

# — Toilet Training for Resistant Learners

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### 3. Resistant

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You have attempted to potty training your child but he or she is resistant to entering the bathroom and/or sitting on the toilet. He or she may scream and tantrum when a caretaker tries to take him or her to the bathroom which may escalate to aggressive behavior. The bathroom can be a traumatic experience for some kids. It is a sensory overloaded environment with water, loud sounds from the flush and the lighting is often different in bathrooms too. The toilet itself can be scary... The flush is loud and things disappear when the flush happens. Some kids have a fear of falling into the toilet. You can help desensitize these sensitivities and fears by following the steps outlined in this program.

# Desensitization Program Overview

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The sequence that will follow is a highly structured teaching method that will introduce the toilet in a very incremental manner. We will first work on distance/location, then move on to increasing time.

You will progress rapidly through these steps so that your child doesn't ritualize any one of them. As such, the level for mastery should stand around 5 successful repetitions, then move on to the next step. You know your child best and you'll know if he or she is getting it so feel free to make adjustments here.

This program combines desensitization with potty training. Due to each child's unique needs, it is highly recommended that you consult with an expert.

# Video Modeling

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Video modeling is a powerful tool for teaching toileting skills. It clearly shows exactly what you'd like your child to do and eliminates the language processing which is difficult for many kids with special needs. Each step of the desensitization program will include a video for your child to watch before practicing the skill. It is recommended that you recreate these videos specific to your environment for easier generalizing.

There are a lot of steps involved. The video model links are also a helpful tool for adults to understand the training sequence.

# Step 1 Consider the Environment & Sensory Needs

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Before you begin toilet training, you will want to address any sensory needs that may be impacting your child's comfort level in the bathroom.

- Noise: Does your child hold his or her ears in the bathroom? It could be the echo or the flush. If it bothers your child, try noise cancelling headphones or play music that your child enjoys
- Lighting: This is usually not an issue in the home but some public restrooms can be bright. Irlen lenses are helpful to filter out bright or fluorescent lighting. You might consider installing ambient lighting.
- Temperature: If your bathroom is tiled, it may be cold. Try heating it up with central heat or a space heater.

# Step 2. Identify 3 Reinforcers

Before beginning your child's program, please take the time to identify what you will use as reinforcement. You will need 3 reinforcers as follows:

## #1 Reinforcer (you will need to identify 2 of these)

A unique, novel, highly preferred toy or object. This can't be something that they already have access to and they *only get it for entering the bathroom initially, then the other for voiding on the toilet.*

## #2 Reinforcer

A preferred reinforcer (something they like a lot)--can only have it for sitting on the potty. If they end up voiding, they can have both #1 and #2 reinforcers

## #3 Reinforcer

An edible reinforcer or something that you can give and take away quickly. Edible reinforcers work well because they are done once it is consumed.

# Step 3. Print and Prepare Visuals

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First, Then Board Use this to reinforce sitting on the potty. You will need to print a picture of your #2 reinforcer to place on this board

Potty Chart Use this to reinforce voiding on the potty. You will need to print a picture of your #1 reinforcer to place on this board

Social Story This is a personalized social story. You will need to add photos of: you, your child, your bathroom, the underwears you will be using, the potty/toilet you will be using, #1-3 reinforcers and place them in the boxes where indicated

Toileting Record print and record results from each attempt. After a week, look for any apparent voiding patterns and adjust your potty times accordingly.

Potty Visual Place this outside of your bathroom or wherever you want your child to access it to build in the communication piece

## Step 4. Implement Communication System

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This step in potty training is often overlooked by many but implementing a communication system is undoubtedly one of the most critical parts of the potty training process. Without it, you are not potty training your child at all, but rather, training yourself, or the adult caretaker, to take your child to the potty at scheduled intervals. Even though your child may not be communicating toileting needs just yet, it is so important to implement this system to build your child's receptive understanding of toileting vocabulary. In short, the language has to go in before it can come out!

