

# Potty Untraining

## NO MORE DIAPERS

On a missionary trip to Central America, we were amazed by the practice of the primitive Maya Indians in not diapering their babies prior to stuffing them into a carrying pouch. The infants are all potty trained. After experimenting on our own and after further observation, we discovered that an infant is born with an aversion to going in their “nests.” The parents “untrain” them by forcing them to become accustomed to going in their pants. It is instinctive in a child to protest a bowel movement. He kicks, stiffens and complains. Being sensitive to the warning signs (after having changed 17,316 diapers with the first three), my wife tried it on our new arrivals. When she sensed that the child was about to “go,” she would go to the toilet and place the bare infant against her bare legs in a spread leg sitting position. At first, a little stream of warm water would provoke the start of an impending “tinkle.” As the child began urinating, she would say, “Pee Pee.” On other occasions, if she missed the signs and a bowel movement was in progress, she would rush the child to the bathroom to finish on the toilet, while occasionally saying, “Do Do.” Even if the child was through with his elimination, she still set him on the pot in order to reinforce the training. He came to identify the sound with the muscle function. They become so well trained to the voice command that you must be careful not to say the words at the wrong time.

Now, some disbelieving mothers have said, “You are the one who is potty trained, not the baby.” Just as a mother knows her baby is hungry or sleepy, she can tell if he wants to go potty. A three week-old baby is doing all he can to communicate.

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My Mother-in-law was equally skeptical until the day my wife said to her, Stop at the next station, the baby wants to go potty.” In a minute, when my wife came out with a thoroughly relieved three-month-old baby is doing all he can do to communicate.

For a while, our bathroom became the end of a pilgrimage for those seeking faith in infant potty training. Many a time our red faced, infant girl looked up to see a great cloud of amazed witnesses expectantly hovering in our large bathroom.

Understand the child is not made to sit for long periods of time waiting to potty. There is no discomfort for the child. An infant soon becomes accustomed to being regulated to about every two hours, or according to sleeping and eating intervals. Many others have also been successful in training their infants.

## A HOSE WHEN HE GOES

A good friend and neighbor had a big three-year-old boy who would sit outside driving nails with a hammer and dumping in his diaper. I suggested it was time to have a man-to-man talk with the kid about the environmental implications of making such large contributions of plastic to the city dump. The father explained that he did not want to cause guilt or stifle the young man’s personality. I well understood his concerns, for I have seen distraught, impatient parents doing emotional damage to their children through verbal abuse. So, I suggested a training exercise.

First, I pointed out that the boy’s mother, busy with the other children, would, several times a day, pick up this big kid, talk sweet to him, lay him on a bed, take off the dirty diaper, wipe him with a warm rag, rub a little lotion on the chaffed spots and then put a fresh, smooth diaper on him. Dumping in his pants was an opportunity to get his mother’s undivided attention. Now, we understand that there is no guilt or blame in this matter, especially on the child’s part’ but there is something quite inconvenient—except for the kid who loved the experience and must have found it the highlight of his day.

So, my suggestion was that the father explain to the boy that, now that he was a man, he would no longer be washed in the house. He was too big and too stinky to be cleaned by the baby-wipes. From now on, he would be washed outside with a garden hose. The child was not to be blamed. This was to be understood as just a progressive change in methods. The next dump, the father took him out and merrily, and might I say, carelessly, washed him off. What with the autumn chill and the cold well water, I don’t remember if it took a second washing or not, but, a week later, the father told me his son was now taking himself to the pot. The child weighed the alternatives and opted to change his lifestyle. Since then, several others have been the recipients of my meddling, and it usually takes no more than three cheerful washings.

## **MANY SWEET RETURNS**

One little three-year-old diaper dumper, when watered down with a hose, looked rather shocked, gritted his teeth, and then adjusted to the inconvenience. When it became clear to the parents that they had a tough, resolute martyr on their hands, and understanding the principles, they sought another solution. While continuing the hosing, the mother realized that, partly due to her attitude toward what she knew to be her last child, the little fellow just didn't want to grow up. He enjoyed being the baby as much as she enjoyed it.

These parents, conscious of their children's nutritional needs, do not provide them with many sweets. The rare occasion when they do is a real treat. This little fellow was a Spartan when it came to bodily discomforts, but he sure did love the sweets. The wise mother cheerfully said to the boy, "Son, Mother has decided that you are just not old enough to be eating sweets, so until you get a little bigger and stop pottying in your clothes, you will not be allowed anything sweet." For a week he seemed to be as monkish about the sweets as he was the hose. Then the day for French toast came around. Not eating syrup, they were allowed one teaspoon of powdered sugar per toast. After watching the other children receive their powdered sugar, the forlorn fellow said to mama, "I sure do like powdered sugar on my French toast." "I know you do," she said, "but you are not old enough yet." After his deprived breakfast of plain French toast, he climbed down, walked around to his mother, and with all the soberness of one making a revolutionary, life-time decision, he announced, "Mother, I am ready to stop wearing a diaper. Take it *off*." That was it. From that moment on, he took himself to the toilet. A week later, the little man, now possessed of a more disciplined character, climbed up to the table, sat down on his dry pants and had his French toast crowned with a spoon of powdered sugar.

## **A NOTE OF WARNING**

Bed wetting or diaper dumping is not a moral or character issue. It is a natural physical function. Don't let your pride do damage to your child. No matter how ashamed or embarrassed you are, don't apply emotional pressure. He is a product of your training and conditioning.

If you have an older child who wets the bed in his sleep, understand it is not a conscious act that can be corrected by the above mentioned methods, nor is it an attitude problem that can be dealt with by discipline. The problem may be physical or emotional. Regardless, buy yourself a set of plastic sheets and teach the kid to change his own bed covers. Don't ever embarrass him or cause him to feel blame.

If you suspect it could be emotional, look within yourself for the problem and get yourself adjusted. The child will grow and mature in an atmosphere of love and security.