

Wait, What? You Used to Love This!

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SUMMARY

Dr. Becky discusses a parent's concern about their toddler's sudden aversion to bath time and the complexities of potty training. She emphasizes the importance of validating children's feelings, providing autonomy, and holding hope for their development while navigating these challenges.

- *Validate children's feelings about their aversions, even if the reasons are unclear.*
- *Offer alternatives to traditional bath time, such as "bird baths" or scrub downs, to respect the child's current discomfort.*
- *Encourage parents to evaluate the necessity of daily baths and involve children in creating a flexible bath schedule.*
- *Recognize that resistance to bath time may symbolize a child's desire for control and independence.*
- *In potty training, parents should respond to children's signals of readiness without pressure, providing support and structure.*
- *Celebrate children's milestones, such as wanting to wear underwear, to reinforce their sense of capability.*
- *Acknowledge the impact of parental attitudes towards mess and cleanliness on children's experiences with potty training.*
- *Use engaging and age-appropriate language when discussing bodily functions to foster a positive relationship with these topics.*

I'm Dr Becky and this is good inside I'm a clinical psychologist I'm a mom of three and I'm on a mission to rethink the way we raise our children [Music] if this line should go down and we only get one thing answered I think we want the emergency question okay let's do it uh our daughter is two years and seven months old and for two years and six months and two weeks of her life she's absolutely loved taking a

bath like looks forward to it it's like it is a treat that stopped one day two weeks ago no 10 days ago Emily something like that yeah screaming crying will not get in the bath and and this this coincided with her generally discovering how to tantrum but it seems very specific and and the other Tantrums seem um random and the other Tantrums seem like something that we can uh they're almost more minor I

would say and we know how to handle them I will say we've also tried quite a few things at this point we've tried offering a bath at different times of day so changing the schedule we have tried getting in the bath with her and then we've also tried a shower now she will only take a bird bath what's a bird bath a bird bath is a washcloth with water getting her wet trying to use a little bit of soap one day I tried a

bird bath where I put her in the tub standing up and then poured water on her um and she was unhappy about

that so if you ask her why don't you what's going on why don't you like the bath what does she say that we try that because she's a very good talker yeah and we've tried that and we can't get an answer out of her she just kind of gets upset and says I don't like it or I don't want to okay

so I here's where I would start I would start by saying this to her today you know what there's something about the bath you really don't like I believe you like that's literally your homework today just to say that I don't have some brilliant interpretation like here's what I think this represents to her and with my own kids I often don't have that either but leading with validation and believing even when you don't understand is an

insanely powerful intervention it's often like for some kids it's like the only thing they need to have a little bit of a movement because you're saying like I believe this thing is real even if I don't even understand it where it's usually easier for us to validate something if we do understand it right so I would just say that there's something about the bath you really don't like right now we believe you and and I would actually

let that sit and and I would have that be the whole thing and just see what she says I I don't expect some she's not gonna like offer some Brilliance but like I promise you it is it matters and just like allowing that be the whole thing makes it more impactful without saying like Okay so here's what we're gonna do so just let that be the thing other things after that I would just evaluate internally for the two of you like how often at the

stage do we need to do a bath the bird bath that you're saying like I refer to that as an important parts shower or something like that right like sometimes you only need the important parts to be washed we all know what those parts are right and it's okay to do that like a kids don't have to bathe every day like nothing horrible happens and so I would also just kind of consult between the two of you of like how often do we need

to make this happen and you can even deliver to that that kind of idea to her by saying again after this other intervention you know what I know there's going to be a time that bath is easier I know now bath is really hard and there will be a time that it's easier and while it's hard we don't have to do baths every day we're not going to bring it up and we can't do baths never

but there's a lot in between every day and never and so let's almost come up with that together let's come up with a schedule together what do we think and I'd let her participate I doubt she's going to say to you I don't know how about every third day you know I don't know if she has the math for that but I can say okay today is Friday but you know there's a couple reasons why we

