



The Next Phase Of Potty Training

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“Patrick, what are you doing?” I said, “We don’t pee in the flowers. We pee in the potty.” My voice did not stop him mid-stream. It did, however, cause him to turn to look at me, and as a result, he peed all over the deck. While washing off the deck with a hose, I calmly explained to him that people pee in the potty, not outside. He said he understood.

Three days later, as I loaded the dishwasher, I heard the phrase that no mother of a newly potty-trained child wants to hear.

“Mom, Patrick pooped his pants!”

As I glanced into the living room, there was my son with his shorts around his ankles, waddling like a penguin. I quickly grabbed him and whisked him off to the bathroom to clean him up. On the mess scale, it measured two wipes. (I classify messes from one wipe—mild mess—to five wipes—major blowout.) Once his bottom had been attended to, I took off his shoes and had him step carefully out of his shorts and underpants, anticipating the mess that awaited me. When I peered in, his underpants were dry...and empty.

“Patrick, where’s the poop?”

My naked three-year-old smiled, took my hand, led me through the kitchen and living room, out the back door, and across the lawn to the front of the swing set. There on the lawn was a large log, about eighteen inches long. If I had discovered this myself, I would have sworn that a Clydesdale had been in my back yard.

As the initial shock started to wear off, it occurred to me that any mother worth her salt would use this experience as lesson material.

“Patrick, we go in the potty,” I chided my brazen bare-assed child. “We don’t go outside.”

He was more interested in the size and consistency of his achievement. “Look, Mommy, it’s so big!” As the two of us hunched over the object of his pride, it became obvious to me that he wasn’t getting the point, but I was determined to find out why he did this and make myself understood.

“Honey, why did you poop on the lawn?”

“Because Otis does,” he replied.

“Yes, but Otis is a dog. You’re a big boy, and big boys use the potty.”

What happened next can only be described as one of the true tests of motherhood. Our dog, Otis, an English springer spaniel, who by nature is usually a bird dog, spied the two of us looking at something in the grass. With canine determination, he swooped in rapidly.

Before I had a chance to shoo him away, he grabbed Patrick’s pride and chomped it down.

The echoes of my shrieks were only drowned out by my son’s screams of horror.

“Otis ate my poop! Otis ate my poop!”

“Otis, put that down!” I yelled. “Bad dog!”

“Mommy, is Otis going to die?” Patrick asked, terribly concerned.

Any mother worth her salt would use the experience as lesson material. “I hope not,” I said, “but he might get very sick.”

“I don’t want Otis to be sick.”

“I don’t want Otis to be sick either, honey.”

“And I don’t want him to die.”

“Well, Patrick, let that be a lesson to you,” I reasoned as only a mother could. “You go in the potty, not outside, so the dog won’t die.”