longer round. This way, it will not unroll as fast. Also, little ones who are potty training will not get too much paper per tug on the roll.

The secret to potty training is a no pressure atmosphere where children believe they are in control and making the decisions. Parents and providers guide their decisions and make it fun.

Play potty while training a stuffed animal or doll. Use your child's future underwear on the animal. Because the underwear is big, it will be easier for your child to teach pulling pants down and up.

Play house and pretend with your child. You be animal's mommy. Feed the animal, make it run to the potty, pull pants down, sit, maybe read a book to it, praise it for trying/accomplishing, wipe, pull pants up, flush and wash hands. Play again.

Let your child be Mommy and take the animal through the steps with you offering corrections if needed. Listen carefully here to the words your child is using. Then, you can use those same words later while you are the real Mommy again! Repeat. Devoting time here with excessive repetition may bore you but provides great instruction for your child. Introduce some fun songs and dances here to make it even more fun!

When potty training, I always try to laugh which is sometimes very hard but at other times takes no effort at all.

Try using a doll that wets. That's a tip that renowned psychologist Dr. Phil suggests. Dr. Phil says that using an anatomically correct doll that wets helps you to demonstrate for the child how to go potty.

You may want to start emptying poopy diapers into the toilet rather than just throwing it away. By doing this, you are showing your child that this is where the poop belongs and he or she will be less resistant to letting go of that during the toilet training process.

Remember that the emotional makeup of a human being is extremely complex. It's not realistic to expect that just because a child is small in stature, he or she will have a small range of emotions. And handling all these strange feelings and sensations is doubly hard for a child because of his or her undeveloped wisdom and lack of information.

Watch for interference from others. Siblings can set a child off by playing on fears and expectations; friends or even teachers may say the wrong thing.

Have your child draw a picture of a bathroom. Ask for explanations of anything you don't understand. You may get some clues about worries or fears the child has been repressing.

Seriously reconsider the use of pull-ups or diapers during this process. Throwing away the diapers can help make for effective potty training more than you can know. When you make a big production of it, your child will know that it's time to let go of that part of their lives.

When you use pull-ups, it feels like wearing a diaper to your child. You, in a way, are giving them permission to use that pull-up as a diaper and wet in it. Your child will have to learn what it feels like to have wet pants. That way, they'll learn.

Do not spend weeks and months see-sawing from diapers to pull-ups to underwear. This is so confusing to toddlers and it simply destroys their feelings of self-esteem. (It's okay to use pull-ups at night for a few weeks while your toddler is working on their physical control, but do not use them during the day.)

If your child has been sitting on the potty for 5 minutes with no results, give it up. Try again at another time. Having them sit there that long is plenty of time to see whether or not they will be able to expel their waste. Keeping the child on the potty longer than that will just cause frustration and boredom!

An additional potty training tip is to make sure to put clothes on your child that are easy for your child to pull down or remove themselves. Even though those cute shorts may be easy for mom to put on her child, the shorts may just be too difficult for your toddler to pull down. Try to look at things as your toddler would: that's the best potty training tip you can find.

When buying training pants, if you are choosing cotton, let your child pick out his/her favorite ones (Rugrats, Batman, Barbie etc.). Cotton training pants will let your child feel the wetness and will train faster. The downside is that they are messier!

Disposable training pants are easy for cleanup and on the go but it may take longer to train if your child does not feel the discomfort of wetness. If you buy cotton, buy more than one three pack. You will go through these quickly and you want to have plenty in the diaper bag and dresser.

Toilet training can get messy so be prepared and expect that there will be many mistakes. Your child is learning a very difficult skill. Clean up any accidents without anger or showing disgust. Do not make negative comments.

Make a big deal about using the last diaper or let your child help you throw out the diapers in the trash can. Shop together for new underwear! Dress your child in clothes that are easy to take on and off.

Do not punish your child by keeping him/her in wet or soiled diapers. This is counterproductive and will not teach your child to use the potty. Do not pressure or nag your child to use the potty. The harder you push, the harder he/she will resist! Only remind your child to use the potty when he/she is showing signs that he/she has to go.

Be prepared to spend a lot of time in the bathroom with your child!

Spring and summer are great times to toilet train! Let your child

go without his/her diaper and watch them notice their own bodily functions. If they can see exactly what is coming from where, they'll have a better idea of what they are supposed to do!

Make sure your child's diet has plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and juice.

We cannot stress this part strongly enough: DO NOT make your child sit on the toilet against his or her will.

Make sure your child's wardrobe is adaptable to potty training. In other words, avoid overalls and shirts that snap in the crotch. Simple clothes are a must at this stage and children who are potty training need to be able to undress themselves.

Be sure all of your child's caregivers follow the same routine you have established. Let them know what you're doing and how your handling any issues you are encountering. Ask them to use those same techniques when your child is with them so your child won't be confused.

Do not think that just because your child is in day care that toilet training is impossible to do. Studies have shown that as long as you are in constant contact with your day care provider regarding your procedures, you can succeed at potty training together!