## Step 4. Implement Communication cont..

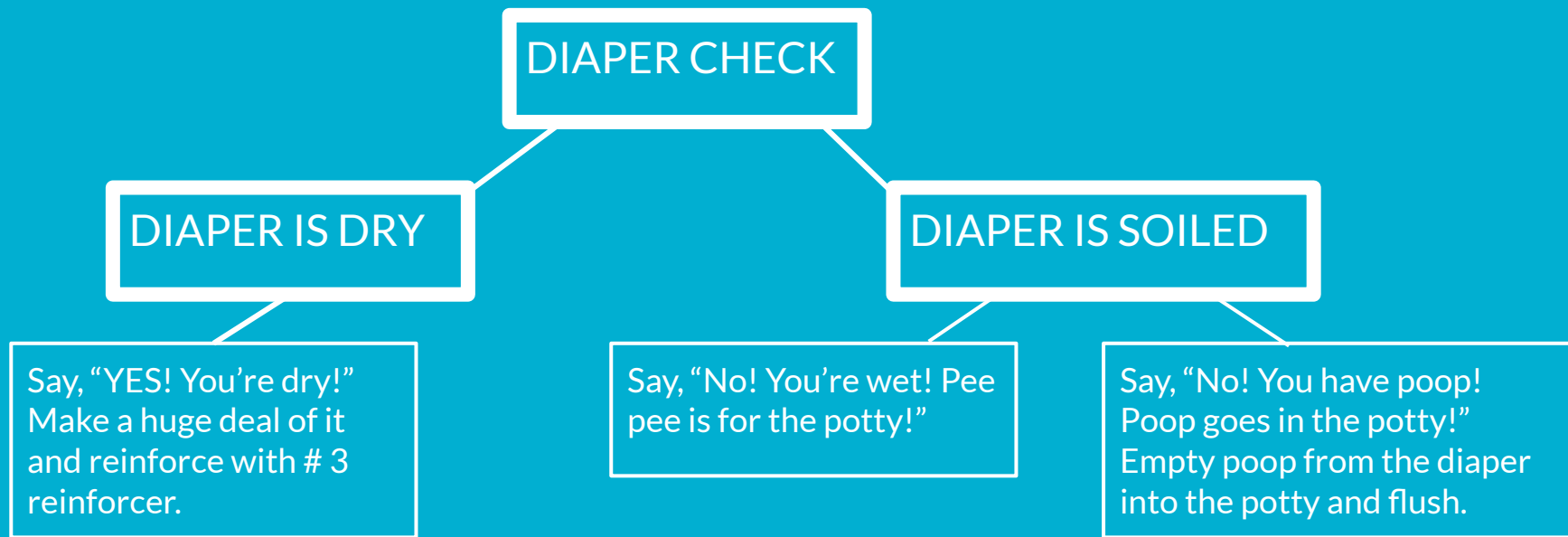
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There are a variety of communication systems from which to choose.

1. VERBAL--if your child is able to communicate through speech, pair verbal language with a low tech communication board for visual support.
2. LOW TECH COMMUNICATION BOARD--place a communication board or poster in the bathroom with key vocabulary. Click here for a [LOW TECH COMMUNICATION BOARD](#).
3. HIGH TECH COMMUNICATION/AAC DEVICE--if your child uses an AAC device, ipad or other speech generating device, arrange toileting icons/vocabulary in a location that allows for quick access.

# Step 5. Diaper Checks

You will begin training awareness by conducting a diaper check prior to each training sequence.



