Potty Training Made Easy, Fast & Simple

*Powerful Secrets, Tips, and Shortcuts From My Work With More Than 317 Children (Including My Own!)*

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Introduction: 300 Children Later – Lessons From A Career In Potty Training

My name is Johanne Cesar, and I am a potty training expert. Does that sound a little strange? Not really. As a children’s daycare teacher, I deal with potty training issues every single day. In fact, you could say that potty training is part of my “job description!”

I am also a parent just like you. At the time of this writing I have 3 small boys. My oldest is 6, my second is 4, and my youngest is just 2 years old.

So if you include my 3 little boys, I have successfully potty trained more than 300 children in the last 10 years. That adds up to thousands of hours of practical potty training experience.

Everything you will read in this book is based on working with those 300 little children. With my help, they have all successfully come to grips with “bathroom issues.” Trust me, you can do the same for your child.

Now that you know I am a potty training expert, let me tell you what I am not.

I am not a child psychologist. I did not take child psychology courses in college. I don’t have a Ph.D., or any other fancy letters after my name. My first potty training “classroom” was not in some child psychology lab. It was in our little bathroom here at home – right down the hall from where I am writing this. That was where I potty trained my own 3 boys.

Why is it important that I am not a psychologist? Because this book is not about theory. I don’t believe in writing endless pages about what you “should” do, in a “controlled” setting, with the “ideal” child. In all my years as a parent I have never experienced one of these theoretical moments! I’m sure you haven’t, either.

The truth is, potty training is the toughest problem you will face in your career as a parent. (The next one will be teaching your child to read.)
But if you are prepared for potty training, you can help your child succeed much, much faster. What you need is good, honest, practical information. You need to know what to do during those “crisis” moments. You must have a guide on those days when life does not follow the theories!

You will get that practical information from this book. I promise. You will not read theories of child psychology in this book. No “celebrity Ph.D.” opinions. Just straight facts and methods that work.

I am writing this book because I spent 10 years in the daycare field. I must admit, I thought I knew it all. It was evident that I was extremely good at my work – and everyone around me knew it. I also had a passion for my career. Not only do I have a tremendous love for all children, I really enjoy watching them grow and develop their own personalities.

My husband says I have a talent for working with children. My employers seem to agree with him. Where I work, the immediate supervisors always choose me to care for their children. It’s nice to know that even the experts consider me the best teacher in their center.

So when my son was born, I decided to do some heavy duty research on potty training. I was going to learn from the experts. So I went to the local library… and was shocked at what I found. Out of 14 books on the shelf, only two were written for the parent. Everything else was written for the child!

You know the type of children’s book I’m talking about. It has lots of pictures and a cute but somewhat vague story. Some of the books I looked at were just 10 pages long. Others had no words at all. To this day, I don’t understand how these books were supposed to help me potty train my child. My children might like the books, but that cute story was not going to help me explain to my little boy why he couldn’t “go” in his pants!

At the time, I just threw up my hands and sighed. “Perhaps these books have to exist so psychologists can get grants to do studies,” I said to myself. Then I continued my search for advice and information.
I turned to the videos. Ah, there were several on the shelf! But again, to my amazement, the videos were geared to the children – not to educating the parent. Everywhere I turned the results were identical.

I thought, “How can this be? Are parents supposed to just tell their children to watch the video and hope that potty training just sort of happens?” With another sigh, I took everything home anyway and began to watch. The videos were cute. And I must admit the songs were catchy and my son liked them.

But I finally realized that my son’s need to be potty trained wouldn’t wait until an expert wrote a book or produced a video for parents. So I began the journey on my own, observing what worked and what didn’t. I worked closely with my little son in that big laboratory called life.

Then my second son came… and my third. With each of them came a new set of problems and solutions, since every child is different. In many ways my 3 little boys were my best teachers, since they let me know in no uncertain terms whether my methods were working or not!

When I began to apply my knowledge at the day care center, it was obvious that I had discovered something. Soon I became the “potty training expert” who answered everyone’s questions. Then one day, out of the blue, my husband Greg said to me, “You should write a book about what you do best - Potty Training!”

Who says men don’t pay attention. Evidently even he noticed that I had a real knack for helping children get through this difficult stage. With Greg’s support, I soon completed the book you are now reading.

I wrote this book to help parents like you. I wrote it because I could not find any practical books to help me potty train my children. Sure, I found many books by child psychologists. But no books by parents, for parents.

I am not saying that child psychologists have nothing to offer. They are very smart people, with many years of university study. They have read hundreds (even thousands) of books.
But child psychologists are not practical experts. They are excellent at conducting studies and discovering patterns, but not necessarily helpful at solving everyday parenting problems.

For example, child psychologists will select a certain number of children from different age groups, and observe their behavior over time. The psychologists plot this information on charts. Eventually they will discover patterns in how these children mature. Based on the pattern, they can predict when a child will start to talk, take those first steps, and oh yes – exactly when the child should be potty trained!

But even when these psychologists write books that millions of parents purchase, they can’t tell you how to be a better parent. Have you ever read one of these books? They say things like “based on our research the average child should be potty trained by age x.” Sounds good.

But what if your child is not potty trained by age x? Is something wrong with your child? And what should you do? Sadly, the book is often silent on solving those tough problems.

Are such books worthless? Of course not. They can give you a theoretical overview. And yes, there is an “average age” for potty training a child – I’ll cover this later on.

But as a parent, you have an urgent need for practical advice. You need the answer to the question: How do I accomplish this daunting task? How do I potty train the right way? This book answers those questions.

Don’t try to apply child psychology theory to potty training. It does not work. Just throw it aside.

Potty training is a journey – not an event. It’s something you go through – not something that just happens. I will guide you on this journey. I will support you.

I will accompany you and your child every step of the way.

Now let’s begin!
Chapter 1: Dealing With Emotions So The Potty Training Process Is Smooth and Less Stressful For Both You And Your Child

Before we get started on the how-to aspects of potty training, let’s dive into a subject that can be difficult for some parents. The subject is EMOTIONS. Not just your child’s emotions. Your emotions.

As a children’s day care teacher, I often see parents beat themselves up because their child does not conform to some “standard” in a child psychology book. These parents will make themselves feel guilty, defensive, and just plain stressed out. They may even get down on themselves for having perfectly normal emotional reactions – emotions like anger.

This makes me sad, because struggling with your emotions makes your life as a parent much more stressful than it needs to be. Especially during potty training, which can be a very emotional process!

So let’s talk a little bit about “normal” reactions to the whole process of potty training.

In real life, we parents have to deal with imperfect situations. Life with children doesn’t happen “by the book.” At least once a week, you will have a difficult day. We have to deal with small children who can’t reason or communicate very well, as well as pressure from family and friends.

Most of all, we have to deal with CHILDREN – little humans. They are not robots or laboratory specimens. Unlike the statistical children in psychology books, a real child can shock, amaze, and scare you – all in the same moment!

So you must accept this fact: potty training is going to be one the most frustrating, stressful, difficult things you will go through with your child in the next few years.
Yes, the bad news is that during potty training, your child will…

- Drive you crazy.
- Try your last nerve.
- Make you angry.
- Embarrass you.
- And put you into some pretty stressful situations!

Sorry, that’s the truth. I won’t hide these facts by burying you in jargon. It would be unfair to sugar coat the whole “potty training experience.”

So the bad news is, potty training is one of your most difficult parental responsibilities!

But there is some good news! If you are prepared for potty training, you can help your child succeed much, much faster. You need to know how to make sure your child has every opportunity to succeed, and what do to during those “crisis” moments. And most of all, you must be ready to deal with your own emotions, as well as your child’s.

This means that you must accept the fact that during potty training, you will get upset. You will get angry. The steam will come out of your ears. And you know what? This is NORMAL.

After all, you are the parent of a young child – a little human being whose only goal right now is to discover everything he or she can get away with. You are dealing with a cute little bundle of infuriating challenges!

Of course you will get upset. Guess what? It’s only human. As parents we sometimes think we have to be MORE than human. That if we don’t have perfect emotional control, we are failures. That is an extremely unhealthy attitude – both for you and your children.

Only someone with no central nervous system – or someone heavily sedated – could fail to react to some of the maddening things small children will do. Anyone who tells you otherwise either does not have any kids or is a child psychologist hiding behind a lab coat. Even Mother Theresa got upset every once in a while.
So accept the fact that it is normal to experience negative emotions at your child. There is no reason to feel guilty. In fact, a little negative emotion can even be healthy, if properly managed and channeled. Throughout this book I will share many strategies that will help you prepare for those negative emotions.

You will notice that the key is to have a plan. We all know the ways our children “get to us.” Your goal will be to turn those situations into potty training opportunities! So accept your emotions. And trust me that you will learn how to prepare yourself to handle your feelings in a positive way that gets results.

All right, before we get into working with your child, let’s take a few moments to understand how potty training developed.
Chapter 2:
How Potty Training Was Done In The Old Days… And Why Things Are Done So Differently Today

Before we get down to potty training basics, let’s talk about what it was like in the old days. Not just to help you understand today’s potty training trends, but to make it easier for you to deal with the advice and opinions of your older relatives!

Did you know that just 20-30 years ago in the United States, most kids were potty trained by the time they hit 12 to 16 months old? That’s correct. It was commonplace to have 70 to 80 percent of all children potty trained by the age of 1. Even today, in most parts of the world, potty training starts as early as 6 months old. This is not an accident.

There are definite reasons why other nations are potty training their children so early, and why just a generation ago, parents in the U.S. potty trained their children at a young age. Is it because that the prior generation of U.S. kids was different from today’s? Or because kids in other countries are different than ours?

No. What is different is our society and culture.

The way parents in developed countries live today is extremely different from the way they lived 20-30 years ago. Our children are not different, it’s our lifestyle as parents. Thus, a definite change in potty training trends.

Potty training starts later today because of our social environment and a shift in work habits. To illustrate this, let me tell you a story about how things were a generation ago.

You are a parent, a mother. You probably have 3 or 4 kids. In most cases, your children were born in succession, so they are close to each other in age. After all, a woman’s life expectancy 30 years ago was not what it is today, so
the tendency was for you to have children very early – and back to back – so you would not have the health risks of a pregnancy later in life.

Your husband most likely works outside the home. He may even have two jobs to support the family. There is no Internet. No telecommuting. No cell phones. So it is up to your husband to provide financial stability by going to work early and arriving home late – sometimes very late – in the day.

What is your job as a mother? To stay at home, maintain the household, and raise your children! There is no outside day care. You are the day care provider for 3 to 4 very young children. You also do all the cooking and all the cleaning.

Ah, cleaning! What was cleaning like 30 years ago? Much harder than it is today. As a mother, you were not only responsible for cleaning the entire house. You also cleaned all the dirty clothing. Including diapers. 30-40 years ago there were no disposable diapers as we know them today. Kids wore cloth diapers.

Now imagine this. Just one generation ago, not every household had a washer and dryer! You didn’t find Laundromats on every other block, as you see in many urban areas today. In many old advertisements and commercials, as well as in old movies, you’ll see a mother washing clothes in a bucket.

Now I will put the question to you very bluntly: How would you like to sit there and have to wash 20 or 30 dirty diapers by hand? I imagine this would be very low on your list of fun tasks.

Of course, in major cities there were “diaper services.” You would collect all the soiled diapers in a pail or bag. A truck would arrive to collect the dirty diapers and provide you with freshly laundered ones.

But diaper service was expensive! Not everyone could afford the luxury of having the fresh diapers delivered and dirty diapers cleaned. Plus there was the smell of having a bag full of dirty cloth diapers in a corner of your home – not pleasant!
So that is your life as an average mother just 30 years ago. You work in the house, on the house, all day long. You have to cook, clean, and take care of your family. And you have to wash diapers by hand.

And chances are, just like today, most of the potty training responsibility fell to the mother, not the father. So it is not surprising that mothers were highly motivated to potty train children at an early age!

Also, there was another motivation for early potty training: social pressure. A generation or two ago, it was considered unacceptable to have a 2 or 3 year old child who was not potty trained. People would literally look at you critically, and even chastise you because your child was not potty trained. It was a “pride thing.”

This explains the attitude of many grandparents today. They will tell you, “You’re waiting too long to potty train your child!” They will tell that if your child is not potty trained by 1 year old, you are doing something wrong. Are they right? Are they wrong? Neither. This is just the way they did things in their time.

So what does all this tell you? In the old days, the longer a child went without potty training, the more of a burden it was for the mother. The longer she had to wash dirty diapers. The harder it was to take care of the house and the kids and do the grocery shopping and do everything else that she had to do on her own time. So in the past, the mother wanted to get potty training out of the way as fast as possible.

Mothers of the past were under a great deal of pressure. Some of the methods that were used for potty training would be considered child abuse today. I apologize for being blunt, but children were sometimes strapped to potty chairs, or were penetrated to force bowel movements. This is highly abusive – perhaps even illegal in today’s society.

So what caused the shift? How did we go from a society that potty trained as early as 6 months old, to a society that now potty trains as late as 3 and 4 years old? Like so many things in a capitalist society, industrialization took hold and took effect.
The shift began during World War II. As the soldiers went off to war, many of mothers took jobs in the factories to support their families. Thus, for the first time, large numbers of women were working outside of the home. When mom came home in the evening, she had to get dinner ready, get the kids ready, and had no time for potty training.

Then came absorbent disposable diapers.

As these diapers became an everyday item, they also became better and better. The more absorbent a diaper is, the longer it can stay on. So now a mother does not have to worry about potty training early – the absorbent diaper just stays on longer. Also, the cost of diapers was dropping. You don’t see many cloth diaper companies today, while they were commonplace 40-50 years ago.

With advances in television and technology, the expense of maintaining a household has grown. Today it is very difficult to maintain a household without multiple incomes. The husband and the wife BOTH work. So after World War II, America found itself growing toward a dual income household. With both the mother and the father working outside of the home, no one could pay 100% attention to potty training.

Instead of having an incentive to potty train a child early, it was now much easier for the parent to wait as long as possible. In fact, with both parents working outside of the home, kids spend a lot of their early lives in day care. Because so many day care providers don’t provide potty training, the whole process is actually more difficult than it was a generation or two ago.

And finally, in the past there was a lot of misinformation about potty training and sexual dysfunction in kids. Some experts thought that if your child was not potty trained early enough, it could lead to many sexual dysfunctions. Since this is not a course on child psychology, I won’t go into these theories here. There are plenty of psychology books that you can research, many of them with conflicting ideas.

