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POTTY TRAINING, SOME TIPS

July 5, 2012

If you ask me, potty training is one of the most frustrating parts of raising children. Every time, I promise myself to keep my spirits up, but every single time, by the third day, my patience is at a minimum and I seriously want to put the nappy back on and forget about the whole thing completely. But miraculously, sticking to it seems to be the trick. After the third and fourth day things improve, and after the first week things really get a whole lot better. Generally, after 2 weeks, the child is potty trained, which means almost all of the wees and poos go in the potty, exception taken for the occasional accident of course. I just went through potty training with Ava, and I thought I would give you my tips and tricks now that I'm fresh off the battle field.

- I've been told that around the time of the 2nd birthday, it's generally a perfect time to start potty training. The child is open to learning new things, and doesn't ?think' about the whole thing too much yet. I believe that the danger of waiting too long is that the whole thing gets much more difficult and frustrating. So we've always started potty training fairly early, I would say between 2 and 2½ depending on the child.
- We went cold turkey. On the day we decided to start potty training, we took off the nappy in the morning and didn't put it back on until the child went down for his/her nap. (We keep the nappy on for naps in the beginning - when we notice the nappy to be consistently dry when the child wakes up we start leaving it off in bed as well). No pull up nappies, no training intervals without nappies - we really believe this too be confusing for the child. We take the nappy off, and don't ever put it back on (except for in the bed) - even though I've been tempted!
- I think Friday or Saturday is a good day to start potty training, as you will be able to do it together over the weekend. We definitely didn't plan anything on this first weekend!
- We made sure to have a few potties around the house (you will need one close to the child at all times in the beginning, so it's handy to have one in different parts of the house). I discovered this portable potty to be super practical for on the go - we always take it with us when we're out and about. It comes with plastic liners that you can tie and trash.
- I find it essential to have plenty of little underwear ready (at least 10 pairs) and plenty of easy pull up (jogging) pants (or pyjama pants).

- We kept two buckets ready, one with washing liquid to soak dirty underwear and clothes, one with soap and wipes to clean the floor.
- We made a reward sheet and bought stickers to reward the child for using the potty.
- Before we started potty training, we got our child used to the potty for a few weeks. We kept it in the bathroom and let the child sit on it before his/her bath. We discussed the potty as a cool and positive thing, read books about potty training. And we spoke about ?big boy/girl underwear' as a very cool thing too.

The day that we started, we took the nappy off when the child woke up in the morning. We put him/her on the potty, and continued to do this throughout the day with 15 minute intervals. Yes, the whole day! We sat next to the child to keep him on there for a bit (we read a book or showed things on the iPod - preferably about potty training and other children using the potty successfully). If the child happened to be lucky and used the potty successfully, we made it into a big deal. Applause and cheering from everybody was absolutely necessary! We trashed the wee in the wc together, we let the child flush, and waved bye bye. And of course, the child can then put a sticker on the reward sheet! Of course it's absolutely normal that most of the times you have accidents. Ava had 3 stickers the first day (pretty good), 2 the next day (one for a poo), only one the third day (the worst day! So frustrating!) - and all the other wees (and poos!) ended up in her underwear. But, after that things get better and usually they start to get the hang of it. At that point the intervals become bigger, like 30 minutes, until they finally pull down their pants and wee in the potty as if they've done nothing else their entire life! With Ava, this happened after about a week, and after 2 weeks she was potty trained. She has now been potty trained for about a month, and she rarely has accidents. We take the portable potty with us whenever we go, and one or two spare outfits just in case, but we rarely have to use those! I know, the whole training sounds like a horrible affair, but now that it's done, I'm so relieved that it's over! Tell me - do you have any potty training tips? (Or if you're thinking of potty training your children and have questions, let me know and we will try to answer them in the comments - we're far from experts of course, but I know it can be so nice to just ask someone who has just gone through the process!)

xxx Esther

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