definitely need to take it back if we get really muddy and really dirty we definitely have to wash that off and also every and then pick a number that feels right to you every so many days even if that doesn't happen we need it so let's look at our calendar and I'd even give her a little bit of visual kind of symbols around this so today this doesn't have to happen oh tomorrow we are going to the playground we always

like to plan playing the sandbox you'll probably end up falling in the mud okay so that might be a day and then

as that day gets closer I would just prepare with her oh this is gonna I just own it from the start this is gonna be hard right like this bath today oh nobody's gonna have fun let's think together what's the easiest you know way we could do this and even then it might be a

stand-up kind of scrub down that you could call it like it's it's a scrub down it's not even a bath you know you can almost like differentiate it and I I think like a key almost formula when our kids are in some really tricky stage is validate exactly what's happening for them in the moment in the intensity they feel it and hold hope for a shift and often we do one and not the other we're like come on

get over this you're fine or we almost like join in their anxiety versus holding those both at once would sound like look I know there's bath feels really tricky there's something about it that feels really really bad I believe you I know that's real and I know there's gonna be it doesn't feel like this and so we're doing these scrub downs and there's gonna be a day I know that you say to me like let's do that

bath again I'm ready for the bubbles like I just know that day is gonna happen it's not today and I know it's gonna happen and so it really respects where a kid is today and it feels really good even as an adult when you're struggling for someone else to see or struggle and to hold hope for something different that's often enough to help a kid have some movement it also gives a kid back control it gives them back control bath time can be

a place that kids really kind of struggle and resist because often bath time is associated with going to bed often bath time is something that parents want kids to do that they don't want to do themselves right and so especially at this like two-year-old age it becomes almost symbolic of on my own person no one can make me do things that I don't want to do this is one thing I kind of have control over I can't

control you know the school I go to I can't control how many hours daddy works but like I can say no to bath and then what ends up happening in those situations is we often get more controlling and then you know it only builds a child's reasons to resist it actually no longer has anything to do with the bath it has to do with defining their independent identity right when we can't fight or win that battle and so

having this other way of approaching it validating it kind of like letting it go on your side like people say like just on our side we're gonna drop the Rope like there's less tension if you drop the rope and both people aren't pulling it also gives a kid back control and so any element of the resistance that's actually just about control once it's no longer about that removing that factor often allows for movement as well because potty is

another area where kids feel like this is one of the only things I can control in my life is what goes out of my body and when and where that happens right and in potty I call it learning because one of the reasons I don't like to call it potty training is training really is kind of a method of control as a trainer I'm controlling the process and I think that very set up is just a recipe for

disaster and resistance and so here we are connecting those two topics so I would say on the bath thing that's

where I would start and even internally to yourselves there's a lot of power as parents at the end of the night when our kids are sleeping and kind of resisting they're like oh I can't believe it's been two weeks of this like is it always gonna be like this I feel like there's power in a system when the leaders do hold hope

like okay this is still happening and you know what like it's Gonna Change it's not that big of a deal we're gonna figure that out I feel like that really filters down and kids end up really feeling that yeah that sounds good that feels good and and you know we've definitely seen her go through you know phases before and then just kind of come out of them naturally she did go through a phase where she just didn't want to use a towel after a

bath for a while which I I like kind of loved that phase she was just like nope and then one day she was like okay travel's back and that's something you can emphasize to her like there's something to saying to a kid like wow there's something about a bath that really doesn't feel good to you I believe you and you know what you know that like whenever we bring up the word bath you're like no no no you really

know what's going on in your body I really respect that about you and look where your parents our job is to keep you safe and there's some amount of basic cleanliness we're just gonna have to do with you but we can really change kind of at what level that's at to respect the fact that this doesn't feel good to you right now because the main message a kid gets is yeah I do know my body and that leaves them more

flexibility when we relinquish control to at some point say you know what like a bubble bath is fun like I I actually do want to do that again so I think that's really helpful in the long run that messaging and I do think that this you know it does feel related to our approach and our philosophy around potty training or potty learning or whatever you want to call it because my understanding was I think like even before I had kids was