But as a parent, I would not let all these theories play on your mind and make you paranoid. The simplest thing you can do for your child’s future mental and sexual health is to give him or her plenty of love and support – not necessarily to potty train at the earliest possible age.
So now let’s concentrate on teaching you how to potty train your child as fast as possible. That will alleviate the stress, worries, and headaches that can interfere with a loving relationship with your kids!
Chapter 3:
Mental Preparedness Is The First Step In Potty Training... And Will Make The Difference Between Success Or Failure

Have you ever observed what people do when they buy a new car, a house, or even new furniture? We go out and take all the measurements. We go on the Internet and get all the details about the car. We research the real estate agent that we want to use. We do all the homework in the world.

Yet, when it comes to something as complicated and difficult as potty training, most parents never do the one thing that they should do! They don’t do their homework. They don’t get prepared.

So this chapter is about preparing yourself for potty training. And the first thing you must prepare yourself for is REALITY. Especially, as I mentioned earlier, the emotional reality.

And unlike the celebrity psychologists, I am NOT going to say this will be the most pleasant experience you’re ever going to have, everything will be all rosy, that you’re not allowed to lose your temper, that you’re not allowed to get upset, that you’re not allowed to do anything! That’s not reality.

First, who am I to tell you how you should feel? Or how you should react to what you feel? Remember, before you are a parent, you are an individual. You are your own person. The reality is, potty training will be frustrating. Yes, you will lose your temper. Yes, you will get upset. Yes, you will not like the results sometimes.

But if you get prepared mentally for potty training, the way you react to your emotions will make the difference between success and failure. And when I say success, I don’t mean success in potty training. I mean success in how stress free it can be for you and your child.

So how do you accomplish this mental preparedness? You must understand what is going on inside your child when it comes to potty training.
By comprehending the process from the child’s perspective, your compassion will often kick in before the anger does. At the very least, your compassion will arise much more quickly, and your child will sense it.

Believe it or not, the emotions of your child are not all that different from your adult emotions. Children feel embarrassment, they feel pain, they feel shame, and they feel hurt – just like you. So let’s imagine a scenario that will help you understand these emotions.

Close your eyes, and picture yourself sitting with your family at Thanksgiving dinner. Someone has just done something so funny, everyone is practically choking with laughter. In fact, you’re laughing so hard that you pee on yourself.

Come on, we’re adults reading here. Accidents can happen even to an adult. In fact, stress incontinence is becoming more and more of a health problem, even for young adults.

Now imagine your embarrassment. For a brief moment, imagine the feelings that you would experience after that accident.

These are the same feelings that your child goes through.

So keep your child’s feelings in mind. Internalize your feelings, and associate them with your child. That way, when your child has an accident, you’ll be internally prepared to understand what they are going through.

Now, here’s another helpful exercise. I’ll assume the bathroom in your house is on the second floor, but even if it isn’t, try this out. First, go get a great big giant sized bottle of water. Second, go as far away from the bathroom as possible – either indoors, or out in the yard or garden. Third, drink that big bottle of water as fast as you can. Now, wait about 20-30 minutes.

Chances are before the 30 minutes are up, you’ll have that feeling of “Hey! I need to go to the bathroom.” But I want you to wait. No, don’t go yet. You have to wait until that sensation becomes almost a pain in your abdomen. No, it won’t hurt you. But it won’t be pleasant.
Wait until the pain becomes so excruciating that it just hurts and you just want to burst and let go. Now I want you to make a dash for the bathroom. Did you make it? Probably. After all, you’ve probably been in that situation a few times before!

But it’s not that easy for your child. When a little kid has to go to the bathroom, in most cases he or she has been holding it until it gets to the bursting point. This is the point where they can barely hold it.

At moments like that, you will find your children doing what I call the “pee-pee dance.” My sons, who are 6 and 4 years old at the time of this writing, still do the pee-pee dance. Frankly, it just baffles me. I just don’t understand why they wait so long sometimes. But children don’t think ahead. This waiting until it’s urgent is just a natural part of the potty training process.

Now imagine what it felt like, having to go so bad. Internalizing that sensation a few times will really help you understand what goes on with your child. By remembering that feeling, you will be less likely to get angry and more likely to handle the situation with compassion.

Finally, ask yourself this question: What is potty training really? Is it teaching your child something new? Or is it teaching your child to reverse something old?

Interesting question, isn’t it? Frankly, potty training is a little bit of both. It’s teaching your child something new – to recognize where to go to the bathroom. But it’s also teaching your child to reverse an old habit that they’ve been doing since they were born.

Think about a habit that you’ve been trying to break for a long time. Maybe you’re trying to not eat so many sweets. Or maybe you’ve tried to stop smoking. Or perhaps it was nail biting. It could even be something very incidental, like tapping your foot when you’re nervous.

Now think about trying to teach yourself a new trick. How about keeping your desk organized? Or switching careers? Or going on a job interview? Or how about just smiling at people and having a more positive attitude?
How difficult is it for you to do that new task or get rid of that old habit? It’s probably very, very difficult. Most scientists will tell you it takes 21 days of serious effort for you to create a new habit, or an old one.

Potty training is no different. In fact, your child is actually trying to break an old habit and learn a new one – all at the same time! Later in this book we will talk a lot about repetition and consistency. This is because even after your child learns how to go potty properly, you still have to make it become a habit.

In most cases, your child is probably 18 to 24 months old. So for the last 2 years of your child’s life, he or she was allowed to go to the bathroom in a diaper on themselves. Every single day, for the last 2 years, it was OKAY for your child to go 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, even 10 times a day on themselves.

What did you as a parent do when your child went to the bathroom in their diaper? Why, you took the child to the bathroom and said, probably in a pleasant or neutral tone of voice, “Oh Johnnie (or oh Suzie), you’ve gone potty. It’s time to clean you up!” And you laid your child down, you cleaned them up, and your changed their diaper. It was natural. It was matter-of-fact. It was nothing to get upset about.

Now, all of a sudden, your child hits a certain age and you decide it’s time for your child to go in the potty. In effect, you’re asking a little kid to reverse a 2 year old habit that started the day the child was born! If it’s difficult for you to break a habit, imagine what it is like for your child.

So as a parent, one of your biggest jobs is to NOT make potty training more difficult than it already is. Children find it easier to learn when the people around them are pleasant, upbeat, and have a calm attitude. Being unpleasant or irritable only makes potty training infinitely more difficult.

If it was nothing to get upset about when you changed your child’s diaper, try to avoid being upset now that you’re potty training. Try to stay matter-of-fact, pleasant, and calm while you change your child or help your child change themselves.

Mental preparedness means setting your expectations of yourself. So start right now, and accept the fact that it will be frustrating. Face it, you WILL lose your temper. At times you just won’t be able to remain calm or pleasant, no
matter how hard you try. You can’t avoid getting upset with your son or daughter – after all, you’re a human being with emotions, not a robot.

So set up your own personal ground rules for how you will handle those emotional situations when they do occur. Make a simple plan for regaining your balance and peace of mind. Here are some ideas:

- Choose a song that you’ll sing or hum to yourself to help balance you emotionally.
- Try counting backwards slowly while you breathe deeply.
- Close your eyes, take several very deep breaths, and exhale all those negative feelings.
- Close your eyes and picture a wonderful island, or some other “happy place” that makes you feel calm.

The point is to find some simple little action you can take so when you do lose your cool (and you will), you have a way to channel any negative feelings away from your child.

Now take out a sheet of paper and write down your expectations. What do you hope will happen during potty training? How can you, as a parent, make it easier on your child? Here’s an exercise that will help you:

Picture yourself at your job. You have just made a mistake and your boss is screaming at you. What is your reaction? You are probably saying to yourself, “Dude, screaming at me is just not helping me make this situation any better!”

It’s exactly the same for your son or daughter. Think about how you would want someone to handle a situation in which you have made a blunder. How do you want someone to handle a difficult conversation with you? How would you prefer that person talk to you? What tone of voice would be most helpful in getting things resolved?

Write these things down. Write down how you like to be treated when you’ve blundered. That’s how you want to treat your son or daughter when it comes to potty training.

While writing down your expectations, make sure you expect the unexpected. Accidents WILL happen. My 4 year old, who is usually very
reliable with his potty training, has an accident once in a while. There’s nothing you can do to prevent it – that’s why it is an ACCIDENT.

There are many different reasons accidents happen, and we’ll go into that later on in the book. For now, just accept the fact that sometimes your child will be having fun outside and doesn’t have the self-awareness to think, hey, let me take a break and go to the bathroom. Perhaps when the pee-pee dance started, he or she couldn’t make it to the bathroom.

Later I will give you examples on how to handle those accident situations. But for now, the point is this: expect the unexpected.

Above all, make your expectations realistic for both you and your child. This book will give you all the KNOWLEDGE to be able to potty train your child. But only you can set realistic goals that will work for you and for your child. No one knows your child better than you. So you are the only person who will know what are realistic goals and expectations for your child.

So write your goals down. Keep them handy, so you can remind yourself of your goals. Check every so often to see if you are on track, if you’re managing your emotions, if you’re responding with compassion. That way you’ll be able to make adjustments that will make potty training a lot easier for you and your child.

Here is one final, important point. Choose your words. What do I mean by that? Choose precise words that you will use to refer to potty training.

Decide now – will you say pee-pee or poo-poo? If you tell your son or daughter, “Let’s go potty,” what does that mean? Are you doing No. 1 or are you doing No. 2? Be very specific! You don’t want to just pick a general word like “potty.” Children need clarity because without it, they will make more mistakes.

So you might use “tinkle” for going No. 1, and “poop” for going No. 2. Your child is a lot smarter than you think, and will quickly learn the difference between No. 1 and No. 2, or the difference between “tinkle” and “pooping.”

By using very specific words to refer to various bathroom duties, you can now have the expectation of establishing a bathroom schedule. You will be
able to tell your son or daughter, “Okay, right now is tinkle time,” or “This time it’s pooping time.”

You don’t need to use the particular words I use. Just pick your own and use them 100% CONSISTENTLY. Later on I’ll explain why you want to write down these words and give copies to your daycare providers and everyone in your family.

But for now, choose words you can stick to consistently. You don’t want to change the words midstream. Take the time now, and make sure you pick words that you and your family will feel comfortable saying in public. Inconsistency will lead to lapse and accidents.

Remember, children need direction. They need to be told what to do. They need stability, and using the same words over and over will help them learn.

Breaking a habit is not easy. Creating a new habit is even tougher. If it’s like this for adults, it’s even more difficult for your child. He or she hasn’t developed the same cognitive abilities and mental control that you have. So prepare yourself mentally, be realistic, write down your expectations, and plan for your emotions.

Now let’s look at your child’s physical characteristics, and how that impacts potty training.
Chapter 4:
How Your Child’s Anatomy Affects Potty Training And When You Should Start

As I mentioned earlier, we aren’t going to worry about theoretical psychology or the physics of your child’s neurobiological system. However, you do need at least a basic understanding of how your child’s body works, because that plays a role in potty training. Don’t worry, I won’t be using words from the medical dictionary, just plain English so you understand exactly what we are talking about.

Potty training your child is all about teaching your little darling to do No. 1 and No. 2 in the potty. No. 1 is the act of “peeing”, and No. 2, the act of “pooping.”

As a parent, you need to understand how each of these acts is a physically different process. These differences are the reason it’s easier to teach children to move their bowels in the potty, than to teach them to pee in the potty!

Here’s why. First, what is the act of “peeing?” Your child’s body takes fluids from foods or drinks that have been ingested. The body extracts all the nutrients and moisture it can use, then the unusable stuff and liquid is passed to the bladder.

Once the bladder gets full to a certain level, it needs to be released - or freed. Holding pee actually requires the squeezing of special muscles. Those muscles keep liquid inside the bladder. So a child has to learn to hold pee in, versus letting it go.

On the other hand, when your child has to do No. 2, the waste is inside the body and has to be pushed out. It’s not so much letting go, it’s an actual pushing. If you have to go No. 2, you can usually sit completely still, and remained relaxed, without actually controlling any muscles.

Unless you are ill with diarrhea, excrement would not be released even if your muscles are completely relaxed. But if you have to go No. 1, and if you relax all your muscles, the liquid will come out of your body.
There is a round-shaped muscle, called the sphincter, which controls the opening and closing of the bladder. This is the muscle you squeeze down to hold No. 1 in. Visualize your bladder as an upside down balloon that is not tied at the opening. As soon as liquid is poured in from the top of that balloon, you have to tighten the opening to keep the liquid inside. That is exactly how the sphincter muscle works. As soon as the liquid is inside the bladder, this muscle contracts and closes the exit.

Pretty basic, right? So what does this have to do with potty training? According to many studies, the sphincter muscle doesn’t develop until after 12 to 15 months. Like any other organ in the body, the bladder grows as your child gets older and bigger. The younger a child is, the smaller the bladder. Thus a young child goes to the bathroom more frequently than an older child.

So your child has to learn two new things during potty training:

- First, they have to learn to recognize ahead of time when they need to go to the bathroom – they must develop that sensation of “It’s time to go pee.”

- Second, they have to learn to hold the pee inside the bladder. That means they have to learn to control the muscles of the sphincter, which closes the bladder and keeps it from releasing No. 1.

Believe it or not, learning these two things requires some complex thinking! It also requires complex physical action by the child. Children develop this awareness differently, plus there is a certain amount of physiological development that has to be accomplished for potty training to be successful.

You, as a parent, need to realize that these physical developments happen at different stages. For example, just because a child has not started walking by 9 months doesn’t mean that child will never walk. Even a 12 to 15 month old child who is not walking yet will learn to walk. These children are just developing differently. As long as there are no severe physical or emotional problems, all you need is to discover the methods that will help those children learn to walk.
Potty training is no different. There is an age where I believe all potty training definitely needs to start. But some kids can begin very early – as long as they can control their sphincter muscles and are mentally ready.

Now that we’ve looked at how the body handles pooping and peeing, you can see why it is usually a lot easier to teach the child to poop in the potty. Pooping requires a physical action, whereas peeing requires nothing at all. In general, the training process for teaching a child to poop will go much faster than teaching the child to pee. You will notice that your child will wake up in the mornings without poop in the diaper long before he or she will wake up without any pee in their diaper.

For healthy adults, getting rid of waste is voluntary. In other words, an adult can control all of the muscles required. But for a newborn or young child, this is all done involuntarily. The child has never been required to THINK about it – they just go! So as you begin the potty training process, you need to realize that your child needs to be mentally ready, as well as physically ready.