When you keep them informed about what you are doing to help your child become toilet trained, they can much easier implement the same procedures while with them and reinforce everything that you have been focusing on!

Don't get all caught up in the negative connotations that many adults have regarding the human body. Toilet training is a part of a life-long process of learning about the body and its functioning.

Adults' attitudes toward genitals and the natural process of toilet training have an important influence on the child's developing feelings about her or his body and taking responsibility for bodily needs.

Make certain the child has observed a parent or trusted adult using the toilet. Answer questions in a relaxed manner. Toilet training accomplished in a calm and positive way is an important support for life-long appreciation of human sexuality.

Young children feel pleasure when they urinate or have a bowel movement. They may want to play with their urine or feces. They also may want to examine their own or other children's genitals when using the toilet.

This is normal experimental behavior. It is a good time to teach correct names for body parts and body functions. The goal is to teach children that all parts of the body are good, and body functions are natural.

Some of the best advice comes from people who have been there and done that.

ADVICE FROM THE BATTLE WEARY

Take what you can use from the following moms who have successfully potty trained their children. Some of their advice may be repetitive, but, heck, if it worked for them, it might work for you too!

Sheila from West Virginia tells us:

"All kids are ready at different times. Just remember to be patient! Some older kids learn easily, but many kids lost interest in training at the very time parents are ready to pull their hair out from changing all of the diapers! It is a learning process for most that takes time and commitment."

Patty from Texas says:

"When my son has to go, we've recently been getting him to yell "poop!" as loud as he can. While silly, this makes him aware that he needs to keep working on training himself, and he won't be able to go in his diaper once the whole family's made aware!"

"When my 18-month-old started going into the bathroom and closing the door, I knew she was about ready to toilet train. I would let her go in and use her potty, dump it into the big toilet, and put it up in the sink for me to rinse out." Sharika in Detroit says. It worked for her!

Suzanne in Missouri offers the following:

"Allow one or two trips to the potty, but not 5. If she seemed afraid, "practice pretend" at home. Or, if she just likes to check out strange potties, put a limit on the amount of trips. Our boys used to like to do this too, especially in a "grown up" restaurant where things tended to get a bit boring. That way, the kids take potty training seriously. When they're taken, they're expected to go!"

Dianne in California used a common potty tool – videos:

"We used the *Once Upon a Potty* video for our daughter. We sang the tune from the video all the time, especially when she went to the potty. She loved it."

Here's a fun little tip from Christie in Kentucky:

"We made up a little song that we sang *every* time our daughter sat on the potty. She loved it. When she finished, we would sing a different song identifying what she had done and telling her how proud we were of her. We also included several rounds of applause. It wasn't too long before she used the potty every time!"

We've talked before about consistency and establishing a routine. Amy in California tells us what worked for her in this venue:

"My biggest help was to be consistent. We used a timer to help us both remember to go potty. We started with every 20 minutes, and as I could see he needed to go less, gradually increased the time. Eventually, he would tell me he needed to go before the timer went off, or say he didn't need to when it did. Then we'd set the timer for five or 10 more minutes and try again."

As you already know, using treats and rewards can be the most effective way to reinforce potty training. Those treats don't always have to be candy. Here's what some parents did:

"Our daughter wasn't very consistent with toilet training until we introduced the surprise bag. We got a bunch of inexpensive toys and stickers and put them in a colorful gift bag.

Every time she used the toilet, we would clap and tell her what a great job she did and let her pick one surprise out of the bag. We kept it up for about a week and a half, and when the surprises ran out she just kept on using the potty.

We continued to praise her and she quickly forgot the surprise bag. I can honestly say that toilet training was painless and quick with this method, and I plan to use it again with my next child.”

— Elizabeth, Washington D.C.

“Whenever I hit a fast food drive-through, I would get a kids' meal even if the kids weren't with me, then I collected all the toys in a dark pillowcase (so it wouldn't be see-through).

When it came time to toilet train my 3-year-old son (an idea he was extremely resistant to), I would let him take one item from the pillowcase every time he went poop on the potty. This worked so quickly that within three weeks he was completely trained. Needless to say, this concept is not working for my daughter who just turned 3. Why not? I don't get it.”

— Meredith, Maine

“We kept a container of our daughter Morgan's favorite treat (M&Ms) on her dresser. If she successfully used the potty, she would receive three M&Ms (we'd let her pick the colors as well). Within a month she was using the potty regularly, with few accidents, and by age 2 1/2 she was trained.”

— Jenna, Pennsylvania

“My 28-month-old really loved my nail polish. I found some at the grocery store that would come right off when she washed her hands, so I let my toddler paint her fingernails every time she peed in the potty. I told her that when she pooped she could have some of Mommy's polish, which wouldn't wash off, on one finger. Ten days later, she was completely potty trained.”

— Shelley, Nevada

Many experts agree that discontinuing the use of pull-up type pants – which are a lot like diapers – can be a daunting task for some parents. Also, allowing your child to go naked at home can help push the process along. Some parents just aren't comfortable with all that. However, these parents found ways to make these tips work.

