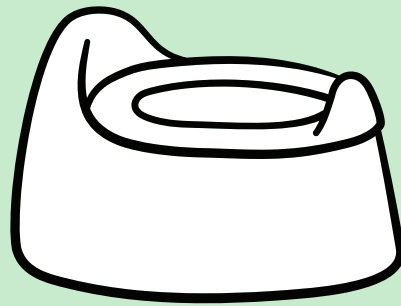


**Good
INSIDE**



Potty Guide

A Step-By-Step Guide for the Potty Process

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Dr. Becky

Self Check-In

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First, let's check in:

Take a moment and reflect on the various feelings and urges that may come up during the potty process. It's important to think about what we bring with us, so we can anticipate our own feelings and think about what coping skills we will need as our kids go through this process.

Below are some ways to learn more about yourself and the feelings that will likely surface during the potty process. There are no right or wrong or better or worse answers – all data is good data and the goal is for you to have a better understanding of yourself through this self-reflection.

Ask Yourself:

How am I when I'm invested in something and it's a bit out of my control?

How am I when I'm working toward things and there's a mistake?

How am I with mess?

How am I with dirty things?

How am I with allowing my kids to separate from me?

What were the family values in my own family of origin in terms of mess and cleanliness?

Imagine:

Imagine your child having an accident on your carpet. Notice how your body feels, your urges, and your thoughts. Say “hi” to all these feelings and remind yourself you can cope. Take a deep breath, imagine now the way you’d like to respond.

Imagine needing to leave for a long car ride and your child refusing to use the potty before. Notice how your body feels, your urges, and your thoughts. Say “hi” to all these feelings and remind yourself you can cope. Take a deep breath, imagine now the way you’d like to respond.

Exercise:

If these imagined scenes bring up your anxiety – this is ok! In fact, it’s fantastic to recognize now. Place your hand on your heart, your feet on the floor, and take a few deep breaths while you imagine the stressful scene. We can “pre-regulate” a bit by practicing coping skills while our body previews some of the feelings we will have.

How Do I Know if My Child is Ready?

Signs of Readiness:

There is no need for your child to show ALL of these signs. Remember that this is a process, not an off/on switch, and kids will be ready at different ages.

- Ability to follow simple instructions
- Tendency to stay dry for at least two hours
- Tendency to be dry after naps
- Regular and predictable bowel movements
- Curiosity about bathroom activities, potty, etc.
- Discomfort with dirty diapers
- Ability to understand bathroom and related body part words
- Signs of feeling “older” and a bit more independent
- Communication of wants and needs – communication can be verbal or non-verbal

NOT Signs of Readiness:

- Your child's friends being potty trained
- A book saying our child should be ready
- Your own anxiety and fears about your kid
- The age you were when you were potty trained
- The age your other kids were when they were potty trained

Big Picture

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Let's separate outcome from process:

OUTCOME: Sitting on the potty, peeing and pooping on the potty.

PROCESS: Noticing signs in your body, accidents, feeling independent and proud of oneself.



Let's prioritize process over outcome:

OUTCOME OVER PROCESS: Sitting on the potty and peeing after your parent places you on the potty, not when you've initiated it on your own.

PROCESS OVER OUTCOME: Your child peeing on the floor then saying to you, "It's coming, it's coming!" and running to the potty to try to finish there.

Prioritizing the key elements of the process is what leads, naturally, to successful potty outcomes, not just in the short-term but also in the long-term when a child is out of the house, independent from any prompts or desire to please you.

Think about encouraging these themes in the potty process:

INDEPENDENCE: Your child needs to feel like a separate person and like they are in charge of what comes out of their body, when, and where.

SEPARATION: The potty process involves a big developmental change – your child is now in charge of peeing and pooping rather than a parent being responsible for the key elements. We want to show support for this change.

CONTROL (your child's not yours!): This is huge. It's hard to be invested in a process and relinquish control. The key is this: this is a child's process, not a parent's – we want our kids to be invested and excited more than we are! Remind yourself: “My child is in control. This is about my child and their body. I am here to support.”

BODY AWARENESS: At the end of the day, potty training is all about a child starting to recognize sensations in their body. This is a process of learning to look inward and assign meaning to feelings, as in, “Oh! I know this feeling in me! It means I have to go to the bathroom!” Too often, potty training methods actually “train” kids to look outward toward their caregivers – for timing of when to pee or for praise or rewards. This external-validation-seeking is the opposite of body awareness.