that it was like a kind of thing where you're like okay we're doing this and we're doing this right now but then I don't know from her school and just feeling it out it has felt a little bit more like let her lead with this because the more you make a thing of it the more it becomes a thing and so really like let her kind of run with this I mean I think that this is something that Ian and I kind of talk

about just while we're parenting like when do you really force or push something and then when do you just kind of like follow her lead and give her the autonomy and so this with potty training it feels like it's a little bit more she's definitely sending signals to us and we're listening to those signals but we're not pressuring her at all at this point so yeah tell me a little bit more about that Journey where you're

at I'd say several months ago she just started talking about potty and wanting to to try the potty and so we got her a you know a little kid party and she would want to sit on it and read and just kind of hang out and talk about it and so I think at that time we got her a couple potty training books potty learning books which like I liked reading some of them one of them

was really gross and remains gross but then she just kind of she lost interest um and so we didn't push it because

it didn't seem urgent and then recently in the last couple months she's gotten very interested and and wants to sit on the potty probably every day and sit and read books and and talk about it and she she wants to flush the actual toilet in her house and she tells us about other kids at her daycare who use the potty and she

talks about what underwear she wants there's a lot of conversation about it in our house but not a whole lot of not a whole lot of action there's a lot of sitting there's a lot of sitting uh and reading about it um a lot of trying yeah a lot of high-fiving for trying but occasionally a success which I think is probably it's just from the sheer probability of sitting on the toilet that long once in a while it's gonna work out oh man two

days ago she was sitting on the potty and she she did she did poop Emily looked at it and said you did it you did it hooray and we high-fived and the first thing she said was underwear because she's so excited about getting underwear and so tell me about that is she is she in underwear so she is wearing diapers right now and I think that a lot of what she is seeing and a lot of or her

desires are coming from being in school because at school they offer her the opportunity to use the potty there are definitely kids on her floor that are using the potty and so she's interested and she's seeing kids wearing underwear and she kind of wants to participate right now she's using diapers and what has also changed in the past I would say month is that we used to always lie her down to change her diaper and now she

wants to stand up she wants to take off her diaper standing up she wants to put on her diaper standing up and we have not used pull-ups because we've heard that that can actually get in the way of potty training pull-ups at this point would perhaps be a little bit more convenient or easier because we're sort of putting her into a diaper standing up is you know a little awkward and also cleaning her up especially if she poops is yes

not that it never feels like it's as thorough as I'd like it to be so you know a question we also had was where is this coming from in terms of wanting to stand up and connected to potty training so let's start with why kids want to stand up so this is a great thing that she wants to stand up and it's actually something I encourage parents to do with their kids when they're younger to even start to suggest

this as you know a kid kind of moves into that potty stage standing up to me is a communication from a kid and they're kind of saying like I'm not such a baby anymore in this way right like laying on your back and being changed is just an act of total dependence and we want our kids to of course maintain parts of them that can get help from other people right that know it's okay to stay attached of course and when

they're moving into the potty stage we want them to feel like they are capable of kind of embodying their their older you know more independent self and so being changed standing up is really a way that your daughter is saying to you I'm ready to move past this diaper phase so even when she says I want to be you know I want to be standing up I would just reinforce that I'd say wow you're feeling like really tall right now like

you're showing me you're ready to be a little bit more independent about all this that's really awesome like I

would just celebrate that so in terms of this question you were asking kind of oh I want it to feel like it's my child's interest that's motivating this and we don't have to we're not forcing her or saying now is the day I think there's something in between that that's important in the potty process and it actually relates to what

we were talking about earlier which is this idea of I see where my kid's at and I hold hope for where they can be right because we do have a role as a parent that enables our kids to feel increasingly capable if a kid at a certain age said to us I really want to be on a soccer team like we would still have to be the ones to like go look for the soccer team and find it and figure

out if we can get them there right if we didn't do that our kid our kids desire to be at a soccer team it couldn't be realized it would just kind of live as a desire and actually when a kid says to us I want to be at a soccer team and then they watch us a little bit go into action oh okay let me look into that here's this option they feel from us wow my parent really