Physically ready means their sphincter muscles have been developed fully, and they are able to control their bodily functions. Mentally ready means that your child is easy to work with and cooperates in different activities.

However, you do NOT have to wait for your child to be 100 percent physically ready and 100 percent mentally ready. At certain stages you can start the potty training process, and get your child acclimated to the potty, how it’s supposed to be used, and so on.

In my experience, 2 years is usually the age when you can start potty training – even if you feel they are not 100 percent mentally or physically ready. When you start at 2, your child can grow into being physically and mentally ready.

And frankly, I have discovered that if you start later than 2, you will have more mental and emotional challenges. That is because your child has gotten very used to saying the word “No!” to you, the parents.
Because the body of a young child cannot voluntarily control the elimination process, there has been a great deal of debate. Some “experts” claim that these physical limitations are why early potty training does not work.

But there are many different schools of thought. Those who feel that early potty training is the way to go can cite good reasons and successful examples. Others who feel early potty training does not work just fall back on the facts – most children cannot control the right muscles.

As a parent, the decision is up to you on whether to start early. In my experience, I have not seen any problems associated with introducing the potty to the child at an early age. Your child can gradually become desensitized to being in the bathroom, and just “get the idea.” Then, when they develop voluntary control of their muscles, you are not fighting two battles.

Battle 1 is taking them to the bathroom. Battle 2 is getting them to use the bathroom. You will soon discover that the real challenge is in getting the child to stay in the bathroom. The actual act of potty training is simple compared to teaching the child to get themselves to the bathroom on time, followed by concentrating and staying in the bathroom long enough to accomplish the task!

So when you desensitize your child to being in the bathroom at an early age, you have won half the battle! That’s what we’ll look at next – the process I call “Pre-Potty Training.”
Chapter 5:
Pre-Potty Training – Essential Steps For Starting Off On The Right Foot

Pre-potty training is like a pre-game warm-up. It is basically a series of little trial runs and exercises. These will help your child get used to the whole “bathroom thing” long before you start formal potty training.

First, you’ll need to decide when it’s time. Go through this decision process a few weeks, or even a month, before the date when you think you’ll start potty training. Don’t decide to start potty training tomorrow. Take some time to get prepared.

If your child is past a certain age – basically 24 months or older – your “getting ready” time is going to have to speed up a bit. You want to move somewhat faster, because your child is almost certainly ready for potty training.

So decide on a time and a date for beginning the potty training process. Remember, potty training is as much training YOU as it is training your child. If this is your first child, you need a certain amount of mental preparedness. So go back to Chapter 3, and start working on your mental and emotional state.

Second, it’s time to start YOUR training. Pre-potty training is an opportunity for you, as a parent, to gear up both physically and mentally. You need to get “into the zone,” so to speak. That’s because the first week of real potty training requires considerable amounts of energy and patience from you.

Here are my recommendations for how to handle pre-potty training:

First, desensitize your child. Go to the library and get some videos and books on potty training. Start showing your child these videos and read the books with him or her. You want to get your child accustomed to seeing other children in the potty training process. Yes, you can start showing the videos or even the books to your child as early as you wish. The books and the videos help desensitize the child to the potty.
Desensitization is important because it helps take away the scary aspects for your child. Let’s face it, that big noisy weird potty has a certain amount of strangeness for a little one! So even if your child is not physically ready for potty training (see Chapter 4), it is a good idea to show them videos of other children going to the potty. After all, children learn by imitation.

My youngest son had a video we used to play for him that he became absolutely addicted to. Every day when he came home from the daycare, his very first question was, “Potty train video?” Even though at his age he couldn’t pronounce it right – it sounded like “potty train video” – he knew how to ask for it. We certainly knew what it meant!

So we played the potty training video for him every day. In fact, if we didn’t, we paid with a tantrum! It was obvious that our child was no longer scared or worried about the potty, which ultimately made potty training easier.

The most important factor is getting your child used to being in the bathroom. Here is an excellent trick for accomplishing this: 3 to 8 weeks before formal potty training starts, hold story times in the bathroom. This will help you not to be afraid of being in the bathroom.

You can also use this time to get your child used to the toilet. At first, let your child sit on the potty chair as you’re reading the story. Then for a few days, have your child sit on the potty chair with the chair open as you’re reading the story. Finally, maybe you have the child sitting on the potty chair with their pants down as they’re being told their story.

Throughout this, you’re not telling the child to do anything. You’re not telling them to go potty or anything like that. The goal is to simply get them used to sitting on the potty and not be afraid of using the potty. Do this once a day, or once every couple of days, but NOT on the same schedule that you will use once the potty training begins. In other words, you do not need to keep a strict schedule in the pre-potty training phase.

If by some chance your child DOES use the potty while sitting on the potty chair, celebrate! Make it a grand affair with stickers and rewards for using that potty. This will help your child know what they’re supposed to do in the potty – without you telling them.
Second, decide what equipment or tools you want to use. Will you be using a potty chair or a toilet insert? This is basically a lifestyle decision. Each device meets different needs, so start thinking about which one will be best for you. Later on in the book I’ll discuss chairs and tools, and will explain why I like certain ones better than others.

Third, start transitioning out of the diaper phase. Believe it or not, you can start this one on day one, the day you bring your child home from the hospital! Start changing your child as soon as the diaper gets wet. That’s correct. Pay attention, and as soon as your child wets the diaper, change it!

Yes, it is a pain. And it can get expensive, because you’re going through diapers more frequently. But your child gets used to being dry. When you start potty training, it is much easier to work with your child if he or she has learned not to like being wet! If that means more diapers in the beginning, it also means your child will be potty trained a lot sooner than most other children are. You will probably save money and stress in the long term.

I have received letters from parents who have asked me how to work with a child who doesn’t care about wet underwear. My guess is that in many of those cases, the child’s diaper was not changed frequently. So the first step would be to help the child learn to prefer the sensation of being dry. I will explain how to do that later in this book. But if possible, from day one, change your child as soon as they are wet. Help your child experience the sensation of being dry.

Fourth, a few months before you start the potty training process, get rid of the super-absorbent diapers. While these diapers are a time saver for you, your child often doesn’t even know when they’re wet. Diapers that are less absorbent are also less expensive. You can probably change more frequently and still save some money.

So anywhere from 2 to 3 months before you start the potty training process, get rid of those ultra-absorbent diapers and use less absorbent diapers. At the very least, use the less absorbent diapers during the daytime, and save the absorbent diapers for nighttime or nap time use. You will continue to change, or try to change, your child’s diaper frequently.
Fifth, talk to your spouse. Potty training should not be something that you do alone. Try to make it something that the whole family does together. Everyone in the family needs to be on the same page. Inconsistency will confuse your child, and can eventually cause rifts between the child and each parent.

But if mommy and daddy are on the same page, your child gets a very clear message on what you expect of him or her. So make sure that you and your spouse decide together what the process is going to be, what the timing is going to be, what words you will use, etc. The goal is to make things crystal clear for your child, so he or she understands what mommy and daddy want.

Another reason to talk to your spouse is to decide in advance on a starting date that will work for both of you. You can dedicate a day or two to working with your child together. This can make a huge difference in helping potty training happen faster. In my experience, it cuts a lot of time off the process.

Sixth, pick the right time to start the process. Potty training is not just the luck of the draw. Choose a time when there is not going to be a lot of activity going on – inside or outside of the house. Look for a solid 2 to 3 days which you can dedicate fully to potty training. Make this a time when both parents, mother and father, or extended family members (like grandparents) can help out. When both parents can dedicate 2 or 3 days to make the potty training process work, it makes an enormous difference.

So don’t choose a time when you’re getting ready to go on vacation. Don’t choose a time when you know you’re going to have friends and family over for a weekend. One of the best times to start the potty training process is when mommy and daddy are able to take a long weekend off together and stay at home.

Ideally, both you and your spouse should plan to take 10 days off – the weekend that you start potty training, and the following week. If you both can’t do this, try for at least one of you. In other words, let’s say you start potty training on a Friday. If you can afford to take a vacation from that Monday to the next weekend, that would be wonderful for your child.

The reason is simple. You have a whole week to lock in the positive reinforcement of what your child accomplished over the weekend!
To be honest with you, if you start potty training on a Friday, and then drop your son or daughter off at daycare on Monday, a lot of what you worked on over the weekend will be lost. Even if your daycare provider is on board with how you want your child potty trained, in most cases they simply can’t do it to the same level as mommy and daddy would.

So timing is a crucial aspect in the potty training process. Pick the right time and it’s an easy process. Pick the wrong time and it takes a lot longer than you would expect.

Seventh, don’t travel the first few weeks after potty training occurs. Try not to take a vacation during potty training. Your child is going to be very distracted if you’re at Disney World. Going potty on an airplane can be scary for little kids. And don’t take a vacation where your child will be left with the grandparents or the in-laws. Relatives might not be able to provide the consistent messages that guarantee success.

Eighth, decide on a schedule for the next two to 8 weeks. Simple things like going to the grocery store or going out with your friends now have to be planned. Once you get into the next chapter, which is the Potty Training Techniques, you will understand why a plan is crucial. So start thinking about your schedule, and how to work your schedule around your child’s needs.

This would be a good time to get yourself a potty training chart and or journal to familiarize yourself with the times your child usually goes potty.

Finally, the most important part of pre-potty training is talking to your child. You want to sit your son or daughter down and explain to them what is going to happen, why it’s better for them, and also set your expectations. Don’t be overly stern – but do be calm, direct, and clear about what is going to be expected of them. Tell them what the process is going to be like, and what will be happening in the next couple weeks.

This is not just good for your child. It’s also good for helping establish a parent-child relationship and open up those lines of communication.

Now we can decide when to start “official” potty training!
Chapter 6:
The Exact Time To Start Potty Training... My Secret Strategy

Of all the chapters in the book, this one probably answers the question you’ve been dying to ask: When should you start potty training your child?

Truthfully, each child is different. The pace of success for each child will be different. How fast a child gets potty-trained will vary enormously from child to child. So deciding on a starting date can also be different from child to child. In my case I chose an exact time to potty-train my boys, as well as other children that I have worked with in daycare.

Some children can start very early. Others need to start later. But in my opinion, it is never too early to introduce the child to the potty, or to the potty chair, so that they become desensitized to it.

The most important thing you can do is to watch your child for obvious signs of readiness. The most outwardly visible sign is what I call the “pee-pee dance.” This is when your child is kind of bent over, with the knees buckled together, sort of balancing and twitching at the same time. This is a sure sign that your child is holding the pee!

If a child can do that, it means he or she is physically ready. The child is contracting the sphincter muscle.

And when a child can contract that sphincter muscle, potty training is simply a matter of teaching where and when to relieve that muscle. They get to release that muscle when they are sitting on the potty. So pay careful attention, and watch your child for such obvious signs of readiness.

A sign that your child can be potty-trained early is when you notice that diaper changes become less necessary. Let’s say you have been paying attention and using your potty chart, so you know your child has been getting 5 diaper changes a day.
Then one day you notice your child only goes through 3 or 4 diaper changes. This is a sign that your the child is holding the pee. Their bladder is now larger, they can hold more liquid, and most importantly, your child is able to close the sphincter muscle. This type of observation will help you decide when to start that potty training.

On average, girls can start potty training as early as 15 to 18 months. This is about 4 to 6 months earlier than boys. There are all kinds of theories about why, but from a practical perspective, it seems that girls develop a lot faster than boys. In general, potty training a girl also takes less time than it does for a boy.

My golden rule is the day the child turns 2 years old is the day potty training should start in full swing. That means the pre-potty training process should have happened already. I choose the second birthday for potty training for a couple of reasons.

First, the child should be mentally ready. He or she should understand commands like stop, go, put this away, pick that up, or go to the potty. Ideally this is around the age of 2, perhaps a little earlier.

If you decide to wait until 2-1/2 to 3 years old, you will have a hard road ahead of you. Most kids that age have a very good vocabulary. The unfortunate thing is their favorite word is "No!"

The child doesn’t say no to be difficult. But at this stage, they are actively exploring the world. They are learning new things. So the child naturally says no because when they are learning new things, and they are busy! Your child is branching out, and you are not the only thing in the child’s universe any more. They want to play with their friends and explore everything and anything.

So the longer you wait, the more difficult of a time you will have potty training. Your child will be wanting independence and will follow their interests. They don’t necessarily want to do what YOU say.

Emotions like embarrassment can also interfere with an older child’s potty training. The child has now learned how it feels to be ashamed or guilty. This can actually get in the way of potty training, since children don’t think or concentrate very well when they are emotional.
Also, if you wait until 2 ½ -3 years old, you have reached the age where children really get into television. TV brings a whole new world into the potty training process. Even my boys, who were well potty-trained at a very early stage, would sometimes have accidents while in front of the TV. They would get lost and forget, "Hey, it's time to go to the bathroom."

I’m sure your next question is, how long does potty training take? Unfortunately, there is no clear-cut answer. What I can say for certain is you can make good headway on the potty training process in one weekend.

Yes, in just 2 to 3 days, you can know exactly what you will need to do to potty-train your child. Your child will also know what to do, and may even start showing signs of being potty-trained in only a weekend.

However, this doesn’t mean there will be no accidents. There will be - guaranteed. Expect them and move forward.

But within a weekends' time, your child is capable of knowing what is expected and what they should be doing. Every day after that weekend period you will work on reinforcement. It’s the repetition and reinforcement that lead to complete, accident-free potty training.

Think about how your child learned to walk. Walking is a process. At first, your child stands up, then falls down. But they get up again, and take a step, and then fall down. Eventually they can go farther without falling. It probably takes a just a couple of days to a week between the first time they stand, and the time they take their first step. The child just has to get enough confidence to take that first step.

As your child starts to walk freely, you notice him or her bumping into things. Maybe they are always falling over, or they cannot look away and walk without falling. But little by little, the child is walking with more balance. Then they start running. The next thing you know, you have got a 2-year-old that is jumping off the couch (like I do.)

Potty training is the exact same process. First, they know what to do. Then they start doing it, but sometimes they forget. Sometimes, there are
accidents. So you want to always have positive reinforcement ready, and just continue with the potty training process.

The reality is, you will need to be very vigilant for at least a month or two before you relax and feel comfortable. Even 4 or 5 months down the road, you will still need to return to some of the basic potty training steps.

But the good news is, you will not need to be as attentive as you were when you first started. The confidence will start to show in your child. It will also show in you – and that will encourage your little one even more.

In the next chapter, we will finally get to the fun stuff – my techniques for a successful potty training process!
Chapter 7:
You’ve Taken The Time To Get Prepared.
Now It’s Time to Start Training!