BODY SOVEREIGNTY: This is the ultimate lesson I hope to teach to my kids in life: “You are the only one in your body and you are the only one – ever – who can know how you feel.” This self-belief underlies self-confidence, an ability to set boundaries, consent, and so many other important processes. In the potty process, we want our kids to embody this belief – that they are the ones who know their body’s signals, they are the ones who make decisions, they are the ones who know what is happening and what to do next.

Setting the Stage: The Months Before

(Ideally At Least 6 Months Before!)

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Modeling:

Start talking aloud (in front of your child) about **“that feeling”**:

“Oh! I think I have that feeling... hmm is it? I think so! I am going to run to the toilet!”

“Oh, I have that feeling... my bladder is telling me it’s full. I’m going to the bathroom and then I’ll be right back.”

Model some hesitation about using the toilet:

“I think I have that feeling... I don’t want to go... Hmm... should I? Ok, I can go, I know I can do it!”

Show some hesitance about bathroom:

“Ugh I don’t like the way that toilet looks... hmm... wait, I know I am safe and I can do it. I am safe and I can do it.”

Take a few deep breaths and then sit on the toilet, maybe continue to model aloud some self-talk: “I can do it, I know I can!”

MANTRA: Use a mantra, yourself, in the months before your child is potty training; you are using this mantra so your child absorbs it, which sets the stage for your child to use it (themselves) during the potty process.

EXAMPLES:

“I am safe. I can do this.”

“This is new. I can sit.”

Model using this mantra yourself as you use the toilet.

Build bathroom associations to *approximate* the potty process:

- **Change your child’s dirty diapers in a bathroom**, ideally with your child standing up – this builds your child’s independence and sense of “feeling older.”
- **Dump poop from the diaper into the potty**, say “bye” as you flush it.
- Any time you have a part of the potty process in the bathroom, you are **building a child’s familiarity with going into the bathroom when there is peeing or pooping.**

Introducing the potty:

- **Have small potties in the bathrooms in the months before** you're officially in potty-learning mode. Invite your child to come with you to bathroom thereby demystifying the toileting process. Your child can sit on the potty, even fully clothed. This is all about building familiarity without stress or pressure.
- **Play it cool.** No reaction if your child likes or doesn't like the potty. Remember: this is their process, not ours!
- **Scripts to explain why the potty is in the bathroom:**

"That is a potty. It's where kids put their pee and poop."

"This is the potty. It's similar to the toilet I use except it's shorter, so your feet can reach the floor just like mine do when I pee and poop."

"Oh... yeah, that's there in case you're curious and want to try sitting on it."

"Soon you'll be ready to be on the toilet just like I am!"

"Soon you'll want to pee on the potty – you'll know when!"

Build the core skills of potty learning without talking about pee, poop, or the toilet!

INTERIORITY: We want our kids to feel like they know the sensations and urges inside their bodies. We want to communicate to our kids that they are the experts in their own bodily urges and sensations.

Scripts to develop interiority:

» **WITH FOOD:**

“Oh you want yogurt for breakfast?

How do you know your body wants yogurt and not a bagel?”

Your kid will likely say, “I just do.”

Say back, “Cool, you really know your body and the messages it sends! So awesome.”

» **WITH TEMPERATURE:**

“You want to take off your jacket?

Huh. Feels a bit cold to me, but sure,

you know your body best and what it’s telling you.

Your jacket will be right here if you want it.”

CONNECT FEELING TO ACTION: We want to build up the connection between a feeling inside the body and taking an action. We can start putting words to this, as this underlying process is critical to the potty process.

Scripts to connect feelings to actions:

» **IN PLAY CHOICES:**

Your child says, “I want to draw a picture!” and starts drawing.

Comment on the arc: “You know what’s cool? There’s something inside you that tells you, in some way, what you’re looking to do... and then you came to the table and started drawing with crayons. Like... first your body said, “I have a feeling about doing art!” and then that feeling made you walk to the table... and grab a crayon. That is all so cool to notice.”

» **IN SOLVING A PROBLEM:**

“You noticed you couldn’t reach the sink and pushed the stool closer so you could stand on that.

So awesome that you knew what you needed to do.”

