

# Toilet Training for Individuals with Disabilities

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Presented by  
Trumpet Behavioral Health  
and Advocacy Denver

# AGENDA



## Discussion items

- When to start toilet training
- Strategies & guidelines for toilet training
- Problem solving common toileting issues

## Reminder

For toilet training, you will need patience, consistency, team work and humor!

# WHEN TO START?



## Observe child & evaluate if they:

- Understand directions and communications
- Prefer being dry and can pull pants up/down
- Indicate awareness: looking down or hiding
- Desire independence and family life is calm

## Ready, set . . .

Make sure you and other caregivers are ready!

## Consistency

Consistency is key along with consistency!

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Prepare

- Make sure your child likes being in the bathroom (no problem behavior)
- Your child should be able to sit comfortably on the toilet with his/her feet resting on the floor or stepstool (:2 - :3 minutes)
- Identify your child's unique needs
- Identify communication method
- Select reinforcers

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Start with data

- Collect data for five days
- Start a journal to note your child's eating and drinking times, soiled/wet diaper, etc.
  - Check his/her diaper at least once every 30 min
- Look for a pattern
  - :10 - :15 minutes after having liquids
  - :30 - :60 minutes after a meal
  - Typically goes every hour
- These times can then be built into your routine

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Create a schedule

- Set a toileting routine and honor it
- Schedule sits based on your data
- Regular intervals in between (30 – 60 min)
- Set a timer as a reminder
- Waiting an additional :15 - :20 minutes could cause your child to have an accident

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Have scheduled sits

- Teach communication behavior
  - “Say, bathroom” – “Bathroom”
  - Touch picture of toilet
- Sit on toilet for :2 - :4 minutes
  - Provide relaxing toys/activities
  - Reinforce successes
  - Praise, special food or toy, get to flush the toilet

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Unscheduled toileting signs

- Antsy, legs crossed, touching privates, wetness
- Prompt the request to go potty/bathroom
- Rush him/her to the toilet

## Accidents

- If accident is happening:
  - Rush to toilet for hopefully success
  - If success, reinforce and praise
- If accident already happened:
  - React calmly and clean child
  - Do not provide attention, reward or punish



# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Track progress & collect data

Event	Time	Type of Toileting Event	Self-Initiated?	Notes
1		Accident Success Both Acc/Succ	Y N	
2		Accident Success Both Acc/Succ	Y N	
3		Accident Success Both Acc/Succ	Y N	
4		Accident Success Both Acc/Succ	Y N	
5		Accident Success Both Acc/Succ	Y N	

## Progress & improvement

As you progress, you can move to only tracking accidents!

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Diapers/Pull-Ups

- **Pros:** easy to keep clean
- **Cons:** difficult to realize accident is happening and may confuse child; “diaper is where I pee”

## Underwear

- **Pros:** easy to realize if accident is happening and creates new norm “under means peeing in the toilet”
- **Cons:** more mess to clean up

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Tips

- Start by having your child sit on the toilet
- Make sure everyone is using the same language
- Have your child wear loose-fitting clothing
- Provide your child with extra beverages/fiber

## After 3 to 6 weeks

- Change reinforcers?
- Increase intensity?
- Intense toilet training (next slide)?
- Take a break?
- Stay the course?

# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



**If previous strategies did not work,  
look to intensive toilet training**

*Intensive procedure includes:*

- Scheduled toileting
- Reinforcement for urinating in the toilet
- Communication training
- Dry-pants checks/urine alarm
- Increase fluid intake
- Positive practice

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# STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES



## Summary

- Observe, is my child ready for toilet training?
- Am I ready?
- Prepare and get reinforcers, toilet seat, step stool
- Collect data and look for patterns
- Create a toileting schedule and honor it
  - Scheduled sits and teach communication, sit for :2 - :5 minutes, reinforce success with special toy
  - Unscheduled toileting and watch for signs
  - Accidents happen and do not punish

# PROBLEM SOLVING



## Problem

My child seems to like having accidents or thinks it is funny to have accidents

## Suggestions

- Consider how much attention you provide during accidents
- Make toileting more fun
  - Hit the target



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# PROBLEM SOLVING



## Problem

My child sits on the toilet and does nothing then as soon as I put the diaper/pull-up back on he has an accident.

## Suggestions

- He / she may not understand the new rules
  - Diapers have a history of being the place where you go to the bathroom
  - Diapers wick away moisture to make it more comfortable to have an accident
  - Consider switching to underwear

# PROBLEM SOLVING



## Problem

My child never has to go to the bathroom.

## Suggestions

- Increase liquids
- Increase motivation to drink
  - Highly preferred drinks
  - Eat salty foods
  - Exercise/play outside

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# PROBLEM SOLVING



## Problem

My child hates going into the bathroom

## Suggestions

- Start with providing a reward for calming being near the bathroom
- Gradually increase your goal
  - In the bathroom
  - In the bathroom & closer to the toilet
  - Sitting on the toilet with pants on
  - Sitting on the toilet with pants off
  - Sitting on the toilet with pants off for 1 minute

# RELAX, IT IS A JOURNEY



**Do not stress, but do commit**  
It's a marathon, not a sprint!



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# RESOURCES



## Books

- **I Use the Potty: Big Kid Power** by Maria van Lieshout
- **Potty** by Leslie Patricelli
- **The Princess and the Potty** by Wendy Cheyette Lewison and Rick Brown

## Tinkle Tunes

## Websites

- [Toilet Training Procedures for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities](#)
- [Potty Training Children with Special Needs](#)

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# THANK YOU!

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