Okay, so you’ve gotten yourself nicely prepared, mentally and emotionally. You’ve got all the right equipment. You’ve been watching your child for any signs of readiness. You’ve also noted your child’s schedule and frequency of when he or she goes to the potty.

Now it’s time for the big day! As I mentioned earlier, I believe you should not wait past your child’s 2-year birthday to start potty training.

This may sound strange, but make this a festive day for both you and your child! Not only is it their birthday, but it is a graduation from one phase of their life into the next. Don’t look at this as beginning a time of hard work. Instead, think of it as entering a new phase in your child’s growth process.

So really create some excitement. Make it a big celebration. Tell your child how wonderful today is because it’s their birthday. Get them really delighted, and make them feel upbeat and joyful.

And I would also say, in a very excited tone, “Guess what? You’ve graduated! It’s time to be potty trained.” Convey enthusiasm and excitement in your voice.

Believe it or not, your child will pick up on your enthusiasm. It’s like walking into a room where everyone is laughing. Even if you have no idea what everyone is laughing about, you find yourself laughing hysterically. You don’t have to have a clue about what is going on – the energy and laughter in that room that will make you want to laugh with everyone else. It’s contagious.

So on this special day, get rid of the diapers. Now I don’t mean get rid of them 100 percent. But explain to your child that part of the celebration is that during the waking hours, “You do not need diapers! You will not have to use
The easiest way to do this is to get rid of the diapers.

Diapers give your child a false sense of confidence. Worse, it tells them that it’s still okay to go in their diaper, whether it’s No. 1 or No. 2. And diapers tell you, the parent, that it’s okay to not be vigilant. They make it easier for you to allow too much time to elapse between bathroom visits.

Many parents ask me about potty pants or big boy diapers. In my opinion, there is no difference between potty pants and a diaper. I do not buy the argument that potty pants help a child gain confidence because they are shaped like underwear and can be pulled on and off. In my experience, when a child has an accident in potty pants, it is 10 times more difficult to clean than an accident on the floor or in a diaper.

More importantly, look at it from your child’s perspective. If it looks like a diaper and smells like a diaper, it must be a diaper! Ask yourself, is there any REAL difference between potty pants and a diaper? No. A diaper is a diaper. If you want to have true success, you simply must get rid of the diapers.

Here’s a trick I’ve done with my own kids that has been very successful. Let them wear underwear – regular child’s underwear – as a reward. As part of the graduation process, tell them “You get to wear your own underwear!”

A couple of weeks before we start potty training, we take the kids to the store and let them pick out their own underwear – something with a cartoon character like Spider Man or Batman or something – whatever the latest movie craze is.

This helps build confidence in the child because they get to make a decision. They get to pick the underwear that they want. In fact, try taking that underwear away from a child after they’ve decided they want to wear that underwear. It’s almost impossible! Once they start wearing the underwear that they’ve chosen and WANT to wear, they do not want to be without it.
Now you have a tremendous reward. It’s positive, it’s fun, and it’s something your child has been part of from the start. Now when your son or daughter does not want to use the potty when you tell them to, you can motivate them with that fun new underwear. Here’s how we did this in our own family:

When my son was being difficult and didn’t want to use the bathroom, we would remind him that “You have to use the bathroom if you want to wear your big boy underwear.”

Well, my son absolutely loved his big boy underwear! For him, it was a symbol of freedom, a sense of accomplishment. It was a positive, grown up step for him. He saw his older brothers wearing big boy underwear, so that doubled the motivation. After all, he wanted to be just like them.

Underwear can motivate children in another way. If they do have an accident, explain that they have only 2 or 3 clean underwear left for the day. That means if they make all their underwear dirty, they will have to wear a diaper. Such a simple and excellent motivator for a child – most of them simply don’t want to make their special underwear dirty!

Getting rid of diapers altogether is also important because most kids don’t like the feeling of being dirty. Occasionally you’ll find one who doesn’t seem to care, or who will play in the actual waste that is excreted. But this is not at all common.

Here is where your pre-potty training will really pay off. You’ve already taught your child to like that dry feeling by giving frequent changes and getting rid of absorbent diapers. Now transitioning away from diapers into the underwear phase is much easier. Your child will most likely prefer life in clean dry underwear, and soon won’t be happy about wearing a diaper at all.

If you find that your child does not seem to mind being dirty, then there are some basic habits you need to work on besides just potty training. Don’t despair, it just means that you will need to be a little more vigilant and start to teach your child to like that clean, dry feeling. Read Chapter 5, Pre-Potty Training, for instructions on how to do this.
Why do I keep insisting that you must be vigilant? The key to successful potty training is consistency and repetition. So at first, you must be ultra-vigilant about how often you take your son or daughter to the bathroom.

My recommendation is that you take your son or daughter to the bathroom to use the toilet every 20 to 25 minutes. Yes, I know that seems like a lot! But when you take them to the bathroom, they don’t necessarily have to go. The idea is to get them on the toilet, knowing that you expect them to go.

When you sit your little one on the toilet, don’t make them stay on the toilet until they go. If they have been sitting there for a long time, give up and try again in about 15-20 minutes.

Your child shouldn’t be forced to sit on the toilet more than 2 to 5 minutes. He or she doesn’t have the patience to sit there, and if they get bored they will associate potty training with boredom. Soon they won’t want to go to the bathroom at all. They will avoid it, and accidents will start to happen frequently.

So be sure you take note of how long they sit on the toilet. To help avoid boredom and relax your child, you can read to them as they sit. Or let them look at a picture book. You know your child better than anyone else. What would entertain them and keep them occupied while using the potty?

To keep YOU on schedule, set a timer with a bell, a stopwatch, or the timer on your microwave. In our house, every time my son got off the toilet, I would set the microwave timer for 20 minutes.

When the bell went off, it was almost like the 4th of July! Every 20 minutes it would sound, and everyone in the house would chant, “It’s potty time!” That included not just mommy, but my older son who was 4½ years old, my second son who was 3, and my husband. We would all start to sing the “It’s potty time!” chant.

Eventually, when my 2 year old heard the bell, he would shout, “It’s potty time!” and would rush to the bathroom. Of course, sometimes it was a bit inconvenient. If we were in a grocery store or a restaurant or anywhere a microwave timer would go off, he would scream, “It’s potty time!” and try to find a bathroom!
So it might be wiser to look for a toy that has some kind of a timer, or a music box, or other type of alarm that will sound when it’s time to use the potty.

I can’t stress to you enough how well this timer technique works. It was wonderful for my child – it was positive and fun and encouraging, and it got the whole family involved. But more importantly, it allowed me to focus on other things in between potty training. When the bell went off, not only did my son know it was time to go to the bathroom, but I also knew it was time to go to the bathroom. No watching the clock!

The timer would go off, and off we went to the potty. Sometimes he used it, and sometimes he didn’t. But the further along we got in the process, the more frequently he would go. And he seemed to KNOW when he had to use it.

Soon I could see the progression. He started to push as soon as he sat on the toilet, because he knew that was something he had to do. Even if he had no liquid in his bladder, he would still push because he knew that’s what he was supposed to do at that time.

I kept stickers in the bathroom and every time he went to the bathroom, we would give him a sticker. We actually had two types of rewards: one for just making the required trip to the bathroom, and another for actually “going potty” The stickers that he liked the most were the ones that we gave him when he actually did eliminate.

If he didn’t actually use the toilet but still asked for a sticker, we would say something to the effect of, “No, the stickers are only when you use the potty. If you didn’t use the potty, then there are no stickers.”

Within 30 days of starting potty training using this simple “timed rewards” method, we were able to take a long bus trip – a 24-hour bus trip from New York to Pensacola, Florida – and he did not have one single accident.

Our diaper costs also went down from $80.00 a month to $15.00 a month, simply because we were able to potty train our son in such a brief time. This is not only wonderful for your child, boosting his or her confidence. It’s great for
your pocketbook, and you don’t have to bother about gathering diaper bags
every time you go out of the house.

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, you need to pick the right words and stick
with them. If you’re going to use pee-pee for No. 1 and poo-poo for No. 2,
make sure you ALWAYS use pee-pee and poo-poo!

Some people make the mistake of being vague. They’ll say to the child,
“Do you have to go potty?” or “It’s time to use the potty” without being
specific. But in my experience, children learn much faster when you specify
using exact words. So we would ask our child, “Do you have to go pee-pee or
do you have to go poo-poo?” He knew the difference – and this gave us an
enormous advantage in potty training.

By tracking his actions and his bathroom usage, we could more or less
predict when he was going to do No. 1 and when he was going to do No. 2.
We could be very specific, and this encouraged our son to communicate with
us about when he needed to go and what he needed to do.

So don’t spend weeks using the word “poo-poo” and then all of a sudden
begin using the word “cauky.” This will confuse the child terribly. Most likely
it will cause a relapse and the accidents will become very frequent.

It is not fair at this stage of the game to expect your child to know there is
a “cauky” meaning No. 1 and a “cauky” meaning No. 2. Your child will have
no clue what you’re talking about, and through sheer confusion might start
holding their bowels versus going.

Therefore it’s extremely critical at this stage of the game that your daycare
providers, parents, and family members know the exact words that you use.
Don’t ask your child to keep track of 6-10 different people’s bathroom terms.

Every time you and your child make that bathroom trip, make sure you
chart the time and the day that your child has used the bathroom, as well as
whether this was a No. 1 or No. 2 visit. This information will help you teach
your child to go No. 2 consistently.

For some reason, children do not like doing No. 2 when other people are
around. The psychologists can speculate about WHY this is so, but for our
purposes we’ll use this mysterious tendency of children to help with their potty training.

As your child starts to develop mentally, he or she will get embarrassed about doing No. 2. You will notice that they will begin to run to a specific corner or run to a different room altogether. And if you chart their bathroom habits, you’ll see that this action happens around the same time every day.

Our son was so predictable. Right after he ate dinner, within 5 minutes, he was running to another room. And it was funny because he would quietly disappear, and as soon as he disappeared, we knew where he was going and what he was doing. So after he ate dinner, we just made sure that he sat on the potty for 5 to 10 minutes. When he used the potty successfully, it was a great celebration! He knew that he did something good.

So make sure you chart your child. It’s a great way stop accidents before they happen, and to have many more positive than negative experiences.

You will start taking your child to the bathroom every 20 to 25 minutes, but as he or she gets older and more potty trained, you can expand that interval. Just be consistent in taking the child to the bathroom in the morning, before and after naptimes, after meals, and right before bedtime.

Even though we want to get rid of diapers altogether, in the first week or so you want to make sure you put a diaper on your child when he or she is sleeping, especially during nap time. It may take a few months before your child can sleep without a diaper, so don’t be disappointed. I’ll cover nighttime potty training more completely later in this book, but for now, keep some diapers around for nap time and sleep time.

One way to take some of the tedium out of potty training for you, the parent, is to have a potty training playtime. Mothers with young kids usually know other mothers with young kids. Find other parents that have children around the same age as you are, and arrange a potty training playtime a couple of times a week. The kids can play with each other, and all go to the bathroom at the same time. This can be very effective in speeding up the potty training process.
The reason is kids like to emulate other kids. If they see other kids going to the potty, they will want to go to the potty as well. They don’t want to be left out!

It’s not difficult to find parents who have kids your age. Just ask your daycare provider for a list of parents. You might also look at parenting magazines in your area to find other parents who are in the same group. You can even call people who put on birthday parties and do theme parties, and ask them for a list of potential people that they are servicing.

This is also an excellent time to take advantage of older siblings if there are any. Let your child watch their older sibling. And if not an older sibling, maybe a parent. If it’s a boy, let the boy go to the bathroom with dad. If it’s a girl, let her go to the bathroom with mom. Kids like to watch and emulate other people such as their friends, their siblings, and especially their parents.

My younger son spent a lot of time watching his older brothers and his father. He really wanted to use the potty standing up very early. He also never used the potty chair, but went straight to using the toilet. He was so used to seeing them use the toilet, he simply wanted to do the same thing.

Now I will reveal a principle that is so critical, yet so overlooked. During the potty training process, you’re teaching your child to be independent. The child has to make a decision (do I need to go?), and then take action on that decision (I am going to the bathroom now).

So please, don’t do things that will hamper your child! For example, some parents dress their children in clothing that is not conducive to potty training. Overalls are probably one of the worst things that you can have your child wear during potty training. This is also true of onesies, or even very tight-fitting clothes that are hard to take off.

Remember the exercise I had you do earlier in this book, where you are in another part of the house and you have to run to the bathroom, with only have a few seconds before you burst? Think of how hard that was, getting to the bathroom on time.

Now think of your child who is barely coordinated enough to get to the bathroom and to use the potty. Why would you ask them to take off not only a
complicated overall, but their underwear, their shoes and everything else? This hinders your child’s desire to be independent. He or she will always have to run to you first to take their clothing off!

Complicated clothing is the largest cause of accidents in a school. You’ve got a teacher who is working with 10 or 15 other kids, and your child has to go to the bathroom. Your child can’t go to the bathroom alone because he is wearing an overall. The teacher is so busy handling other kids, your child simply can’t wait any longer – and there’s an accident.

So make it easy for your child to be independent. Pick simple clothing for them to wear while they are potty training.

And please, make it easy for your child to learn by keeping a sensible schedule. Picture yourself working on an important project until 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, and then you have to take a test for driving or for handling heavy equipment at 7:00 am. Think of how difficult it is for you to pass a test like that when you are tired out.

The same goes for your child. Make sure that you’re not forcing your child to be perfect at the times when he or she is most tired. This is where knowing your child is important. If you know your child normally takes a nap at 1:00 pm, don’t wait until 12:50 to take your child to the bathroom. Once your child has become physically tired, mentally it’s draining to them, and all you’re going to get is frustration and a difficult time.

So plan potty training sessions around your child and around your child’s schedule. Avoid trips to the potty when your child has become too tired to learn.

Finally, be alert to distractions that will cause your child to forget about her bladder and bowels. Television, playtime, and toys are all things that cause kids to forget about going to the bathroom. Even after children become potty trained, they can have accidents when they are deeply absorbed in a TV show. This is where your vigilance will pay off.

I have seen many children get so wrapped up in the television or the games that they’re playing that they forget about using the potty until it starts
to hurt. By that time, it’s too late! The child runs to the bathroom and there’s no way that they can get their clothing off in time.

So during potty training, try to make it easy for your child to succeed. Stay alert during playtime and TV time. If necessary, put that timer on and use the “It’s potty time!” chant. Don’t set your little one up to fail with inappropriate clothing.