COMFORT IN SEPARATION: Before your child uses the potty, you want to communicate that you trust your child in moments of separation, that you are comfortable with your child no longer being in the baby stage.

Scripts to develop comfort in separation:

“Can you go grab your pjs in your room? You can be there alone... I trust you.”

“You like blue as your favorite color and I like green. Isn’t it cool that we are a bit different?”

Avoid too much language like “big girl” or “big boy” or “big kid”:

Potty training is about independence... and yet kids both want to get older AND be your little kid. Forcing a child into a “big kid” identity can backfire for kids who are struggling with growing up or who are conflicted about the potty experience. This can especially backfire if there’s a new baby and a child doesn’t want to fully give up their “little kid” part.

Get ahead of poop anxiety:

First, let's understand what might be underlying a kid's fear of pooping on the potty:

- **Fear of mess:** To help with this, try to minimize talking about poop as “yucky” and, in general, check in on your family's focus on order, “holding it all in / together,” avoidance of mess.
- **Fear of loss:** Kids at this age are very focused on themes of body preservation and body conservation. Kids sometimes worry about poop – is it a part of me? Is it safe to let it go? Is my body still whole? (Think about how at this age kids struggle when they get a tiny scrape. Kids don't understand body continuity in the same way. Poop activities bring up the same concerns).
- **Confusion.** Kids often don't understand what poop is, which increases anxiety.

Second, let's pair strategies with this understanding

- Explain **what pee is, what poop is**

PEE: Extra liquid from our bodies

POOP: When we eat, our body turns food into energy. The parts of our food that our body doesn't need turns into poop.

- **Tell the story of poop going to swim with its friends.**

Say “Bye poop, enjoy your swim! Have fun with your friends!”

Use this story when you flush poop or when your child sees you poop. Kids tend to love this – after all, it’s a story that adds understanding and playfulness – both key factors for reducing anxiety.

- **Do not call poop yucky or stinky,** as this leads children to believe they “shouldn’t” have poop inside them, that it’s bad and shouldn’t be seen.

3 Day Process

Preparation

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What to get before:

- **POTTIES:** Many of them, you want your child to have access wherever they are.
- **UNDIES:** Buy in advance, pick out with your child so your child is involved in the process. Get 3-weeks worth.
- **LANGUAGE:** Use real words: penis / vagina / vulva.
- **PULL-UPS:** For nap and sleep.
- **EXTRA LIQUID:** Get ingredients to make ice pops, also lots of liquid during initial days – water, some juice, whatever your child would be happy to drink.
- **PATIENCE AND PLAYFULNESS:** Ok ok, there's not a store for this. But prepare yourself in advance – to have patience and a playful optimistic mood during the initial days of this process!

Overall Ideas and Structure:

- **You want three days to really “be in” the potty process.** This means no plans, no playdates, no outings if you can manage. You want to be home in a known environment with few distractions. You’ll want to pay close attention to your child – mostly so you can learn the signs that your child has to use the potty, so you can empower your child to have success. If you are busy with plans or distracted, you’ll be less able to pay attention, your child won’t have the support they may need, and everyone will be more frustrated! Plus, having quiet days and sense of stability helps your child feel safe enough to make the change to using the potty, which helps a child feel empowered and capable.
- **A few days before you begin, announce:** “So exciting – you are going to be done with diapers soon! We can be naked around the house for a bit while you learn to pee and poop in the potty and we can also order you some undies you like... let’s look together.” Have your child pick out undies so they have some agency in this process.
- **The night before:** “Tomorrow is that day! We are going to say bye to diapers and hello to those new undies you picked out! You are going to learn how to pee and poop on the toilet. It’s exciting to learn new things, and it can be a bit tricky. I’ll be there with you.”
- **Get rid of diapers the night before** (or hide them) so there’s no mixed-messages; we don’t want our child to think we are ambivalent or don’t believe in their ability to be successful.
- **Don’t use diapers or pull-ups during the day after you’ve committed to the potty process:** Diapers and pull-ups absorb pee and so kids don’t get the input from their body about what’s happening, which leads to their becoming more disconnected from body signals. Our goal is to increase body awareness, not decrease it!