“I put painter's plastic down on the carpets, and then took off my 16-month-old's diaper. There were a number of accidents, but the

cleanups were quick and easy because of the plastic. She soon caught on and was happy not to be in uncomfortable diapers!”

— Eva, Oklahoma

“I had my son pick out underwear with his favorite character, Thomas the Tank Engine, on them. Then I told him not to get Thomas wet. It worked immediately!”

— Dionte, Illinois

“My son was fully toilet trained at 3, except he wouldn't go poop in the toilet. I tried everything, and asked everyone. Finally one day we were shopping and he asked for boxers. I told him that if we got these he would have to use the toilet or it would get all over the place. That seemed to be the magic thing because ever since then he has had no more accidents.”

— Mackenzie, California

“I let my daughter wear underwear every day until naptime, but I put plastic pants over them to prevent messes. In the beginning she wet several times a day and didn't like the feeling. I also gave her a nickel for her piggy every time she sat on the potty. She was trained by 20 months.”

— Jill, Arkansas

“My daughter tortured me for months, using the potty successfully one day, then demanding diapers the next. Finally I told her that the pack of diapers we had just bought was the last, and I wasn't buying any more.

We then picked out training pants. When we got down to the last few diapers, I again emphasized that they were the last and when they were gone there wouldn't be any more. We then went to training pants and to "sleeping underwear" at night. She had a few accidents the first week and has been trained ever since!”

— Tammi, Florida

Finally, there are parents who “feel your pain”. Jill from Indiana had gotten to her own breaking point. Here’s what she did:

"Our daughter was 2 1/2 when we finally got her trained. We tried everything in the book. She wanted to wear underwear but not go to the potty. Finally we said, "Go ahead and do what you want." Two days later, she started using the potty on her own, with no encouragement from us!"

These parents share their time-tested techniques with you in hopes that you will recognize your child in one of theirs and be able to put what worked for them to work for you!

Of course, as we've said many times in this book, every child is different. But doesn't it help to know that you're not alone!

CONCLUSION

The day will come where you will look at your child in amazement and with pride realizing something has clicked. Something has registered.

Your child has initiated - with no reminder - going to the potty.

If you're like most parents, potty training your toddler feels a lot like fighting an uphill battle. But sometimes, advice from another parent who's been there can be encouraging enough to pull you through.

Often, potty training habits can be hereditary. That's right - handed down from generation to generation. Ask about how old you were when you were finally toilet trained and then take that information and apply it to your situation with your own child.

I, myself, was potty trained early - my mother tells me 15 months. However, my brother was 4 years old before he would use the toilet on a regular basis. My own daughter trained herself at 18 months as did my sister. Every child is different. There is no magic formula to help your child potty regularly. You can't just snap your finger and say "You're potty trained."

The real job during potty training lays with you - not your child. When you foster a supportive environment and couple that with lots of praise and encouragement, you will have a child who is eager to go on the potty and will, most likely train easily in the long run.

You must, must be patient. Most children will take quite a long time before they actually “get it”. It will take up a lot of your time and a huge amount of your attention. But remember that this only lasts a little while and you will be able to get on with your life without having every waking moment having to do with pooping and peeing.

Potty training is not about the potty. It’s about control. Your toddler is learning to control his or her body. The reason that the bathroom becomes a battleground is because parents mistakenly think that they are in control of the situation. Let that idea simply disappear. Your toddler is now in control and accepting that will eliminate the battle

For parents, potty training is about learning how to help and support their toddler in the fight for independence. It’s imperative that you choose to stay on the right side of the battle lines, or your toddler's self-esteem will suffer.

By waiting until the time is right, rewarding the behavior you want to see and not shaming your toddler if he or she does get it “wrong”, you are building your toddler’s self-esteem and empowering them to succeed joyfully. No more battles. Happy child. Happy parents. It’s that simple.

We can’t offer a simple solution to everyone’s problem. What we can do is show you what history, experience, research, and time has shown to work in the past with other people in other situations.

You can look into some of those fancy “potty toys” like “Potty Elmo” or dolls that wet themselves on a potty, but the best way to train your child is to listen to them and do what works best for their individual personality. Of course, if these toys will work, by all means use them!

Potty training is a milestone for a toddler, but it is a process that can be frustrating for both parents and toddler. Realizing that it is a natural process that must be endured for both of you will make this time a little less stressful.

This is something that is very personal for your child, and it should be personal for you as well. As we said at the beginning of this book, everyone will probably be offering you advice just as we have. Don’t take every piece of advice as “gospel”. Try some of it out and

find what works. Then you can be the one offering the advice instead of listening to it! And believe us, you will!

We will close with a simple line that Howie Mandel used during one of his comedy shows when he was talking about toilet training his own child. He said that every time his son was asked to use the potty, he would cry – sometimes uncontrollably.

Howie and his wife would get into huge arguments about the fact that their son was crying and how it wasn't right that he was associating bad things with the potty. Howie combated this thinking to his wife by simply saying, "It's his potty and he'll cry if he wants to!"

Relax, have fun, and feel satisfied when you can ditch the diapers and be free at last! Your toddler will feel the same way too!