Most of all, use as many positive motivators as you can. It takes a little more time and effort up front, but the reward – for you and your child – will be a much easier, faster potty training process.

In fact, now that you know these things, you may actually choose to think about early potty training. That’s what the next chapter is all about.
Chapter 8: Benefits And Disadvantages Of Early Potty Training: How You Can Make It Work For You

What is early potty training? It is teaching your child to be fully potty trained as early as 1 year old.

Early potty training is actually not a new concept. Parents have been potty training their children early for centuries. In some cultures, the process is actually started as early as a few weeks. There are obvious advantages to this. But there are also some serious disadvantages of early potty training, as scientific studies have shown.

In this chapter I will share some known facts about early potty training, as well as some of my own opinions. I leave it up to you to make your own decision as to whether early potty training will work for your child or not.

In some early cultures, parents potty trained their young as early as 3 to 4 weeks of age. The reasons were mostly sanitary – not having to clean dirty diapers was an advantage in cultures without washing machines. In these cultures, diapers were cloth – not the disposable diapers of today.

When clothes were washed by hand and not by machine, it was important that a child be potty trained as early as possible. Social pressures, including all kinds of ideas about “normal” and “abnormal” child development, also played a role.

In modern culture, it became more and more widely accepted to potty train a child at an early age. As I explained in the first chapter of this book, mothers simply needed to be able to reduce their dirty diaper workload. Even today in the United States, when disposable diapers are the norm, there are plenty of people who say early potty training is a good thing and definitely achievable.
The current techniques for teaching early potty training are simple. You basically take your son or daughter at an early age, even a few weeks, and get them on the potty. Sometimes it is only for a minute or two. As your child gets older, they can be on the potty for longer, and by older I mean 4 to 5 months of age. Many parents who use this early potty training technique claim that their children are fully potty trained by the age of 1.

Some scientists believe that early potty training does not work. They claim that it actually leads to longer delays in the child being fully potty trained. They will cite studies to support their views, but there always seem to be studies that contradict them.

In my experience – and I have potty trained more than 300 children – the earlier you get your child used to the bathroom, the less difficulty you will have in making the process a success. So I will cautiously say that I do believe in some form of early potty training.

However, I have never gone to the extreme of potty training as early as a few weeks of age. I see no harm in getting a child used to the potty as early as a year and a half. In fact, I think it is a good idea. A child who is used to the potty at that age will make the transition to formal training a lot easier than a child who has some opposition to the toilet.

For me, early potty training is not about getting the child fully potty trained. It’s more about desensitizing them to the bathroom experience, getting them used to the potty, and not giving them a chance to develop an aversion to it.

This is why I am a firm believer in pre-potty training (see Chapter 5). From a very young age, children learn to accept being in the bathroom. It becomes a normal part of everyday life, not a mysterious weird place or a battleground where they pit your will against theirs.

So if you are considering early potty training, I would recommend the pre-potty training approach in Chapter 5. This is less stressful for both you and your child. Instead of expecting your little one to be fully potty trained at an early age, you can start to set the stage for a fast, easy potty training experience when they are little more physically and mentally mature. If they are not afraid
to sit on the potty, and don’t hate being on the potty, the actual “training” will be much less stressful with many fewer accidents.

During pre-potty training, if your very young child happens to make a bowel movement or pee in the potty, wonderful! Be happy, clap your hands, sing a song, and give your child a meaningful reward. Eventually, what will happen is the child will notice when the rewards come. He or she will start making the connection between using the potty and the rewards. Using the bathroom has become a positive experience. It will be a breeze to motivate a child who has already made this connection!

If a young child does not use the potty, do not let that deter you. Don’t let that get you upset. The first step – and certainly the biggest one – is getting them to sit on the potty and not hate it. Potty training will be so much easier when you have a child that is not kicking and screaming while they are sitting on the toilet!

So my honest opinion of early potty training is this: It is not a bad thing if your goal is to get your child used to being in the bathroom. Just be careful about pushing your child to be fully potty trained at an early age.

Review Chapter 4, to make sure you aren’t going to be asking your child to do something that their little body won’t let them do. And take another look at Chapter 3, about your own mental preparedness, to make sure YOU have your expectations fully under control before you begin.

Now that we’ve taken a brief look at early potty training, let’s go to the other end of the spectrum – potty training an older child.
Chapter 9:
Potty Training An Older Child: What You Should Know That Will Make A World Of Difference

When I say “older child,” I mean a child that is 3 years or older and is still wearing diapers during the daytime. This does NOT include an older child that is wetting at night (I'll cover this problem later in this book).

Although most children will be potty trained by the age of 25 to 26 months, in my opinion, it is not socially unacceptable or a terrible thing if your child is 2 1/2 to 3 years old and still not potty trained. There is a school of thought that likes to wait even longer for potty training. The idea is to wait for the child to be ready, on their own, to be potty-trained. This typically means the child will be potty trained a bit later on in life.

But it is good to remember that we have already seen the enormous advantages to potty training at an earlier stage. And in my opinion, there are significant disadvantages to waiting to potty train until later in life.

The first disadvantage is, the majority of 3-year-olds are in some type of daycare situation. And the majority of daycare centers will not accept kids that are not potty trained during the daytime. So if you want to get your child into some kind of preschool, you’ll simply need to have them potty trained.

Then, there is kindergarten. No kindergarten school in the country will accept a child that is not potty trained.

Another disadvantage to waiting is that simple things, like sleepovers and friends coming over to your house, become difficult when your child is not potty trained. It is also easier to find people who are willing to baby-sit a potty trained child. And if you want to take a getaway with your spouse, if your child is potty trained you can go to a resort or hotel with children’s activities.

Finally, the biggest disadvantage to waiting has to do with your child’s mental development. When your tot starts to hit 2 to 3 years old, they are
experiencing their own independence for the first time. Suddenly mommy and daddy and are not as influential. Children will want to go out and do their own thing. They suddenly prefer playing with their little friends.

So it is a definite advantage to be able to let your child play outside, or hang out with their friends, and not have to worry about whether they are wetting themselves! And I’m not just talking about embarrassment for you as the parent. A 2-3 year old child’s emotions are still developing. If they are fully potty trained, they are much less likely to wind up being taunted or ridiculed by other children.

If you happen to be faced with potty training a 3 year old, don’t despair. The same techniques that work for younger children will also work for the older child. The only thing that you are going to run into with an older child is resistance. The child has developed some of his or her own ideas. Now that your child is an independent thinker, he or she won’t always feel like listening to mommy or daddy. This can make the process a lot harder for you, the parent.

Fortunately, by the age of 3, your child has definitely learned the word "play." You can use this concept of play to avoid resistance.

For example, you can schedule “play dates” with their friends. At this age, children are quick to follow their peers. If they can hang out with a child from their school who is also going through the potty training process, they will have someone they can follow. They will even experience a little healthy peer pressure, in that they will not want to do the opposite of their friend who is happily using the potty!

You should also accept the fact that with older children, you sometimes have to be a little bit stronger. An older child is often eager to push against the parent. So you might need to establish a parent/child relationship based on establishing your authority in a strong and loving type of way.

The good news is that older children understand a lot more, a lot better than a 2-year-old. In most cases, they have fully developed their sphincter muscles. So potty training is something that they should be able to do, IF they WANT to do it.
Follow the same potty training principles you would use for younger children, but explain a bit more, and also demand just a tiny bit more. Establish consistency in your child's life. That means eating and sleeping and nap times that are fixed and don’t change. Create an order and a routine that the child can follow and get good at.

In the end, repetition makes all the difference in potty training an older child. An orderly, routine schedule increases your child’s chance of success. You must be consistent because at this age, other factors come into play that can get in the way of potty training. There are so many more activities and people in the child’s life, especially if they are in daycare. The opportunities for inconsistency are vast.

But barring some psychological or physical challenges, creating consistency in your older child's life will make potty training much easier. So avoid any kind of change, like a move. And please, start the potty training process way before your child starts school. This way you can avoid regression in the stressful atmosphere of the classroom.

Now let’s look at whether your child’s gender makes any difference in the potty training process.
Chapter 10:
The Truth Behind Potty Training Boys Versus Girls

I have conducted some surveys of parents, and have been asked some very interesting questions about boys versus girls. Let’s touch on some of these issues briefly in this chapter.

In working with more than 300 children, I must admit that girls seem to be easier to potty train than boys. Girls also seem to learn faster than boys. Many studies have shown that the brain develops faster in little girls than in boys. This must account for why girls can be potty trained a lot earlier than boys can.

However, as for the actual potty training techniques, there isn’t much difference. Whether your child is a girl or a boy, the same principles apply.

This is because most potty training techniques are psychological and emotional, not physical. The only difference is you may be able to start working with your little girl 3 to 6 months earlier than your little boy. This is not to say that you cannot start early with a boy. A girl will simply start to comprehend a lot faster.

Interestingly, the most frequently asked question I have gotten from all the parents I have surveyed is actually about boys. It is: "Should I potty train my son sitting down or standing up?" The answer to this question is really going to surprise you.

In my experience, you should always, always potty train your son sitting down.

I know you are thinking, "Wouldn't it be better to potty train him standing up so it will be an easier transition for him later on?" The answer is no. Always potty train your son sitting down. Here is why:

Remember in Chapter 4 we talked about the sphincter muscle? And how the act of just releasing the muscle lets the fluid exit the body? Even though
that is true, there is usually a last little bit of fluid in the bladder that needs to be pushed out at the end. And sometimes, in the act of pushing, the child does not have the ability to control other bodily functions.

For little boys, this can be quite a problem. I have seen boys who are going No. 1 standing up have an accident of No. 2 on the floor. This is not because the little boy did not know he should go to the bathroom to go No. 2. In pushing to let out the pee, he accidentally pushed out the No. 2 as well.

My husband is very protective of our little boys. He never wanted to have my son sitting on a public toilet, simply for sanitary reasons. Imagine how nervous he was when taking my son to use a public bathroom, holding my son up at the urinal, terrified of my son doing a No. 2 on his leg! So always potty train your little boy sitting down.

In fact, let me give you a few more excellent reasons to potty train your child sitting down:

1. Have you ever taken a look at a 2-year-old walking? It is a marvel that they can even stand up straight. It is something that they just do not have the ability to master at 2 years of age!

   It’s a challenge for little one to walk, stand still, or stand up straight for any length of time. So your little child does not have the muscle control to be able to potty and stand at the same time.

My third son primarily stood when using the potty. The reason was he had two older brothers that were fully potty trained and they always stood, so that is what he wanted to be able to do. As he was trying to use the potty, he had to either stand on the potty chair or on his tiptoes, and, in a lot of cases, he could not reach the top of a toilet to pee inside the bowl. Because he could not reach the top, he would miss the toilet and sometimes hit his pants or the floor. As he put his pants on, they would be wet.

This was devastating for him! He did not realize that he did a good thing by using the potty and he accidentally wet his underwear because he could not reach the top of the bowl. So don’t ask your little boy to be more coordinated than he is capable of! Let him learn to use the potty sitting
down. Then he can stand when he’s older and more nimble.

2. For a mother like me, cleaning is difficult enough. And boys simply do not know how to aim! Even my husband – sometimes he’s all over the place… let alone a 2-year-old! A little boy can end up spraying the whole back of the bathroom just trying to learn to aim. So get him used to using the potty sitting down for simple sanitary reasons.

Here is a little trick you can use for your boys who, like my younger child, insist on standing up. Put some Cheerios in the bottom of the potty bowl, then tell them to aim at the Cheerios! Boys love games, and this is one that they can play when using the potty.

Sometimes when my son was having a lot of fun with his brothers and did not want to use the potty, we would say, "Hey, let's go get some Cheerios!” Suddenly he was all ready to go to the potty.

3. Lastly, for girls as well as boys, let your child accompany you to the bathroom so they can see how it’s done. On the whole this technique works especially well for boys, since they always want to be like their dad. But it will also work for little girls, especially if they are nervous about the toilet.

If you are curious about some of the other questions parents have asked me, take a look at the bonus report that came with this book, “The Ultimate Potty Training FAQ.”

Now let’s deal with much more difficult subject – how to handle problem children.
Chapter 11: Techniques For Handling Problem Children That Will Help You Keep Your Sanity

Let’s start by first defining a problem child. As parents we all have different thresholds. If you have a child that has accidents every so often, I would not consider him or her to be a problem child.

Children have accidents for many different reasons. It could be the child was outside playing and forgot, was watching a really good television program, or just got distracted until it was too late. An occasional mistake does not make a problem child.

A true problem child is one who kicks and screams when it’s time to use the potty and simply will not listen to you.

This is the sort of child who has not responded to months of diligent application of good potty training techniques. He or she is still fighting the whole idea of going to the potty.

If you find this howling resistance is a consistent behavior when you first start potty training, don’t be alarmed. (You may be furious, but don’t panic.) Some children, for whatever reason, are extremely stressed by anything new. Until they get used to the idea, they will try to revise it out of existence by having tantrums.

But if you’ve been putting up with 4, 5 or even 6 months of consistent screaming and defiant behavior, that’s when you have a problem child.

When dealing with a child who is very defiant about using the potty, you must find ways to minimize the stress for both of you. Your job as a parent is to try your best to make it as comfortable as possible and easy for your child to succeed.

The goal is to get your child to continue to learn. What this really means is it’s your job not to give up.
Remember, if your child is between the ages of 2 and 3, you might be experiencing the “terrible twos.” Your child has entered the stage when he or she will want to test the limits of your influence. And of course, they’re pushing the envelope just when you’re trying to teach them to do something difficult! So you will have to try your utmost not to be deterred and not to give up.

Chances are that if you have problem child when it comes to using the potty, you are probably also having problems with your child in other areas of behavior. A child will not be that defiant when it comes to the potty to the exclusion of everything else.

For example, you might find when it’s time to tell your son or daughter to put their toys away, or to sit down to eat, that it is a constant battle to try and get them to listen to you. If that is the case, potty training is not going to be any different.

So if you are having success handling those other challenging situations, try to apply what works in the potty training arena. Don’t start thinking that because this is potty training it’s different. Use the same techniques you use to get your child to cooperate in other areas.

Sometimes a problem child is just very, very strong willed. So think about how you deal with strong willed adults. There are techniques that are conducive to a mutual positive relationship. Children are no different. Simply try to create a situation where you let the child feel as if they are the ones who are making the decision.

Here is a simple but effective technique. Instead of asking your child whether he wants to go to the bathroom, say, “Do you want to go do No. 1 or No. 2?” Psychologically that strong willed child feels they are making their own decision.