Extra Tips to reduce parent stress/frustration:

- **Roll up your carpets!** Keep your rugs rolled up for those initial days, to help reduce your own anxiety about mess.
- **Keep some spray cleaner and extra paper towels** in common areas for easy of clean up. Include your child in the clean up process! “Oops! No big deal, let’s clean up together. Can you get the spray bottle and paper towels! What a helper!” If your child doesn’t want to help clean up, move on. Avoid any power struggles. Not wanting to help clean up is totally fine!
- **Put an old blanket over your couches** or furniture you may feel concerned about.
- **Keep an “undies-caddy”** (think: living room, bathroom and other common areas) nearby so your child can change into new undies when needed and there isn’t the added step of going back to their bedroom to change. Being able to easily change on one’s own helps empower a child to feel in control and capable.

REMEMBER: Our stress is absorbed by our children and this is a particularly sensitive time for kids and parents alike. Do what you need to, to allow for a low-stress and relaxed potty learning experience. This might mean making sure you work in a few rounds of deep breathing in a day, making sure you have time for a short workout, taking a long shower or bath at night, or having a go-to-mantra like **“I am a good parent, I have a good kid, my child will figure this out!”** or **“I have coped with uncertainty before and I can do it again!”**

Day 1



Start Here:

- **Wake up: “Exciting day! Let’s take off that diaper!** Do you want to be naked or do you want to wear those undies you picked out?”
- **Explain what’s happening: “This is different today – we will pee and poop on the potty!** I know you’ll be able to figure this out. Your job is to pay attention to your body and let me know when you have that ‘I have to go!’ feeling ... we will run to find a potty when you have it and get as much of the pee or poop in there as you can!”
- **Start by modeling the process yourself: “Oh... I have that feeling! I think I think... it’s here... or wait is it? Ok I’m going to try!” Walk to sit on a toilet and pause and then don’t go.** Then “I’m so glad I tried. It’s tricky to know the feeling. I’ll check in with my body again later.” Maybe do this again 5-10 minutes later and then sit on the toilet, count to 15 in your head, take an audible deep breath, then pee on the toilet. Say aloud, “Wow, that felt good to do!” as if you’re truly talking to yourself.
- **Later in the day, explain that kids wear special sleep undies** (i.e., pull-ups!) for anytime they are sleeping. No need to potty train for sleeping – children will do this on their own timeline.



Peeing, Day 1:

- **Suggest timelines for using the toilet:** it might be before breakfast, after snack, before lunch, before nap, etc. The goal is to offer some *structure* but not *control*, and to over time, offer less structure so a child can base their own bathroom use on their own body signals – not a schedule put forth by parents. We want our kids to learn the signals in their body, not just pee when we put them on the potty.
- **Tell your child. “Tell me when you have that feeling. When you do, we will run to the potty!”** When you say “Do you have to go? DO you?” – this can feel to a child like you are taking over control. “Tell me when you have that feeling” gives the control and body awareness back to your child (this is what we want!).
- **Don’t ever force your child to sit on the potty.** If your child doesn’t want to go, use words like, “Ok, you’re in charge of your body!” or “Ok, you’ll know when you’re ready. You’re the only one in your body!” or “Ok, the potty is right here, so close to you when you have that feeling.”
- **Stay nearby – watch for signs of readiness to pee.** When you see a sign (a child holding genitals, wiggling, your awareness it’s been a while), use language like, “Oh let’s both run to try the potty!” or “I want to check in with my body!” or “I’m wondering if you have that feeling!” rather than “I’m putting you on the toilet!” or “I know you have to go, come on!”
- **Remember: the goal isn’t to stay dry.** The goal is for your child to have as much practice as possible linking the feeling of needing to pee to getting to a potty and then releasing the pee there.

- **Infuse silliness and fun:** you can add Goldfish crackers to the potty so your child can pee on top and see the fish “swim.” Feel free to make this a story of something you did when you started using the potty when you were your child’s age – after all, kids love intergenerational traditions and always like feeling connected, not alone.
- **Give your child extra liquids** throughout the day in the form of drinks or ice pops that you’ve made together – remember, this gives your child more “bladder practice” which helps gain awareness of body signals.



Pooping, Day 1:

- **Use similar language** of noticing a feeling in the body, walking to potty to use it.
- **Talk about how “Poop goes in the potty” and then we flush it down the toilet.** By now the story of “poop going to swim with friends” should be integrated, so this isn’t new for your child.
- **When your child is working on a poop you can integrate this story:** “Oh, you’re working on that! The poop is going to be so excited to go swim with its friends!”
- **If your child gets anxious about pooping in potty, remember the goal is to help your child feel safe.** Encourage your child to use the potty by validating the worry and showing your belief in your child: “I know this feels new and new things feel tricky! And I know you can do it, sweetie. I know you can. I’m right here with you if you want me to be or I can turn around so you have privacy when you sit.”