thinks I'm capable of being on a soccer team and if we don't there's a message not only of frustration but if a kid feeling like oh like maybe my parents don't think I can do this and so I think there's this balance with potty that when we do see our kid giving us signs from them that they're ready I really actually think as parents we do need to take a step because if we don't we give our kid a a kind of a

communication that we think they they should stay in diapers that's very different than forcing right it doesn't mean hey we're doing this three-day process starting now not that but if a kid is talking about potty and they want undies and they're talking about daycare I do think we need to say that hey you're showing me that you're really excited about being in undies or you're excited to start peeing and pooping on the potty how cool you know what we're

gonna do this weekend we're gonna have three days where we say bye to the diapers and we say hello to the potty and I'm gonna help you through that this is such an awesome thing you want to do so in my mind we're like the boundaries and we're putting up these boundaries and making these decisions based on what our child is giving us but if we don't do that kids often take that as a communication that we don't think they can do that and

then they do become more conflicted tell me if that resonates that difference between like forcing versus providing the structure to make change possible so yeah that I mean that completely makes sense to me and I certainly I don't want to feel like we're holding her back in any way and I think we've been very enthusiastic about using the potty but like for example we've said to her you know great when you start using the potty we will get

you underwear but I I'm wondering if what you're actually saying is hey maybe we get the underwear now and we start trying it on or using it and talking about the potty in that way and maybe it because I I was seeing it as a more of a like I don't know success and that is something I would encourage us to rethink right I think that seeing our kids as capable of doing something is often a precursor for them

fully believing they're capable of doing that thing so I think the message of when you do this we'll get to that next step it little bit reverses it I think she's telling you hey Mom and Dad don't you see what I'm doing like make this possible for me show me your hope show me the structure show me the steps I am giving you everything I have as a two-year-old give me that little bit more so I can actually make this shift

and I think so many times it's interesting with parents we're either you know um we lead with potty with a lot of control which is not what you're doing or sometimes we lead with almost too much backing off and and I think that middle ground as she's saying I'm here help me get to the next step and so I I would just pave that way I think there are a lot of step-by-step things because when the moment comes like oh what about

this moment what do I do now what about when there's an accident what about when they say no potty like truly the potty Workshop that I have that comes with a handbook is going to give you every single thing that is a process that actually not only leads to potty success but I think is really in line with your parenting philosophy because how we approach the potty how we go about the potty process can set the stage for body

autonomy for confidence for boundaries like I always think how awesome to have a potty approach that like buys us wins in the future right like just efficient that's how I think about it and it will just give you that kind of relief of okay like all of my questions and the step-by-step kind of moves are right here so I will send you that and I think that'll be kind of that how-to that'll get you to that next step but before we

do that I want to get to the book I want to hear the book and you said it just stuck in my head this one book grosses me out and another kind of aspect of the potty process I think that kids pick up on is our relationship with pee with poop with gross with mess and actually kind of learning a little bit about that is actually really important so I'm gonna put you on the spot and I want to

hear about this gross disgusting book well let me first say I do everything I can to keep this discussed between Emily and I we talk about it after hours I think as far as our daughter knows I love this book but I'm telling you I hate this book I hate when she makes me read it tell me like is there a page is there a moment what comes up for you about it I don't I don't want to disparage any authors on

your show but we'll just say should I read it would you like read yeah read the page piss piss piss and a little bitty push out comes my pee with a teeny tiny whoosh so far so good then it goes uh um says mama do we have to poop too I grunt and then I poo there's something about um I grunt which is what there's a that's a terrible sentence

is it the sentence structure is it the is it the noise is it the grammar is it the order of operations I mean I want to know the word grunt is a that's a tough place to start from uh but I think pairing grunt with um is like we have other potty books like we have that are totally fine and are I totally I'm on the same page with each about that one page but but otherwise

like I think everything else in that book seems I think it's okay right yeah and is this the one your daughter happens to love because that's always the case it's like read that one she I mean she demands I'd say she demands all of them equally yeah yeah and then in sequence but there was a day when this was requested four times in a row um there's something that also as a parent you really you're reading for

your child but also and I think this is coming from both the work that Ian and I do which has a lot to do with words and so when you encounter something where the words just like feel abrasive that's that's an example where the words just like they don't work together or something I have the same feeling about that book but I'm I'm all the other potty books and talking about you know do you have to poop do you have to pee

you know that's fine which by the way I also want to just say we also had to have a discussion about what we wanted to call poop and pee because I grew up and it was called a [_] and a duty um what what about in your house Ian uh I think I think just pee and poop uh mm-hmm yeah the word Duty kind of grosses me out yeah it was it was a [_] and a duty and I remember actually