But as a parent you’ve actually triumphed by assuming the major point of contention – whether or not to go to the bathroom – is already a done deal. Your child will most likely give you an answer of one or the other. A conflict is avoided, and the learning process continues.
With a problem child you must pay attention to your child’s behaviors and patterns at an early age. You need to understand what those patterns are and how to circumvent them if necessary. With a strong willed child, it helps to have realistic expectations. Knowing your child as strong willed, you need to develop a more resilient sense of patience and compassion.

If you really haven’t noticed your child’s behavior patterns by this point, or haven’t paid sufficient attention to their habits, do not be surprised when you discover that your child’s favorite word is “No! when it comes to potty. If you are even a moderately attentive parent, you’ll notice signs early on that will tip you off to a child who will fight the potty training by kicking and screaming.

Extreme care must be used with some problem or very strong willed children. When I tell you they will go kicking and screaming, I mean that literally! You must protect the child from hurting him or herself, as well as to keep the child from hurting other members of the family – you, or your other kids. Also be very careful that your child does not knock things over that could fall on both you and your child.

Since this is not a course on child psychology, but a guide to help you have a successful potty training experience, get advice from a professional if your child does not seem to be aware of the potential to cause serious physical harm.

With a problem child, you might find that after a few months of potty training, nothing you try is working. You might want to give up. But try to keep it in perspective. The issue is NOT the potty training. The child may be very well trained, and probably fully understands what is required of him or her. It is the child’s defiant patterns that have taken hold.

For some reason, your child does not want to cooperate or give you the satisfaction of knowing that they’ve done what you wanted them to do. So don’t feel that you are a failure and cannot potty train! You have probably done a very good job, but the child’s need to rebel has gotten in the way.

Sometimes a strong-willed child will go 2 or 3 days completely potty trained, without a mishap. Then for some reason or another they decide they don’t want to be potty trained anymore! They will suddenly regress, as if they
were in diapers! At this point you’ll feel terrible – as if you had never taught the child to potty train in the first place.

So if you have a child who is more willful or challenging, set you expectations correctly at the beginning. Know that the process is going to take a little bit longer than normal. Understand that it’s going to be more difficult, and sometimes more stressful, than if you had a child that was very cooperative.

From the onset, establish a strong parent-child relationship. Having observed dozens of problem children, it often seems like the parent-child distinction is weak.

Sometimes that means the child isn’t getting clear direction from the parent. Sometimes there is little or no discipline from the parent. And sometimes, believe it or not, the child feels that he or she is the parent!

So even though it is easier said than done, you must claim proper authority over your child. You should be the parent. And as a parent YOU make the decisions and set the expectations for the child.

Sit your problem child down and be clear and straightforward. Let them know exactly what you expect from them. Tell them the exact results you expect to see. Lay the ground rules and be calm, but be very firm in your tone of voice. I am not saying you should yell and scream just like the child would. Just use a very strong, firm, determined voice.

This is an excellent time to get the father involved. Sometimes daddy can play the “bad guy” temporarily. The goal is for there to be no confusion in the child’s mind about what is expected and what the limits are – or else some toys and rewards will be taken away.

With a problem child it is especially important to study your child’s habits. The goal is to discover your child’s motivators – what will get them to act correctly and appropriately. Once you have found these motivators, the possibility of losing them will often inspire a child to cooperate.

This doesn’t have to be done in a manipulative or coercive way. In fact, it’s better if you are completely up front about it. State in a calm, firm, determined
voice that “If you do not cooperate, the result will be this. If you do cooperate, the result will lead to you getting that.”

Try to always offer a positive alternative. For example, we used to say to our son, “All right Lorenzo, when you’re finished pottiing you are going to get this treat,” usually one of his toys. Unless it was absolutely necessary, we tried not to say “If you don’t potty we’re taking the toy away.”

We laid down our expectations in such a way that we painted a positive picture in his mind for him – of having his beloved toy. You’ll be amazed at how much your child at this age understands, especially about cause and effect and the consequences of his behavior.

If you live with a problem child, you have probably realized by now that your child absolutely, positively understands the word “No.” Your child knows the meaning so well, he or she can use it to make your life quite problematic! I am sure you’ve experienced firsthand the intelligence and subtlety your child has at this stage of the game.

For example, sometimes the child will suddenly stop reacting to a certain motivator. It worked before, but now all your child says is “No!” So to stay one step ahead, be prepared to switch your motivators. No problem, just keep moving down the line until you find the one that gets your child to act.

Keep looking for new and unique motivators for your child such as games that you can play in the bathroom together. Positive reinforcements are most important. Reward even the smallest success and it will be a step in the right direction.

Avoid the negative reinforcement of, “You didn’t do what I wanted you to do!” Instead strive to be as positive as possible with the child, and keep your eye open for small successes.

This may be a very difficult and trying time for you. But in spite of that, try to make potty training as fun as possible for your problem child. Even if he or she is behaving terribly, go back to Chapter 3. Develop some of those tricks to help you stand back and balance your emotions. And remember this kicking, screaming creature is still just a child, and children will be children.
With some problem children the technique of play-dates can be very helpful (see Chapter 9). Play dates often work because strong-willed children are apt to follow other children more than they will follow you. So don’t be afraid to invite someone over who has a child that is in the potty training phase as well. Let the children vibe off of each other and learn the potty training process together. Just because you’re not the one teaching the child doesn’t mean that it doesn’t work. Some kids just would rather follow other children, and that’s okay.

Overall your goal is to find what makes your child happy, and use that to get your child to cooperate with you. If you can do that, and try to remain firm without losing your cool, your child will use the potty when you want them to use it. It can be done – and both you and your child will feel good about it.

Now let’s look at how your child’s daycare provider can help you in the potty training process – if they are willing!
Chapter 12: How To Make Sure Your School Or Daycare Provider Is On Board With You And Does Not Railroad Your Success

If your child is between the ages of 2 and 3, it is time for them to enter the world of either daycare or some kind of a preschool.

This is a wonderful transitional period in your child's life. He or she is about to start the learning process. Few things make you more proud as a parent than watching your child start school and begin learning so many new, wonderful things!

There is only one problem with schools and daycares when it comes to potty training. Most will not accept a child who is not daytime potty trained. Yes, most child care facilities understand that some kids, during naptime, might have accidents. But on the whole, your child needs to be potty trained during the daytime.

To make things worse, most daycares simply don’t do potty training! And frankly, the ones that do often don’t do a very good job.

Now you have a bigger dilemma. As a parent who has potty trained your child using the techniques in this book, the question is, “How do I send my child to a daycare without having relapses?” Here are some things that may help.

Remember that to work in a daycare facility, your only qualification is that you love working with children. The daycare staff may not necessarily be qualified educators or people who understand how to raise and develop children mentally. In some cases, you will have well meaning high school kids who come after school to help out at the daycares.

The facility’s main goal, in most cases, is to make sure your child is not getting hurt at their school. Some do add a little bit of curriculum as an incentive for you to enroll your child in their facility. But their purpose is not
to potty train your child. It is to provide safety for your child while you are at work bringing in income for your family.

So, the real question is, "How do you continue the potty training process and get your daycare to cooperate?"

First, write down notes from this book. Get a small journal and jot down the process that you want to use, the motivators, words, etc. that will work for your child. This is something you will give to your new daycare provider so your expectations are crystal clear.

The reason you should make absolutely sure this is written down is so that there is no miscommunication. You don’t want anyone to be able to say that they did not understand what your expectations were. If it is written in plain English, black and white, there can never be a dispute of "he said/she said" or "I didn't understand what you wanted us to do."

Don’t forget to write down the special words that you use for potty. Remember we talked about being consistent with your words? It is vital that the school is consistent as well.

Second, schedule a meeting with not only your child’s immediate teacher, but also with someone who is in a higher position; potentially the head of the daycare facility. In the meeting, let them go over your notes. Give them a chance to explain what their policies are. Then share your expectations, and what you are hoping to accomplish.

Some smaller schools and home daycares might respond with resistance. They may say, "Well, we've got 15 or 20 kids. It's too hard for us to watch your child alone when it comes to the potty training process." Frankly, that is the time for you to step back and ask yourself, "Is this the right daycare for my child?"

In fact, ask this question of all potential daycare facilitators. Explain that your decision will be based on a good mix of safety and education for your child. See how they respond. If they are negative or don’t want to listen, it is probably better to look for a different facility.
The most difficult point to get cooperation on will be using your child’s special “potty words.” If there are a few other kids going through the potty training process, it might be difficult for the teacher to remember the words that everyone uses.

But it does not hurt to ask. The worst that can happen is they say yes – and forget. But if they say, "I don't know if I can do that," the chances of them remembering are still a lot better than if you didn’t ask at all.

Your goal is to make sure that your child’s needs are met, and there are plenty of daycares that will meet those needs. They are not common, but they certainly do exist. Yes, you might have to spend a little bit more to find such a school. But you must weigh the additional expense against what’s best for you and your child.

You want the school to help build your child's confidence. And you want to be able to walk around your house at the end of the day, and not have to carry diaper bags or chase after your son or daughter, making sure they are going to the potty. If your school is helping you with the process, your life will be better as well as your child’s. That’s certainly worth at least some additional expense.

Third, talk to the parents who have kids around the same age as your child. Then see if you can pair up with another parent and, together, schedule some play dates and potty parties.

I know that sounds crazy, but there is nothing easier to do than have a potty training party. You and the other parents can enjoy some nice conversation and some snacks, and the kids can follow each other’s lead and reinforce their potty training. For more on potty parties and play dates, see Chapter 9.

Finally, if you are not happy with the attitude of your daycare facility, here are some thoughts on finding a new one.

First, ask questions. Ask them about their policy toward potty training. Do they help? Do they not help? What is their policy about a child who is having accidents? How about a child who has a lapse? Even though your child is very reliable about the potty, it’s always possible to have an accident.
Some daycares will ask you to withdraw your child if he or she has accidents, so avoid those types of daycares.

Make sure you visit any prospective daycare and actually talk to the teachers. You might also want to talk to other parents that have gone through that same daycare and ask them how they felt about the potty training policy. Did their children get the help they needed? Which classroom was their child in if they did get help?

Sometimes you will be allowed to request certain classrooms, especially in larger facilities. One teacher will not want to have anything to do with potty training, while another teacher will be delighted to help you out and reinforce all your good work. So talk to other parents and find out which classroom to request for your child.

In conclusion, remember that daycare is very important to the potty training process. You have to try your best to get your daycare to maintain consistency. Do everything you can to get them working with you, not against you.

If you find your daycare provider will not potty train, think long and hard about whether this is the best option for your child and you. Yes, your child will eventually become potty trained, but it is going to take a longer time than if you had the daycare cooperate fully.

Think about it this way. Your child may spend 8 to 10 hours a day in the daycare facility. That is more time than they will spend awake at home. So if your daycare is helping with the process, they are providing many more hours of practice than you could possibly do with your child at home. Isn’t that worth a little extra money in the long run?
Chapter 13:
The Most Common Causes Of Lapses Or Accidents And How To Handle Them

A lapse is very different from an accident. Here is an accident: The child is watching an exciting video, forgets about the bathroom, and soils his or her underwear. There might be an accident today, and maybe one in a week or so.

But a lapse occurs when the child does a complete reverse.

One day the child was fully potty-trained. But now you are changing your son’s or daughter’s clothes constantly because they are not making it to the potty in time. Sometimes there is not even an attempt to go to the potty.

Lapses and accidents have different causes. Nine times out of 10, an accident is caused because the child is just completely involved in some other activity at the moment. Inevitably the child is so mentally involved in some other activity that they simply forget to go to the bathroom. The child holds the pee or the potty so long that it begins to hurt.

So an accident happens because a child is having too much fun doing whatever they are doing. They simply do not want to stop, they just want to hold the potty until the very last minute.

Early in this book you did an exercise that proved that even when an adult like you does the “hold-the-potty” exercise, there comes a point that no matter how strong you are, you can’t hold the potty and make it to the bathroom. This is what causes almost all accidents.

Accidents are basically a momentary thing, the result of something happening with the child at a certain moment.

Lapses are caused by totally different reasons. My experience has shown that lapses in potty training – even complete reversals of potty training – are usually caused by some kind of psychological or traumatic experience. In other words, there is something serious going on in the child’s life that has caused a complete reversal of the potty training.
Accidents are caused by some momentary action or activity. A lapse is caused by an important event in the child’s inner life.

Remember, your child is extremely bright and extremely smart. He or she is also very, very sensitive and in tune with their surroundings. Most parents think kids do not understand what is going on around them, but trust me, to some degree they sense everything.

So any shift in their surroundings can throw a child out of balance. Children thrive on consistency and stability. Even if they cannot articulate their uncertainty or confusion, they will react to it.

Sometimes a child will regress in his or her behavior as a method of reaching out to the parent for attention. It is a form of jealousy. Your child figures they are not getting your attention in one way, so they will get it another way.

I know it is difficult for you as a parent to believe that the child would manifest that kind of behavior. But a young child doesn’t really plot to do this. It just stems from a desire to get your attention the only way they know how.

Just think about it. For two years, every time that child had to go to the bathroom all they had to do was dirty their diaper. You, the parent, would come running and change their diaper. To you it was a simple act of changing a diaper, but to the child it was an act of attention.

Now that your child has become potty-trained, they have to go to use the bathroom on their own without mommy or daddy. When some kind of traumatic experience occurs – perhaps only in the child’s mind, but still upsetting – the child feels “I need that attention again.”

Your child does not know how to come up to you and calmly ask you for reassurance. So what do they do? Dirty their diaper, or dirty their underwear. The result? Mommy and daddy come running to change the diaper again. Once again, the child is the center of your world.

Here are some of the most common events that will lead to a lapse in a young child:
First, divorce or separation. This includes any situation in which the mother and father are no longer together. Lapses are more frequent when the child is sent to live with the parent that he or she does not have the strongest bond with.

I have gotten many letters from parents of divorced children with this problem. The child was fully potty-trained. Then the little one goes to other parent's house for the weekend. When the child returns, the lapse is in full swing.

In this situation there are two possible causes for the regression. One, it can be the simple psychological trauma of going from one parent's house to the other. Second, it may be that the “weekend parent” is not consistent with the potty training.

Yes, it’s all too common. Parent No. 1 spends the week potty training the child, and then parent No. 2 spends the weekend un-potty training the child. When the child returns from the weekend, they have forgotten everything learned during the week.