# Step 6 Introduce the Potty (Touch)

1. You will set up the potty in a location that is non-threatening to your child so he or she becomes comfortable around it. You might set it up in the living room while he or she is watching TV. Leave it here for a day so he or she can explore it or at least become familiar with it.
2. Show your child the “First, Then” board with a picture of the #2 Reinforcer. (Use the actual object if your child is presymbolic).
3. Set the timer and say, “when timer goes off, it’s time to potty.”
4. While the timer is running, review the video model of the desired behavior
5. When the timer goes off, model touching the potty. (If they are aversive, use an object like a pencil or toy to touch the potty).
6. When your child touches the potty, immediately reinforce him or her and make a big deal of it, “YES! You did it!! You earned \_\_\_.”
7. Repeat 5-7 times on 5-10 minute intervals.

# Step 7 Touch Outside the Bathroom

1. You will repeat the same sequence, but you will move the potty just outside the bathroom. Leave the door open so that they can begin getting comfortable. Set the reinforcer inside the bathroom within their view.
2. Show your child the “First, Then” board with a picture of the #2 Reinforcer. (Use the actual object if your child is presymbolic).
3. Set the timer for 10-15 minutes and say, “when timer goes off, it’s time to potty.”
4. While the timer is running, review the video model of the desired behavior
5. When the timer goes off, model touching the potty. (If they are aversive, using an object like a pencil or toy to touch the potty).
6. When your child touches the potty, immediately reinforce him or her and make a big deal of it, “YES! You did it!! You earned \_\_\_.” Have your child cross the threshold of the bathroom to obtain #2 reinforcer.
7. Repeat 5-7 times every 10-15 minutes.

# Step 8 Sit on Potty Outside the Bathroom

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1. Continue working with the potty just outside the bathroom door. Leave the door open so that they can begin getting comfortable. Set the reinforcer a little further inside the bathroom, still within their view.
2. Show your child the “First, Then” board with a picture of the #2 Reinforcer. (Use the actual object if your child is presymbolic).
3. Set the timer and say, “when timer goes off, it’s time to potty.”
4. While the timer is running, review the video model of the desired behavior
5. When the timer goes off, prompt them to “sit” on the potty. (If they are still really aversive, go back to Step 4 for a few more reps until you think they are ready to progress. You might consider introducing the “sit” in the living room/family room first, then move outside the bathroom. This will all be dependent upon your child’s level of comfort.

# Step 8 Continued...Sit on Potty Outside Bathroom

1. You will work on this step for a bit (about 5-7 reps each) in the following sequence, immediately reinforcing each one as follows:
  - a. Immediate touch of the seat with their bottom (down and up)
  - b. Sit for a count of “1, 2, 3 done”
  - c. Sit for a count of 10 introducing a timer (simultaneous oral count with timer)
  - d. Sit with timer for 30 seconds
  - e. Sit with timer for 1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes

\*click each step to access the video model

\*\*allow at least a 5 minute break in between repetitions

2. Continue to have your child cross the threshold of the bathroom to obtain #1 reinforcer, going a little further inside each time.

# Step 9 Cross the Threshold Into the Bathroom

1. You will follow the same sequence as Step 9, but work on crossing the threshold into the bathroom each time using the same sequence:
  - a. Immediate touch of the seat with their bottom (down and up)
  - b. Sit for a count of “1, 2, 3 done”
  - c. Sit for a count of 10 introducing a timer (simultaneous oral count with timer)
  - d. Sit with timer for 30 seconds
  - e. Sit with timer for 1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes
  - f. Reward with #1 reinforcer

\*click each step to access the video model

\*\*allow at least a 5 minute break in between repetitions

# Step 10 Reevaluate Reinforcers & Adjust

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Between steps 8 and 9 is when you would really benefit from expert eyes, but if you are trekking on with the self-guided program, this is when you will want to make adjustments to your reinforcers. Based on your child's individual aversions, either going into the bathroom or graduating onto the toilet is going to take a lot of work and you must provide a sufficient amount of motivation. Based on your child's current progress, you will switch out your #1 reinforcer on Step 8 if they have difficulty going into the bathroom or Step 9 if they have an aversion to the actual toilet.

The training sequence provided will swap reinforcers at Step 8, but you will make this judgement call based on your individual circumstances.