- **If your child is anxious, focus on keeping your own body calm;** your child is absorbing your feelings in this process, and if you're stressed and frustrated, this will actually "tighten" your child up. So take some deep breaths and tell yourself, "My child's body, not mine. My child will figure this out."
- **Give your child extra fruit and high-fiber foods** to ease the pooping process.



Responding to Accidents:

- **Accidents aren't the enemy!** Accidents are part of the learning process. During or after an accident, many kids recognize their body signs, as in: "Oh! Maybe that feeling before was the 'I have to pee feeling'! I now know more what feeling I'm looking for!"
- **Tell yourself over and over: "Accidents are part of the process."** Accidents happen on the pathway to success. My child has got this."
- **It's very common for kids to have many accidents** in the first few days! Some kids start to make progress toward the end of Day 1 and others not until Day 3. Stay the course.
- **Try to minimize:**
 - » **Shame** ("Ugh again?")
 - » **Blame** ("You could have gotten to the potty!")
 - » **Your own frustration** ("You're just not getting it!")

WHAT TO SAY WHEN THERE'S AN ACCIDENT:

- **Describe without personalizing:** “Oh, your legs are wet. Let’s dry you off.”
- **Link to body:** “Let’s keep looking for that feeling.”
- **Express hope:** “It’s hard to learn new things! You’re working at this, I see it. I think you’ll catch that feeling the next time it comes.”
- **Stay close:** “Oh! That feeling and then pee! Let’s finish it on the potty!” – and bring your child to potty to finish there. Approximation is hugely helpful.



Responding to Peeing and Pooping in Potty:

KEY: this is your child’s success, not yours – we want to keep it that way!

WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOUR CHILD PEES OR POOPS IN POTTY:

- **Link to body awareness:** “Wow... you had the feeling... it came... you got to the potty. WOW.”
- **Reflect your child’s process:** “You are really getting to know your own body!”
- **Keep it simple:** “You did it!”

- **Play it cool with “poop success”:** A child can view too much excitement as our taking over control or as adding pressure. After your child poops in the potty, count to 15 before saying anything. This gives you something to do before inserting your excitement or saying something that perhaps your child actually doesn’t want to hear; this allows your child to own their reaction. You can use words like, “You did it” or “Yup, you pooped on the potty.”

Rewards:

- **Notice if your child even wants them** – we often assume they are part of the process, but often kids love having complete ownership over the process.
- **Use rewards minimally or not at all** (my preference!).
- **Praise: remember, praise is a form of control and it shows kids what we want from them.** Strong-willed kids may have their potty progress regress with too much praise because they feel something is being taken away from them (their independence).



Sleep:

- **Sleep and nighttime: put kids in “sleep diapers”** – aka, pull-ups. Don’t worry about “potty training” during sleep. No need to make this happen, it’ll happen naturally.
- **Script: “Time for nap... let’s put on your sleep undies!** We will go back to being naked (or wearing undies) when you wake up!”
- **Ask your child if they want to try to use the potty before nap.** Model doing this yourself as well.

Days 2 and 3

Days 2 and 3 are extensions of Day 1. Follow the same general guidance with a few modifications:

- **Start to give less frequent check-ins** – so you allow more of the going-to-the-potty to be directed by your child.
- **More “Let me know when you have that potty feeling”** and less “Let’s go to the bathroom.”
- **Still use some extra liquids and high fibers foods.**
- **Don’t force your child to go to the bathroom** or place your child on the potty at set intervals – remember, this process is about your child learning their body signals, not your taking over this process for them.
- **Many kids have lots of accidents on Day 2!** Again, this is normal. Your child is looking to *you* to see a sense of hope and capability. Stay positive, try to avoid shame and blame. Refer to the Responding to Accidents section for specific language.
- **Day 3: try a small visit outside for success.** Goal is to build confidence. “Try a short walk or a visit to a nearby park or something manageable that set your child up for success and personal pride.”
- **Portable Potty:** It’s great to have a small portable potty – this can help foster success on outings and also allows a child to have a potty option if they don’t want to use a public toilet.”

