



Adventures in Potty Training

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When our twin boys were going through this challenging stage, I got *dozens* of suggestions from well-meaning (and sometimes smug) moms who had breezed right through it. Believe me, I tried a *lot* of the strategies without success and I was feeling more than a bit desperate as the boys began to wear the 3-year-old Pull-Ups. I took them to their pediatrician just to make sure there was nothing physically wrong with them, and after the basic screening tests, she sat down with me and smiled.

“There’s nothing wrong with the boys,” she said. “This is just one of the rare areas that toddlers have a lot of control over, and they don’t give it up easily.”

“*That’s* for sure,” I muttered. “I thought about taking them to Toys R Us and offering to mortgage our home to buy them anything they want if they would just poop in the toilet.” She grinned. “It’s been considered by many parents before you,” she assured me.

My mom was providing daycare, and she and I put our heads together to try and figure out how we were going to somehow entice the boys to graduate to big-boy pants. She looked at me and said, “Maybe the answer isn’t in bribing them—maybe it’s best to get them involved in wanting a solution.” Then she laid out a plan.

The next time one of them complained of poop in his pants, we sat both boys down and explained that we weren’t going to change their Pull-Ups anymore. They seemed puzzled, so we took them into the bathroom. Mom pointed to the diaper wipes and clean stack of Pull-Ups and then the wastebasket nearby.

“You are big boys now. When you have poop in your pants, you take them off, shake the poop into the toilet (she demonstrated with the boy who was in need of the procedure), put the dirty Pull-Up in this wastebasket, use this wipe to clean your bottom, and put on one of the clean Pull-Ups in this stack. Then you flush the toilet, wash your hands like we taught you, and go back to playing.” They both seemed unimpressed and more than a little disinterested. Until it was time to change again.

I took the boy into the bathroom and said I’d watch him as he practiced what we had just taught him to do. He seemed mildly horrified at the possibility of actually having to come in contact with his own poop—but I assured him I’d be right here to coach him through it. “What time does Daddy get here?” he asked, thinking he could surely talk him into helping.

“*Hours* from now,” I firmly replied. “Come on—you can do this.” I can’t say the process went smoothly and without incident, but it proved to be effective in driving home the point. Mom and I both pledged to follow this new routine, despite protests and messes. Less than a week later, both boys decided that directly pooping in the toilet had distinctly better results and benefits than changing their own Pull-Ups. Voila—big boy pants!

Now I can join the ranks of moms who found a solution—and you can just count my suggestion as another one of those dozens of ideas....