# Step 11 Gradually Move Into the Bathroom

1. Once your child is demonstrating the ability to sit for 3 minutes, you can increase the time to 5 minutes and begin working on distance into the bathroom using the same sequence and reinforcement schedule:
2. At this point, you will introduce the new #1 reinforcer which will be used to reward voiding on the potty and the old #1 reinforcer becomes a #2 reinforcer to reward sitting in the bathroom. Show your child the “First, Then” board with a picture of the new #1 Reinforcer. (Use the actual object if your child is presymbolic).
3. Set the timer for 30 minutes and say, “when timer goes off, it’s time to potty.”
4. When the timer goes off, prompt them to “sit” on the potty with the potty gradually moving into the bathroom a couple of inches each time as follows:
  - a. Cross the threshold with the potty (half in/half out of bathroom)
  - b. Cross the threshold completely inside
  - c. Gradually move a few inches towards the toilet until the potty is able to sit right next to the big toilet.

\*click each step to access the video model

# Step 12 Start Transition from Potty to Toilet

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1. Once your child is able to sit on the potty, next to the toilet, it is time to start working on the transition. You will use the “Potty Chart” visual and your #2 reinforcer.
2. You will continue your 30 minute toileting interval but the reinforcement schedule will differ. While your child is seated on the potty next to the toilet, have him or her touch the big potty. Give him or her a star for each touch, save the last star for the when the 5 minute timer goes off. After the last star is earned, give child the #2 reinforcer.
3. Repeat this sequence 5-7 times, then take the potty away and hide it.

# Step 12 Sit on the Toilet

1. You will continue your 30 minute toileting interval but the reinforcement schedule will differ. You will now begin reinforcing for time seated on the toilet again as follows:
  - a. Immediate touch of the seat with their bottom (down and up)
  - b. Sit for a count of “1, 2, 3 done”
  - c. Sit for a count of 10 introducing a timer (simultaneous oral count with timer)
  - d. Sit with timer for 30 seconds
  - e. Sit with timer for 1 minute, 2 minutes, 3 minutes

\*click each step to access the video model

# Step 13 Voiding on the Toilet

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At this point your child should be sitting on the toilet for 5-6 minutes and now it is time to reinforce voiding on the toilet for the #1 reinforcer. If he or she doesn't void, he or she will still be rewarded with a #2 reinforcer for sitting.. Here are some tips:

1. Monitor and Adjust: Review your toileting record to determine if there are regular times that your child is wet and adjust your intervals accordingly. If you know that your child is about to void, try 5 minutes on the toilet, 5 minutes off to increase chances of success.
2. Variable Reinforcement: Vary your reinforcers to maintain motivation by switching out your #1 reinforcer. Children get satiated quickly when your reinforcement intervals are frequent and you might need to swap things out for something new.

# Recommended Toileting Equipment

## Potty Seat



A potty seat that looks like your toilet will generalize easier when it's time to make the transition. Have your child practice flushing on it so it isn't as scary when they flush the big toilet.

## Built In Training Seat



When you are able to transition to the big toilet, you can choose a removable seat or a built in seat. The removable seats have a tendency to slide around so I prefer this type but it is a matter of preference.

## Training Seat with Steps



If your child needs extra support accessing or balancing on the seat, this training seat is ideal. It has handles that they can hold and steps that make for easy access.

# Other Helpful Products with Links

## Potty Pager



You might consider using a potty pager to help raise a physiological awareness. There are many models but this basic model worked well for me. It is fairly inexpensive and can also be used again for night-time training.

## Cool & Learn Pull Ups



These pull ups use a technology that causes a brief and gentle cooling sensation when coming into contact with urine which can help cue the child that it's time to go potty.

## Training Underwear



These training underwear have 6 layers of absorbent material in the front and back. They are made in sizes 2T all the way up to 8-9 years old. Made of breathable cotton and muslin cloth for sensitive skin.

Thank you for  
trusting us  
with your  
journey