Common Questions and Struggles

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What about staying dry for sleep? Does my child need undies then?

- **Kids stay dry during naps or overnight sleep at different times /** at different rates after daytime potty success.
- **Early on, repeat over and over:** “I don’t have to worry about sleep!” Use pull-ups (“Sleep Undies”) and don’t push it with your child. After all, your child is already learning a major new skill!
- **Naptime dryness usually comes before overnight dryness.** Look for dry diapers after nap. After a child is dry for 3-5 naps in a row, you can move to undies. Tell your child, “You’re ready for undies now at naptime!” If your child resists, don’t push it – remember, we want our kids to feel independent, not controlled.
- **Nighttime is different for every kid.** Usually kids learn to stay dry overnight **naturally**, on their own! When you realize their diaper is dry many mornings in a row, take the same approach as you did with switching to undies for naps. In other words, you don’t have to do much about it.
- **Your child may start waking up earlier,** saying they have to pee and don’t want to pee in their diaper. This is normal. As tempting as it is to say, “It’s fine, pee in your diaper, please!” so you can get more sleep... go with it and remember it’s a stage and your child

will be back to sleeping until their normal time soon.

- » **Talk in advance:** Tell your child that if they have to pee before morning, **you will take them to the bathroom**, but this is not morning time and so your child will pee and then go back to bed (in my house we use a “Traffic Light” clock so we can say “You’ll go back to bed until the Green Light” – I highly recommend this for many reasons, including all of what’s mentioned in my [Sleep Workshop!](#)). We don’t want to be harsh or punitive when kids wake to use the toilet – we also don’t want to engage like it’s morning time if it’s not.
- » **Role play:** If your child is waking up early to pee, practice the “pee and go back to bed without talking” routine. This means find a calm connected time during the day and actually play this out. Give your child a high-five when they get back into bed quietly. Kids often are willing to do this role play, even finding it funny to practice something in advance.

What do I do about poop anxiety or withholding?

- **It’s all about reducing our own, parental anxiety.**
 - » **TELL YOURSELF:** “My child will figure this out. My child will figure this out.”
 - » **TALK TO YOUR FEELINGS:** “Hi anxiety. Hi frustration. I know this is a hard time. I also know my kid will figure it out. Yes Yes Yes, this will happen.”
 - » **GET OUT FRUSTRATION:** Express it in a drawing, in curse,

words, in whatever you form feels good to you – of course, at a time and place away from your child!

- **Make sure pooping or not pooping isn't the only thing you focus on about your child.**
 - » **We don't want your child to take in the reflection** that he is “the kid who withholds poop.”
 - » **Worry Windows:** Give yourself specific times of day you allow yourself to worry about your child's pooping. Outside of those times, say hello to your worry and remind it of it's next Worry Window when you'll give it your full attention.
 - » **Kids know if we plan entire days or schedules around their pooping** – this actually makes them more anxious, as they see themselves as a problem or unable to cope and adapt.
- **Reduce positive focus as well.** Don't celebrate with your child when they poop – this can feel like added pressure for the next time.
- **“You know your body”** – use this when talking to your child about their food choices, clothing choices, other independent decisions. What you're doing here is something very deep and important: you're reminding your child of their body awareness and sovereignty.
- **“Holding it in”** – we want to help your child, outside of pooping, “let it out” - meaning increasing the number of times in their life they can be silly and let go of full control or tightness. Some examples:
 - » **Family scream:** “I have a lot of big feelings in my body

that I want to just let out as a scream! Do you? Let's go outside and let it all out together" – then actually go outside and scream, modeling (in non-toilet ways) that we can have things inside of us and let them out.

- » **Dance parties**
- » **Drawing** – do more creative projects, use things like shaving cream and other art items that are messy.
- **Build tolerance for mess**
 - » **Play in the mud, dirt, maybe saying,** "It's fun not to be so perfectly clean all the time, right? Clean can be nice, dirty can be nice... it's fun to do both! Plus... when I'm dirty, I know I can always get clean later!"
 - » **Model tolerating mess in other areas:** "Let's not clean up tonight... we don't always have to have things neat and clean."
 - » **Look at your relationship with mess** – if you know you're someone who tends toward "having it all together" and "appearing perfect" then model being a bit more casual, messy, relaxed. Maybe say one day: "I wanted to put on sweats and be a bit... messier. Don't always have to have it all together" or share "Ugh, I don't want to make the books look even on the bookshelf today! It's really ok not to... yes... I am going to leave them as they are. No need for everything to always been so neat and clean around here."
- **Primary goal is to help child manage anxiety.** Remember: the primary goal is not to poop on the potty – as long as this remains the goal, anxiety will increase, withholding will intensify.