In other words, throughout the weekend the child learns it is okay to dirty their underwear with either pee or poop. Unfortunately, young children do not know when the weekend ends. They go back to their primary residence continuing the negative behavior that they learned over the weekend.

Second: a move. Whether it is a move to a new house, or a move to a new school, moves can cause major lapses. Children like familiar surroundings. They can become very stressed out about unfamiliar places. It is almost as if the child starts repeating a behavior that they can relate to – as if soiling themselves brings them some kind of comfort. Again, your child needs some kind of attention.

Third, death. Usually a child will regress when there has been a death in the family, especially if someone died that they were close to. The child will lapse not just in potty training. For example, you might find your child sucking his or her thumb. Or they stop eating properly. They may begin making baby noises. Death is extremely traumatic for young children, so be alert for more than just potty training regression.
fourth, a new caregiver. Be careful about changing your babysitters or daycare providers during the potty training process – or right after potty training. Usually the child will form a bond with either the babysitter or some of their friends at the daycare center, and taking them out of that environment can lead to a regression.

If you know that you are going to be changing either daycares or child care providers, try to do it well before you start the potty training process or well into the potty training process. It’s best to make these changes anywhere from 6 to 8 months after you have started potty training.

Why should you wait that long? By that point the child will be fully aware of what they need to be able to do to be successful in the potty training. It will be a part of their everyday life, with the habit firmly established.

So do not change daycare providers and/or child care providers a few weeks or even a month into the potty training process. At that stage of the game you will completely erase everything you have worked so hard to achieve.

Fifth, vacations. I have had personal experience with vacation lapses. As a parent, you deserve a vacation and a nice rest with your spouse. Sometimes that means leaving the kids with either the grandparents or some friends and family. It’s perfectly natural and okay for you to do this. But make sure you time it properly, so that you are not doing this during the potty training process.

If you must take that vacation and leave your child behind, make sure that your friends and family and grandparents are in line with what you are trying to do with the potty training. Make sure they understand your expectations.

But if you have a choice, don’t leave your child during that early stage of the potty training process.

Yes, I knew better, but my husband and I took a 4-day getaway when my son was only two and a half months into the potty training process. He stayed at my parent’s house for the 4 or 5 days that we were gone.
I prepared perfectly. Before I left, I made sure that my parents understood exactly when to take him to the bathroom and everything that needed to be done. I know they understood me. I am sure that they did their best to follow all my instructions.

But in spite of my parents doing their very best, when we came back my son experienced a complete regression in his potty training. We went from not having a single accident in a month and a half, to having 2 or 3 accidents every day for about 2 weeks.

So when I tell you the child will regress, you can believe me. And the only thing we did was take a few days to go away on vacation.

I honestly do not know if it was the act of leaving him with his grandparents that caused the regression. Perhaps my parents just were not as diligent as I was when it comes to the potty training. But what matters was there was a total regression.

When you start the potty training process, you get into this zone. You know what to look for. You become vigilant, you are in tune with your child, and you know to ask your child to go to the bathroom.

No matter how much the grandparents love the child, and no matter how much you lay down what the rules are, they aren’t in that zone. They aren’t in tune and always thinking, “Hey I’ve got to ask my precious little angel if he needs to go to the bathroom.” So as much as they want to help you, the reality is, they are just not going to be as good at it as you would be.

So how do you handle regression?

Expect them. Regressions happen. You’ll deal with the situation a lot better if you are prepared for it. Don’t get into a dream-state and think that “It cannot happen to my child.” I have potty trained more than 300 children, yet my own child had one that lasted 2 weeks. It can happen, it will happen, and there is nothing you can do to prevent it because you can’t get inside your child’s mind.

It isn’t just big, traumatic things that can trigger a regression in your child. A new sibling in the family will often trigger a major regression in a child.
Especially if the child is the firstborn, and now there is a new younger brother or sister. If there are two older children, and then there is a third child, the regression will be mild to nonexistent. But, when there is one child, and now there is a second child, there definitely is a regression.

Sometimes an older child will start wetting the bed at night. You can go from a child that was sleeping throughout the night and waking up completely dry, to a child who is now waking up wet every morning. This type of regression can happen at any stage, not just the pre-potty training stage, especially with a new sibling in the house.

So learn to expect regression so you can handle it on a more positive note. Like anything in life, when things are not working the way you expect, always go back to the basics. Pick up this manual, read the techniques, and refresh yourself. Go back to what worked for you the first time.

The good news is, with regression training it usually takes much less time to get the child out of the regression than it does to potty-train from scratch. So don’t be afraid of going through a regression, especially if you had a very difficult time potty training your child in the first place. Usually it will be a lot faster the second time around than the first time around.

Some regressions are caused by a lack of confidence. You might ask yourself, how can my child lose confidence? It can be as simple as a single bathroom accident.

Your child experiences a much bigger trauma than appears. Perhaps he or she was deeply embarrassed. Or maybe you as a parent said, “I can’t believe that you dirtied yourself, bad boy, or bad girl!” That can trigger a regression.

Here are some of the things that you can do to avoid that situation.

One: Watch your child during playtime. Face it, children are not paying attention when it comes to playtime and the potty! They are happily doing their own thing, and potty is the least of their concerns. So it is your job to be very vigilant while your child is playing.

2: Help them avoid having an accident, especially if their friends are around. If an accident happens in the presence of friends, it can shatters a
child’s self confidence. It will not only lead to a form of regression, but probably cause nighttime wetting. Losing confidence in front of their peers is emotionally devastating, so pay special attention during playtime.

3: Track their potty time. Knowing when your child uses the potty is a great way to help prevent accidents that will lead to confidence break-downs and lapses.

A simple technique I discovered was before going out, I always made sure my son used the bathroom. Even if he said he did not have to go, I would tell him to sit down anyway.

Once you are out and about, your child is vulnerable. If you go to a store to run errands, you are not sure if they either, a) have bathrooms, or b) where the bathrooms are! What will you do if your child says, “Oh, I have to go!” By that point, they really have to go. So, to help prevent that, take them to the potty before going out the door.

4: Get in the habit of consistently asking the child, “Do you have to go?” Even if you sound like a broken record, always continue to ask, “Do you have to go to the bathroom?”

Five: Be as consistent as possible. If you take them to the bathroom in the morning, take them to the bathroom every morning. If they go to the bathroom after naps, then take them to the bathroom after all naps. Make sure everyone in contact with your son or daughter also knows how consistent you are. If you fail to be consistent even once, you give your child an opening to say, “Hey, change of behavior, it is okay!”

As an adult, I am sure there are many things that you have tried to reverse in your own behavior patterns, only to find those habits extremely difficult to break. Now think of a young child that does not have the same cognitive ability you do. Managing these major behavior changes is even more difficult for children.

So be consistent. If you are part of a divorce situation, make sure the other parents know what is expected. Do your utmost to get everyone working towards the same goal – to successfully potty-train your child.
Potty training is a process, not an event. There is no start and finish to potty training. You will be potty training anywhere from 6 months to a year and a half. Now I do not mean that you are going to be sitting there running your child to the bathroom for the next year and a half. But I do mean that you will be vigilant in asking your child on a consistent basis, “Do you have to go to the potty? Is it time for you to go to the potty?” or, “Did you use the potty?” With my youngest son, who is now 3 years old, we still consistently ask if he needs to go to the potty.

Let me tell you a story of how potty-trained he is. Sometimes his older brothers will joke that they are going to put a diaper on him, and he just says, “Ew, that is disgusting!” Or sometimes he will see another child in his daycare class that has wet themselves. When he runs home, that is the first thing he tells us. He is extremely aware of proper bathroom behavior.

Let me reassure you, even with a relapse our methods do work and are very successful. In my son’s daycare class, which is a toddler classroom, there are 20 students. My son is the only child in the class that does not wear a diaper. He has not worn a diaper in a year.

And you know what? Even though I think my son is the smartest and most wonderful child in the class, I know the other children could be potty trained just like him. But the other parents do not know these techniques. They really need to.
Chapter 14:
What You Should Keep In Mind When It Comes To Family and Friends

Family and friends, don’t you just love them? Especially grandparents. You think back to the days when mom and dad used to take care of you, and you say to yourself, “Isn’t this wonderful? Now my parents will help me raise my child!”

After all, your parents will do the same great job with your kids as they did with you, won’t they? Especially with potty training. I mean, you’re an adult and you are certainly not wearing diapers! Your mom must know exactly what she’s doing.

Well, chances are that mom probably made dozens of mistakes when potty training you. Fortunately, you were so young you simply do not remember. Especially if was 30-40 years ago. In those days there were a lot of strange practices when it came to potty training a young child.

Have you ever noticed that when you take your kids to your parents for an evening or for any extended stay you find yourself saying, “Boy, they didn’t treat me like that when I was kid.”

It is not that your parents are any different. They might be a little bit older and wiser, but the truth of the matter is grandparents have special attitude when it comes to your child. Their attitude is, “Oh wonderful! I can spoil them and bring them back!” When they were raising you, they could not spoil you because they had to keep you.

I am not saying that grandparents are bad or you should avoid them — not at all! But it is good to be realistic. You have to understand what your child’s grandparents are thinking so you can incorporate this into your potty training regimen.

Remember our mantra about remaining consistent? I am sure that by now you completely understand just how crucial consistency is for your child’s well
being. By being consistent you will not only potty train your child. Your child will *stay* potty trained and avoid possible lapses.

The good and bad news is that potty training is one of those things that you do not do all alone. As the old saying goes, it takes a community to raise a child. It certainly takes a community to potty train a child!

You do not live in a vacuum or a bubble. You will come in contact with friends and family. You will go on vacations and you will spend time at other people’s houses and your child will inevitably spend time away from you with other folks. So it is important to make sure the community, *your* community, is working towards the same goal and the same direction.

Your approach, in fact the whole approach of this book, is a proactive one. You *direct* the child to go to the bathroom. The last thing you want is to put your child in the care of a family member whose idea of potty training is to let the child go on themselves or to wait for the child to decide when they want to go. This will give your child a hopelessly mixed message. In some cases, your child might even learn to enjoy going to that relative’s house. They may prefer the idea of not having to go to the bathroom, basically just doing whatever they want.

It is no different than visiting a relative who has bowls and bowls of candy lying around the house, when you prefer healthy snacks for your child. You do not avoid that family member. You simply let them know that sweets are not an everyday treat in your house. You communicate. You help that family member line up with your wishes and expectations when it comes to snacks for your child. Potty training is no different.

Communication is vital. So write some notes about your child’s potty training rules, and hand that out to your family members. Explain exactly what you are doing and what the process is going to be. If you can, I would even record some of this information on a cassette so that they can listen to it. This is not only good for you, but it is great for them because you are making it easy for them to help you.

Try the proactive approach. You’ll discover that your friends and relatives will appreciate the fact that you have taken the time to give them some direction. They don’t have to think or make decisions or stress over whether
they are doing it right. They just have to follow your notes or listen to your tapes.

During potty training, avoid sending your children for long stays at the homes of relatives without you. And even if you are there, it is still a good idea to avoid long stays in a different environment. Children can have odd reactions to being in a strange place. They might lapse or pick up bad habits that normally are nonexistent at your home.

Plus when you’re not around, even if your relatives try to follow your direction, they simply can’t do everything you say 100 percent. They are not YOU. Your child trusts you more than anyone else. Without your comforting presence, you can’t expect their potty training to remain “locked in.”

So avoid taking your child for long periods of time to other folks’ homes during the potty training phase. If possible, wait until well after the post-potty training, to give your child a chance to master the skills that they have just learned.

Finally, when you start potty training, get ready for every family member to come out of the woodwork and offer tips on how to potty train your child. Some people will tell you this is wrong. Others will tell you this is right. Everyone will try to give you some kind of direction on what you should do.

Do yourself a favor and don’t listen to any of it – unless someone has done some research, read books like this, or has worked with a child educator. What is the point of following the advice of people who are not doing things the right way themselves?

Yes, even people who do not have kids will try and give you advice! I equate that to going to your car mechanic to get advice on a medical problem. Unless you’re dealing with a real expert, thank them politely – and ignore what they say!
Chapter 15: 
Don’t Let Potty Training Hold You Back: Tips That Make Traveling and Going Out Much Easier

Let’s be realistic. You have errands to run. You have things to do and places to go. Although this is a very important time in the development of your child, you do not want to let potty training keep you locked in a cage so you can’t perform the day-to-day things that need to be done.

The good news is, even if you have a strong regimen for timing your child’s trips to the bathroom, you can still do the things you need to get done. It just takes a little bit more thought – and sometimes a little bit more time.

Remember, everyone’s goals and needs should be met – including yours. You do not want to just focus on potty training and forget about you! If you ignore your needs, you will begin to feel neglected emotionally. This can lead to negative feelings toward your own child, which will make the potty training very, very stressful event for both of you.

So to help get you and your child out of the house, keep using your chart and watching the patterns of your child. Using my methods, your child will get pretty regular. You will be able to predict the times when he or she will need to use the bathroom. This, in turn, will help you plan your day.

If you know that your child uses the bathroom every day around 10:00, then simply avoid activities around that time. Take the time to plan and chart your child’s potty training activities.

Charting should not start when you begin potty training. Begin charting from an early age. This will give you a good understanding of your child’s bowel and bladder movements.

With your chart, now you can begin to plan your errands. Most of us do the same things every week. Going to the gym, picking someone up from
school, going to the grocery store and cleaners… it’s all fairly routine. So begin to arrange your schedule around your son’s or daughter’s schedule.

If naptime is at 3:00 and your child usually wakes up at 4:00 and uses the bathroom, then plan grocery time for 4:30. That gives you a good hour to be able to go to the grocery store, get what you need, and come back.

Before even taking off on an errand, a few simple steps can make things much easier for you. First, carry a little port-a-potty in the back of the car. It is wonderful to be able to pull over on the side of the road or into a parking lot and allow your child to use the potty. We have done that, but again, for sanitary reasons this is a decision you need to make.

With my younger son, whenever he needed to go to the potty, we would just pull him out of the car on the side of the road, or wherever we were, and he would go next to the car. He had no problems with it and we had no problems with it. Luckily, neither did the town! But this may not be at all realistic or comfortable for you. Or for your child.

So it takes a little extra thought to plan your day according to your child’s potty training. But it is well worth the effort to make sure that you do not have accidents. Just think of it this way. Not planning your day will lead to multiple accidents. It’s much more difficult to be in the store and discover that your son or daughter has wet themselves. You have to take care of that, carry bags of extra clothing and wipes, and in general go through a major hassle that is embarrassing for you and your child.

