



Fred Rogers Timeless Wisdom



Going to the Potty



Even though toilet accidents are frustrating, children manage better when their parents and caregivers are patient and remind them of their successes rather than making them feel bad when they've wet or soiled their pants. Children really do want to please the adults who care for them. Children like the feeling of "growing up." - Fred Rogers

There's a lot of hard work involved in learning to use the potty. Children have to learn to control their muscles, to hold on or let go at just the right time. They have to stop doing something they really like and get to the bathroom at just the right time. It takes a lot of physical and mental control to master going to the potty. No wonder young children sometimes have accidents as they're learning!

Daytime control is usually mastered before night time control. When children sleep soundly, they aren't aware of their bladder sensations. It's a good idea to have young children use the bathroom before taking a nap. Some children might need to be awakened and encouraged to use the bathroom to avoid having an accident.

Signs of Readiness

The timetable for learning to use the potty is as individual as learning to walk or talk is for each child. Expecting too much too soon can lead to frustration for everyone -- the parents, the caregivers and the children. Here's a good reminder for adults: when we make the effort to begin toilet training and find that the child isn't the least bit interested, it's probably a good idea to back off and try again later.

Potty Accidents

The occasional accident is inevitable for preschoolers, and though they may be inconvenient, they can also be important teaching moments. Try to stay calm and patient, putting the emphasis on their potty successes so far, while gently reminding them to start their trip to the toilet a little earlier next time.

Sometimes children have accidents when they are sick, have a cold, or experiencing life changes. They have less control of their bladders when they aren't feeling well or when they're upset about changes in their lives (like the arrival of a new baby in the family, a move from one home to another, starting school, or other stresses).

Potty Training Is a Joint Effort

The “training” that goes on in “toilet training” is a joint effort that involves parents, the child, and the caregivers. The adults need to learn how to respond to the child’s cues indicating readiness to be trained. Adults also need to be willing to put in the time and effort necessary to help the child get to the potty ‘just in time’ and allow the child ‘to sit’ for a while. On the other hand, children need time to sit, experience the mechanics of the potty, and develop awareness of their bodies’ sensations that result in urinating and having a bowel movement.



When the adults involved in the process have realistic expectations, we are more likely to approach toilet training with a balance of gentleness and persistence. Children are more likely to gain from the experience not just mastery of their body functions, but also a stronger sense of self. They can feel proud of themselves for the ways they are growing and able to manage certain things that are important in the grownup world.

- ***STOP...and “GO” Right Away*** – Young children can get so engaged in activities and play that it’s sometimes tough for them to remember to take a break. Before you know it, an accident ensues. Reinforce for your preschoolers that it’s important to take a bathroom break as soon as they have to “go” – and reassure them that they can come back to their toys as soon as they’ve “flushed, washed...and are on their way.”
- ***Keep them “Going”*** – Periodically reminding children to use the potty will help them get into the habit of thinking about the potty and hopefully head off accidents before it’s too late.

 **Strategy Song:** *When you have to go potty, stop..and go right away. Flush, wash...and be on your way.*

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood closely parallels the gentle tone and emphasis on social and emotional strategies that made *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and Fred Rogers a TV icon. Fred’s creativity and innovation continue to thrive in 21st century TV. Teachers and parents will enjoy revisiting his messages with a new generation of characters.