I have a memory of being in pre-k or kindergarten or something and telling the teacher I have to make a [_] and someone teasing me because they were like what's a [_] hmm um so yeah it pee and poop are are pee and poop pee and poop and and and toot yeah the reason these words and looking at our own just reaction whether it's to the words or to certain books why why it

actually matters is because especially with poop like our kids pick up on just how we relate to mess just a period right like and poop is there's just mess there's mess involved right it's similar to how our kids pick up on what happens when our parents walk into a room that has toys all over it how bookshelves need to look and actually how kids end up relating to the pooping process is a little bit related to how they answer the question like is

it okay to have mess is it okay to have messy things in Me is This allowed is this kind of you know part of what exists in our family and that actually sometimes has more to do with some kids kind of poop withholding or real poop resistance um is sometimes a kid's way of saying I'm not supposed to have things in me you know that are messy and imperfect and aren't clean right so checking in as

a parent of like yeah what is my relationship with mess not just poop but poop often stands for just like things that are yeah that it's messy and it's smelly and right it's not beautiful and linear and perfect and our kids pick up on that separate from how we talk about poop itself and I think especially as we go into the potty process as a parent it's kind of doing a little inventory of what our kid might have picked up on

there and how we can actually get ahead of so many poop issues by you know thinking about mess in the less black and white way yeah it is so opening and helpful for kids look everything you're saying it seems like she is so ready uh to just like put all these things together and yes our kids get to an age where when they poop like oh my goodness like I can't this is not the same as

when they were six months and so you too I think are ready and deserving of her to put these skills together and be more independent in this process and I I'm gonna send you my workshop which comes with the handbook and I can't wait to hear how it goes so keep me in the loop and before you go and I have heard that you interview inanimate objects for a living I do yes um yes um I don't know how many people I could

say that to before we go I am curious to know what might a potty sound like or what might a potty say in an interview oh man uh I mean I think that um the interviews that I've done with inanimate objects often I have an expectation of how they're going to feel about their lives uh and it's it's most rewarding for me when how they feel is surprising like I interviewed a subway seat which I

would have thought would be a terrible existence uh but the subway seat loved his life and loved um nothing more than connecting with people through their butts um I don't know I think a potty I think a party would certainly um it would be unable to recognize us by our faces um you know it would that's not the part it is so often uh introduced to so it would it would sort of know us by uh our

our tushes as we say to our daughter and maybe our faces would kind of we wouldn't want to look at it that would be unpleasant for us so it would it would always just want us to turn around and say oh there you are yeah no I know you I know you yeah I love it that seems pretty perfect all right well for more about the potty come back next week when we will be talking about the thing everybody does

but only our kids seem to want to talk about yup we're talking about Poop everyone and you do not want to miss next week's episode see you then thanks for listening to share a story or ask me a question go to goodinside.com backslash podcast you could also write me at podcast@goodinside.com parenting is the hardest and most important job in the world and parents deserve resources and support so they feel empowered confident

and connected I'm so excited to share good inside membership the first platform that brings together content and experts you trust with a global community of like valued parents it's totally game changing good inside with Dr Becky is produced by Jesse Baker and Eric Newsom at magnificent noise our production staff includes Sabrina farhi julianat and Kristen Muller I would also like to thank Erica belski Mary Panico Jill

Cromwell Wang Ashley Valenzuela and the rest of the good inside team and One Last Thing Before I Let You Go let's end by placing our hands on our hearts and reminding ourselves even as I struggle and even as I have a hard time on the outside I remain good inside [Music]