Of course, even with the planning, carry extra clothes. I used to keep clothes in a knapsack. It either stayed in the car, or my son used to carry it. It was kind of his own little backpack that he carried. The great thing was, no matter where we went, he always had to have his backpack. It became kind of a friend to him. Your child may become attached to the backpack, too!

Try to run your errands at the same stores every week. When you use the same grocery store, you learn where the bathrooms are. You’ll know exactly where to go when your child has to go! Sometimes large shopping centers have very confusing layouts. The bathrooms can be at opposite ends, and it always seems that I am at the farthest point from the bathrooms when my son has to
go. So try to be consistent in the stores you frequent, and get to know exactly where the bathrooms are.

Suppose you do go to a new store that you have never been to before? One of the first things you can do as you walk through the door is go to customer service and ask where the bathrooms are. At the same time, find out if the bathrooms require a key to get in – and where to get the key. Believe me, you do not want to run all the way to the back of the store to find out you now need a key from the front of the store. You might also ask if the bathrooms have changing tables.

Here is a tip that will save you endless headaches. As soon as you get to a location, whether it is a store that you have frequented before or a new one, always take your son or daughter to the bathroom. This will make your life so much easier. It will free you up to get your shopping done and run your errands.

Why wait until you are at the checkout, in a long line, wait 25 minutes, to find out that your son or daughter says they have to go now? Be proactive and take your child to the bathroom as soon as you get there. That will free you up for a good 45 minutes to an hour.

In fact, why not ask your child before you hit the checkout line if they have to go to the bathroom? In some stores the lines are pretty long. If you are going to multiple stores, it is a very good idea to go both before and after you leave.

Part of planning your day is watching what your child eats and drinks. If you are going to be running an errand at 3:00, then you want to avoid liquids after 2:00 p.m. Have your child stop drinking around 12:00-1:00.

You might also want give your child foods that are more absorbent. Have your child eat first, and then drink, so that the food absorbs some of the liquid in the stomach.

As for vacations, I am not saying that you shouldn’t go. But be realistic. Vacations will take a considerable amount of planning, and it is a lot more difficult to take your child to the bathroom every 20-30 minutes when you are on some tropical island. So if you can wait to take a vacation, especially in the
earlier stages of potty training, you will probably have much more fun when you do go.

In the later stages of potty training, you can take a vacation with the child. But don’t be surprised if there is relapse.

Above all, don’t go on vacation and leave your kids behind. I made this mistake myself, and regretted it. My boy experienced a complete reversal of his potty training. In the end, I wish I had waited just a little longer to take that vacation!
Chapter 16: Now You Are Ready For The Big Leagues – Strategies For Nighttime Potty Training

You work so hard to get your son or daughter potty trained during the daytime, and finally you see the results. Pat yourself on the back and give yourself a nice big round of applause! You have done a wonderful job.

But if you think the work is over, think again. Now comes hard part – getting your son or daughter to wake up every morning dry, without wetting the bed at night.

Nighttime potty training takes much longer than traditional daytime potty training. It is not uncommon to have a 4 or 5 year old, sometimes even a 6 year old, that is still not potty trained during the bedtime hours. Most doctors will tell you this is no cause for alarm.

But you should be concerned when a child reaches 7 or 8 and is still wetting the bed during the night. Something serious could be causing the child not to be potty trained during the nighttime. That’s the time to get some expert opinions and tests.

What makes nighttime potty training so hard? Basically, the child has to develop the ability to sense when to go to the bathroom, even while they are asleep. Child physiology can make this tricky. Your son’s or daughter’s bladder is of a certain size. During the night the bladder fills up fairly quickly and cannot hold all the liquid that your child needs to release. The child is sound asleep, peacefully dreaming, and simply does not feel an urge to wake up and go to the bathroom – and wets the bed.

As we mentioned in Chapter 2, the act of letting out pee is an act of just letting the muscles relax. To hold the pee, the sphincter muscles actually have to contract. They must restrict the flow of liquid. So your son or daughter must be able to perform that muscle contraction right in the midst of sleep.

Most kids who wet the bed at night have smaller bladders. They simply cannot hold a lot of liquid! They need to urinate frequently and, in most cases,
the child does not wake up in time to actually go to the bathroom. That is physiological cause of nighttime bed-wetting.

But there are also mental causes of nighttime bed-wetting. Most commonly the child does not have much confidence in himself or herself. The child is afraid of getting in trouble, and this, believe it or not, leads them to wet themselves.

I have seen this in very strict households where the parents are severe with the child. The child is literally afraid of the parents, and it is that fear that makes them wet the bed. I have personally witnessed many cases in which a child is frequently yelled at. The child is literally intimated and afraid all the time. These children invariably wet themselves in the bed.

Nighttime potty training is basically a new way of thinking. The child has to think about the fact that they need to go to the bathroom – and be able to recognize that even while in a deep sleep! This is much easier said than done.

So here are some techniques that I have used, as well as some “learning curves” we’ve experienced in our own children’s nighttime potty training.

First, if the nighttime bed-wetting is caused by an overfull bladder, it just makes sense to be sure that your child’s bladder is not full when they go to bed. Avoid giving your child liquids, especially juices, anywhere from an hour to an hour-and-a-half before bedtime. Plan dinner, bed time, and snack time appropriately. Make sure when you do give your child a snack or some juice at dinner time, it is well in advance of the child going to bed.

Second, make sure that every night before your child goes to bed, the very last thing they do is to go to the bathroom and urinate. Use positive reinforcement words. Tell your son or daughter that they are definitely going to wake up dry. Tell them you know that they are going to wake up dry. Finally, tell them that you believe in them. I can testify to the effectiveness of using those exact words.

When your child wakes up dry, make sure that there is a big reward and a celebration. Your child should be congratulated for waking up dry from a whole night’s sleep. When our son or daughter wakes up dry, he gets to keep
the diaper instead of throwing it out. Sounds odd, but it almost becomes a reward, keeping that precious diaper out of the garbage.

My son really enjoys putting the diaper underneath the cabinet instead of throwing it into the garbage can. In most cases, you can actually re-use that same diaper for a few days, since it is dry. This is last frontier – the money you save by getting your child potty trained during both the daytime and nighttime! Instead of using more than a pack of diapers a week, you might need one pack of diapers for the whole month.

Third, slowly start to wean your son or daughter off of wearing diapers at night. When you notice your child getting through a few nights without wetting themselves, you can start to feel confident in taking away the diapers.

One of the biggest learning curves we had to go through was with our older son. He was still wetting the bed at 5 years old, while our second son was not wetting the bed at 3 years old! What on odd situation. My youngest son, who at the time was a year old, was wearing diapers during the daytime. My oldest son was wearing diapers at night. And my middle child was not wearing any diapers because he was potty trained both day and night!

We simply couldn’t figure out why our oldest son was still wearing diapers and would not stop wetting the bed. At one point we thought maybe it was something psychological. We spoke with our doctor, who recommended a few tools, but they didn’t seem to be the answers. So we decided to take our techniques for daytime potty training, follow some of our own advice, and came up with our own unique plan.

Now, you might think this was a little harsh or difficult to do, and it was. But nonetheless it did work for us and it should work for you as well.

We started by making sure our son did not drink in the evening. We planned dinner time and snack time to make sure our child got nourishment and fluids early enough so he would not drink when it was time to go to bed. Take my word for it, at first your son or daughter will try to sneak out and get as much to drink as possible. Be strong and say no, because this is for the good of the child and will help build confidence.
Next, we created a daytime-style potty training pattern for the night. It was set at 2-hour intervals. We would wake up our son, get him out of bed, and take him to the bathroom. My husband I would rotate the schedules. Usually my husband took him around midnight. I would then take him around 2:00, and then we would both get up and take him around 4:00 or 5:00, whatever time it was to get up to go to work.

You might feel it is rather tough, waking up a 5 year old like that and taking him to the bathroom to urinate. Yes, it was very difficult, but we needed to try something.

At the time, my oldest son and my second son slept in bunk beds. My oldest slept on top. I noticed that they had decided the top bunk was the “fun” bunk. So we reversed them. We put our oldest son on the bottom bunk and our other son on the top bunk. Now sleeping in the top bunk became a reward for staying dry. Whoever stayed dry would get the top bunk.

Remember how I talked about not making it harder for your child to succeed? We realized that maybe our son was not getting up to go to the bathroom because he was on that top bunk. If he slept on the bottom, it would be easier for him to get up and go to the bathroom. It certainly was easier for us to wake him up and get him to go to the bathroom from that bottom bunk than it was to try to carry him at 2:00 in the morning from the top bunk!

Then we added a night light, thinking maybe he was too afraid to get up and walk to the bathroom by himself in the dark.

By watching the patterns carefully, we found that most of the time, even taking him to the bathroom at 2:00 am, he would sometimes still wet the bed. Then we discovered that most of my son’s bed-wetting took place right before he woke up in the morning.

So we decided to wake him for potty at least 30 to 40 minutes before he normally woke up. At this point we started noticing that he was staying drier and drier. As he stayed dry, he gained a little bit more confidence. Nevertheless, he was still wetting fairly consistently.
Then it struck us that part of the reason he was wetting the bed was because we were enablers. We almost helped him delay his potty training because we kept him in the diapers. At this point we became even more drastic in our approach. We went to the bedding store and got plastic sheets, and got rid of the diapers altogether.

We still continued to wake him up during the night, but now the pattern changed again. When he wet himself, he woke up and came to our room. We would take him to the bathroom, get him cleaned up and dressed, change the sheets, and then put him back on his bed. The next night would come around, and the same thing would happen.

This went on for a couple of weeks – he came to our room around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning and tell us he wet himself. We’d change him and put him back in his bed.

So one day, we decided to take matters even a little bit further. We told him he could not come to our room any more and wake us up. We put sheets by his bed, and we put a second set of pajamas and underwear and sheets in his room.

Sure enough, that night he wet himself and came to our room. But we said, no, go back to your room, change your sheets, clean yourself up, and change your clothes. This happened for another couple of nights.

And then he never wet the bed again.

Low and behold, he was completely potty trained at night – as soon as he learned that he had to take care of it himself.

I guess the message here is that children are a lot smarter than we think. When he finally realized that mommy and daddy were not going to change his underwear anymore, he decided that it was time to be potty trained during the night.

So even though it is difficult for you, and hard on your child as well, you might want to follow the same approach.
Remember to get your child to bed as early as possible. If the children are staying up very late, when they do fall asleep they will sink into an extremely deep sleep. They won’t notice the sensation that their bladder is full, and thus wet themselves in the bed.

There are tons of tools that you can use that might help you in the potty training process. A doctor told us about a little electronic product that can be placed near your child’s underwear. As soon as it notices the sensation of wetness, it will sound an alarm to wake the child up so that they can go to the bathroom and empty their bladder. The alarm forces the child to recognize when they are going to the bathroom so they can get up.

There are many products like that. Investigate them if you have hit a brick wall. But remember they are supports, not solutions. There is no substitute for building your child’s confidence through consistency and repetition.

If you must use diapers, make sure you are not using absorbent diapers. You want your child to notice when they feel wet so they can get up and go to the bathroom. And when your child wakes up in the morning, the first thing you want to do is take those diapers off.

A 4-5 year old child should not have to wear diapers consistently. Using them at night is all right in the beginning, just until they are nighttime potty trained. But your child should eventually get the message that wearing the diaper is not a cool thing to do.

At one point our oldest son, at age 5, would still be playing around in the living room at 9:30 in the morning – wearing his diaper like a tot! So we quickly taught him that the diaper was not fun. Yes, his little brothers wore diapers, but he was beyond that. He actually developed a disgust for diapers, and this helped him with his nighttime potty training.
Chapter 17: The Big Leagues Continued… Bowel Movements And Why The Easy Road Now Lies Ahead

The time has come to start training your child how to control his or her bowels. Yes, no more No. 2 in their underwear! This also happens to be one of the funnier stages of the potty training process, when you discover some of the silly reactions that your son or daughter has to bowel movements.

As if we have not said enough about watching and charting your child, you’ll be pleased to know that you will love the consistent pattern most children develop for No. 2.

My son was regular like a clock. Within 10 minutes of eating any meal, he had to go to the bathroom and have a bowel movement. When we finally discovered his schedule, we knew exactly when to take him to the bathroom to make sure that he did not have any accidents.

The funny thing about kids is, they become embarrassed about doing No. 2. In most cases they will run to certain areas of a room or hide in a closet to do their business. They will be all over the place, then suddenly disappear when it’s time for No. 2.

My oldest son, for some reason, would stand next to a window and have a bowel movement. We learned that if we saw him standing near a window, look out – time to rush him to the bathroom! My second son would hide underneath the table. My third son would leave the room altogether, and whenever we noticed he was gone, we knew he went to another room to do No. 2.

So watch your child’s habits. I can almost guarantee you will begin to “read the signs” so you can catch him in time. It will usually be extremely obvious.
Sometimes if we were not fast enough, even if our son started to No. 2 we made sure we got him to the bathroom to finish on the toilet. Our goal was to get him used to doing it on the toilet, and half a success was better than none.

The reward for doing No. 2 in the toilet was simple: he got to flush the toilet. He was obsessed with flushing the toilet. I am not sure if it was the sound or just the water swirling around.

He soon developed a little saying, “Mommy, I did a lot of poop.” So I would ask him, “Hey Lorenzo, did you do a lot of poop?” He would reply, “Yes, I did a lot of poop!” He sort of enjoyed and even marveled at the fact that he did a lot of poop.

Because the act of doing No. 2 is actually a pushing, and it takes effort, it is actually much easier to train your child to do No. 2 in the potty. The child knows when he or she is going to be pooping, since it is basically voluntary. They have time to catch themselves and make it to the bathroom, as long as they are healthy and don’t have some form of diarrhea.

What should you do when your child has accidents, especially if they are potty trained in the daytime for No. 1 and No. 2? You can use a technique similar to the one we used to nighttime train our son (see the previous chapter). We gently insisted that our son change his own underwear and diapers, which had a powerful effect on him. You can do the same thing when it comes to accidents for No. 2.

Of course, this is effective because kids just do not like having to clean themselves. If they do soil themselves with No. 2, throw on some latex gloves, which you should keep around the house, get them some wipes, and tell them to go to the bathroom and clean themselves up. Don’t be harsh, just make it a matter of fact incident. Oops, you had an accident, so it’s time to clean yourself up.

You should be there to supervise. But the overall objective is to get them to clean *themselves* – not for *you* to clean *them*. Soon your child will start to pay much more attention to what they are doing, and will rarely have a No. 2 accident.