THE FOUR STAGES OF TOILET LEARNING
by Kristi Hayward (CCC Teacher)

Stage 1: Toilet Play
- pretends to toilet, usually with clothes on
- observes others going to the bathroom
- shows an interest in the toilet

Stage 2: Toilet Practice
- practices flushing
- practices pulling pants up and down
- practices getting on and off the toilet
- practices squatting and standing
- practices hand washing
- asks if diaper is wet or dry, clean or dirty

Stage 3: Toilet Learning
- shows interest in wearing “real” underwear
- feels the need to urinate by showing gestures, is verbal, or uses facial expressions
- holds urine for longer periods of time
- acquires the desire to be clean
- has words for using the toilet and tells you when they have to go
- can pull pants up and down for themselves
- stands and sits well on their own
- shows signs of pushing and concentration when they are ready for a bowel movement
- tells you they are soiled or wet and needs to be changed

Stage 4: Independent Toileting

What You Can Do

- Explain to the child you will be taking them to the toilet and what will happen. Introduce them to underwear and show them yours.

- Let the child pick out “real” underwear. They may have a favorite character like Barbie, Dora, Batman, Spiderman, Bob the Builder, etc.

- Let the child watch a parent or sibling urinate to help them visually learn.

- Give encouragement and positive reinforcement for TRYING to use the toilet.

- Turn on the water to use as a stimulus to urinate during early toilet learning.
• Read books with your child about toilet learning.

• Mentally prepare yourself for the process

• Let the child be in charge of as much of the process as possible. Tell them to let you know when they have to go.

• Make up a song as encouragement.

• Pretend to be something or dance while going into the bathroom.
  - kangaroo, elephant, bird, lion, train, airplane, etc.

• Give an appropriate vocabulary for body parts and functions.

• Provide a potty chair for learning and/or a step stool to use the toilet. Let the child use whichever they prefer. Remember they need to feel comfortable.

• Give the child a book to read to relax while sitting on the toilet. You may also save special books just for when they are sitting on the toilet.

• Give simple answers to questions without making the child feel embarrassed or ashamed for asking.

• Begin a routine of handwashing after each visit to the toilet.

• Monitor fluid intake, especially before bedtime.

• Postpone toilet learning if the child does not seem to catch on or does not seem interested.

• Talk about the items in the bathroom and what they do
  - toilet, sink, soap dispenser, toilet paper, etc

• Use positive encouraging phrases,
  - “You did it”, “Way to go”, “Good for you”, etc.

• Ask child gently if they need to use the toilet throughout the day.

• Cue children as adults toilet, ”I’ll be back, my body tells me I have to use the toilet.

• Focus on the progress.
• Under-react to accidents

• Approach accidents as opportunities for the child to learn how to clean up and get dressed. Be warm and supportive.

• Dress children in easy-to-remove clothing. Sweatpants are the best

**What Not To Do**

• Do not dress your child in clothing that is hard to get out of during early learning. Wearing these items may cause extra stress for the child if they can not get them off in time or are always getting wet are having to change their clothes. Do not dress them in these until they have mastered toileting with them on and can undress themselves.
  - overalls, buttons, onesies, and dresses

• Do not shame, threaten, or punish a child for having an accident

• Do not insist a child remain on the toilet longer than 5 to 7 minutes. The child may develop an association of unpleasantness with the bathroom

• Do not take away privileges for accidents

• Do not force a child to start learning who is not ready

• Do not use words like “dirty”, “naughty”, or “stinky”. These negative terms can make your child feel ashamed and self conscious

• Do not use food or other treats as a bribe

• Do not expect it to happen overnight.

• Do not stress out about it! It will happen.

• Do not compare your child with another.
HYGIENE HINTS

When a child is learning how to use a toilet, it is also important that he or she learn hygiene. Here are some hints:

-Teach girls to wipe from front to back, because bacteria can easily be transferred from the anus to the vaginal area.

-Hand washing should always be included at the end of every child’s bathroom routine.
-Encourage children to wipe gently, to prevent irritation which can cause infection.

-When accidents occur, never leave a child in wet or dirty clothing. Change the child’s clothing as quickly as possible, and have the child assist you where appropriate.

REFERENCES FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS

Children Books
KoKo Bear’s New Potty by Vicki Lansky
Annie’s Potty by Judith Caseley
Once Upon a Potty by Alona Frankel
I Want My Potty by Tony Ross
I Have To Go by Robert Munsch
Going to the Potty by Mr. Rogers
My Potty Chair by Ruth Young
Your New Potty by Joanna Cole
Toilet Learning by Alison Mack
Potty Time by Betty Reichmeier
No More Diapers by J.G. Brooks
Everybody Poops by Taro Gomi
The Toilet Book by Jan Pienkowski
Stop and Go Potty by Judith H. Blau
My Potty Book by Mary Atkinson
I’M Grown Up by Margaret Miller
Getting Dressed by Ben Argueta

Adult Books
Toddlers and Parents by Barry T Brazelton
Good Behavior by Stephen W Garber
Toilet Training by Vicki Lansky
Toilet Training Without Tears by Charles Schaefer M.D.
Mommy, I have to go potty! by Jan Faull M.Ed
The Comprehensive Toddler Curriculum by Kay Albrecht & Linda G. Miller