- » **Child can poop wherever they are comfortable** – this helps a child associate poop with success and lower anxiety.
- » **Let your child decide where they want to poop.** Start there and say: “It’s ok to not want to poop on the potty. No biggie! Its best to poop where you want to, in the way you want to.” If that means they want a diaper in their bedroom, this is ok – this is where you start. Give a few days to “reset” – to remove focus, remove pressure, remove goal-orientation.
- **Slowly build comfort:** Let’s say your child has been withholding for a while and now you allow your child to poop in a diaper in their room. From there after a few days, see if you can encourage your child to still poop in the diaper but near the bathroom... then in a diaper in the bathroom... then in a diaper touching the toilet... then in a diaper on the toilet... then have a diaper with a hole. **Here’s the main point: we want to reduce pressure, control, shame and any sense of “you’re doing this wrong.”** We want to help kids feel more relaxed, less guilty or ashamed, and to have poop be less of a focal point of stress.

What if my child only poops in the diaper at the end of nap time?

- **This is ok!**
- **Play it cool**
- **Dump poop in the toilet** after nap
- Tell yourself **“This can go in my ‘Things I Don’t Have to Worry About’ box.”**
- **No shame or blame** or negativity in your reaction.

- **Check-in before nap:** “Your body have that poop feeling coming? Hm, does mine? It might... I’m going to sit on the toilet, see if anything comes...” – you’re modeling this without pressure,

What do I do about car trips when my child is newly potty trained?

Avoid putting a child back in diapers. Bring a travel potty with you. Yes, having a newly trained potty trained child on a long trip means more frequent stops! Bring a change of clothes as well.

How can I communicate with daycare or other care providers about the potty process?

- When your child begins the potty process, **talk to other care providers.**
- **Bring extra changes of clothes** to school so teachers have them.
- **Share the language you use about checking-in:** “Let me know when you have that feeling” or “Wondering if you have that feeling?” rather than “You have to go to the potty now!”
”Share that you’ve found this is most successful because it allows your child to feel in control and proud.
- **Share the language you use about accidents:** “Oh, your pants are wet. We have dry ones, let’s get those on. Let’s keep looking for that feeling in your body, the one that tells you that you have to pee – I know you’ll find it next time!”

Additional Questions & Strategies

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Who should wipe and when?

- Wiping can often be a source of stress for parents because of possible mess. Remember to check back in with yourself and remind yourself, “This mess is temporary, and my child is learning. My job is to support them, not control them.”
- Practice wiping outside of the poop-moment by using toothpaste on a plastic toy and have a child engage in pretend play to practice this new skill. This can be done in the bathroom or even in the bath. Let your child use toilet paper or wipes to practice wiping their pretend toy’s poop.
- Initially, you may choose to wipe your child and then gradually offer times for them to wipe themselves. Wiping requires coordination that should be practiced outside the moment.
- If wiping for your child works for everyone, no worries! Keep doing it. You’ll know when you’re ready to help your child start practicing this on their own.

Boys: standing up or sitting down? Does this matter and when should we switch from sitting to standing?

- Sitting is often preferable at first – it’s easier and less messy!

However, if your child wants to pee standing up, feel free to go with that. Remember, approximation is a key factor here; using Cheerios or goldfish as a point of aim can be helpful. Most kids who start peeing sitting down will naturally transition to standing up at a time they're interested. You can always lightly suggest it – again, if there's resistance, play it cool, let it go, and move on!

PLAY STRATEGY: Choose several plastic toys that your child can use to pretend-pee or pretend-poop with. This gives your child another way to express thoughts and feelings about potty learning and possible reluctance and anxiety. Allow your child to put their dump truck on the potty and ask *“Hi Dumpy! Do you have that feeling? Let me know when you do!”*

You can even pretend that Dumpy pooped out dirt! And then pretend to flush it down the toilet, and then wash dump truck's wheels. Providing multiple outlets for expression, modelling and play with peeing and pooping is key to integrating potty learning concepts.



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