

When Potty Training does not go as Planned Seven Tips



We're pretty sure you'll agree that nothing causes more anxiety in a parent than the topics of sleep, feeding, and scariest of all, potty training.

I often get calls about potty training that go something like this:

"Help, my child is having difficulty potty training, and cannot move up to the next class in preschool until he gets the hang of it," or,

"My child was potty trained, and now she has regressed and won't sit on the potty anymore," or,

"My son goes pee -pee on the potty all of the time, but he just won't go poop".

Sometimes it feels like your child takes one exciting step forward, only to stumble two steps back.

All of these scenarios are very stressful and make parents feel inadequate.

You shouldn't! Developmentally, children around this age are trying to exert their independence and control over their world.

Whether or not they use the potty is one of the few things that they have control over, (by the way, if you haven't noticed, they also have control of what time they finally fall asleep and what goes in and down their mouths, much to the dismay of many a parent.)

As far as potty training goes, they want to do it and be like all of the other children, but for some unknown reason, they just aren't ready yet.

Some of the common reasons children have difficulty with potty training or experience regressions include:

- Moving to a new home
- A new daycare or change in their daycare classroom
- A new sibling is brought into the home (there may be a delay in their reaction to a new sibling, so even if the baby is 6 months old, you may see regressions in your older child's behavior)
- Issues with other children in their classroom
- Potty training was started too soon!

If your child is experiencing any of the above situations, hold off for a few months. This will help make the potty training experience go so much quicker.

If your child is not experiencing any of the above situations and is still having difficulty, here are a few tips that could get you right back on track:

1. Stop Potty Training

What? Yes, just stop! For two whole weeks.

At this point, you are both frustrated. Your child knows that this is really important to you, and chances are you're probably showing your frustration.

Stop the whole process. Tell your child you are going to stop. If she is able to go pee pee on the potty, let her continue. However, let up on the pressure to go poop.

If she has an accident, just bring her in the bathroom and change her. No criticism or lecture. Just, "Ok, you can try again later, I know you can do this!"

Use these two weeks as a "reset", then try a different approach when you pick up the process again.

2. Get Rid of The Pull-Ups

Children cannot feel when they are wet or dirty in pull-ups. If you haven't started your child using underwear then do this now at least for the day. If your child is already in big girl panties then keep her in them like you have been doing. If at night, you have been putting on pull-ups then (for now) keep them on her.

3. Stock Up on Rewards

Run out to the store and purchase a small stockpile of toys and games.

Keep rewards small and vary them. If you start with a big LEGO set for his first poop on the potty, by the end of the week you will need to take him to Disney World!

Change the rewards frequently and make a big deal about them. Keep all of these rewards in a special bucket or basket in the bathroom, as a reminder that using the potty is a good thing.

4. Create A Sticker Chart

I know, I know, you tried this before. However, stickers alone are not motivating for this age group. Plus, waiting until the end of the week for stickers is too long.

At this age, children need immediate reinforcement. Sometimes, even just sitting ON the potty is a move in the right direction that should be rewarded. For other children, a poop in the potty is need for a reward.

Make a big deal and put a sticker on the board, then let your child pick a reward from the basket.

5. Change the Look & Feel of The Bathroom

If poop is the problem, make the bathroom a motivating and inviting place.

Just think about how you would feel if you had to go and someone was staring at you, telling you to go, or worse, constantly asking, “Did you go yet?”

Have a basket of books or a copy of “Where’s Waldo” in the bathroom. These keep children calm and distracted so that their bodies will work naturally.

6. Know When to Ask

Don’t keep asking him if he has to go while he is playing.

I know that a lot of professionals say to do this, but if you have a child that has regressed, you need a different approach.

Most children have a specific time each day that they go to the potty. Make sitting and going to the potty a part of his daily routine (e.g. wake up, potty, get dressed, eat breakfast, potty before leaving for daycare.)

If you keep asking while he is playing he is going to be resistant. Why would he want to stop doing something fun to do something intimidating?

7. BE CALM!

My final tip is also my most important one.

You cannot make your child go. She has all of the control here. There is no competition to see whose child was potty-trained first. Those parents who potty trained their children in 3 days are not better parents than you. Every child is different, and some need a little more support in this area.