

## A Behavioral Approach to Toilet Training



**Presented by:**

**Natalia A. Krum, BCaBA**

BCaBA Consultant

*Carolina Center for ABA and  
Autism Treatment*

**Down Syndrome Association  
of Greater Charlotte**

**May 18, 2013**

## Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the *science of behavior*.

It is a scientific approach for observing, understanding and changing people's behavior.

- Well researched, evidence based methods
- Founded on the principles of behavior and learning
- **B. F. Skinner**
- Behavior Analysts use these principles and methods derived from them to create socially significant change

## Commonly Viewed As...

### 'Behavior modification'

In early years, criticized for use of punishment to decrease maladaptive behavior. The term still carries a negative connotation.

off the mark.com by Mark Parisi



© Mark Parisi, Permission required for use.

- 'CSI' and 'Criminal Minds' phenonemon: ABA is all about **criminal profiling**





- More recently viewed as '**Autism therapy**'

WHY? It is the **only** treatment for individuals diagnosed with Autism whose benefits have been consistently validated by independent scientific research. Endorsed by National Institute of Mental Health, US Surgeon General and the American Academy of Pediatrics



## Applied Behavior Analysis

- Applied: Applicable to people, creates **socially significant** change that improves quality of life
- Behavioral: **Observable behavior** is the target (for reduction or acquisition)
- Analytic: Scientifically analyzes **functional relations** between behavior and the environment
- Effective, technological, conceptually systematic
- Founded on the basic principles of behavior

## Behavior?

- Principles of learning govern the acquisition of important skills and behaviors – such as learning to walk, talk, follow social rules, read, write and GO POTTY!
- We all learn from interactions with our social and physical environments – **the 3 term contingency!**



**Antecedent:** before behavior

- Stimulus control: Prompts
- Motivation (MO): Increases Value of Things

**Behavior**

- Response form (all kinds of behavior)

**Consequence:** immediately following behavior

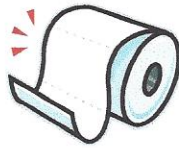
- **Reinforcement: increases behavior**
- Extinction: weakens behavior
- Punishment: decreases behavior



## What behaviors are we teaching?

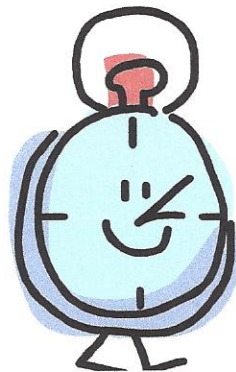
- Our objective is to teach the child to independently follow all the steps required to toilet himself. These include:

Approaching the bathroom when he feels the need to go, sitting on the toilet, lowering and raising his pants on his own, sitting until he goes in the toilet, wiping when he needs to and flushing the toilet.



## We cannot wait!...

- Age
- Independence
- Integration
  - ~School Placement
  - ~Day care
  - ~Other social situations
- **No more messy diapers!**





## But we MUST wait...



- If your child is not ready, the rushed attempt can lead to major frustration for the child and parents alike
- If you start before she is ready, or stop and start (according to what's convenient for you), expect it to go on for a while!
- It may be more difficult to toilet train your child the second or third time around ("false starts")

**Is the child ready, developmentally?  
Are YOU ready?**

## How can we find out?



<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Potty Action</u>		<u>Notes and Comments</u>
		Pee	Poop	
Mon	2pm	Pee		Home from school. Grabbing his diaper
Mon	5pm	Both	Both	After dinner. Watching TV

## When is your child ready?



### ○ AWARENESS

- ~Does your child look at you before/after wetting or soiling the diaper?
- ~Does he hide or move away from you before a bowel movement?
- ~Does your child indicate that he has a wet or soiled diaper?

### ○ CONTROL

- ~Is your child able to withhold urine for 60 to 90 minutes?
- ~Does your child have regular BMs with no soiling of her diaper overnight (BM)?

## When is your child ready?



### ○ PRE-REQ. SKILLS

- ~Can your child communicate with single signs, pictures or words?
- ~Can your child locate the bathrooms at home?
- ~Is your child interested in the bathroom toilet, hand washing or dressing?
- ~Can your child pull his own pants up and down?
- ~Can your child stay sited for 15 consecutive minutes?
- ~Is your child compliant (overall)? Are there any problem behaviors?

## When are **you** ready?

- Are any big changes coming soon to your family within the next 3 months?
- At least 2 solid weeks – plan on being home, committed to working solely on potty training

**The BEST time to begin is when you know you will be committed to the task at hand, and will be able to follow through to its conclusion. You are trading a few days or week's worth of headaches and non-stop work for a LIFETIME of independence!**

## If you are NOT ready...

There are some steps you can take ahead of time to prepare:

- Change your child frequently so that he is always **dry**
- Have your child assist you dressing and undressing, especially lowering and raising his pants. Encourage him to be **more independent**
- Allow your child to watch you as you go to the toilet on your own. Comment on every step using **simple sentences** like, "Look, I'm walking to the toilet! Now I pull pants down..."
- "**Pair**" the potty chair/toilet with reinforcers each morning and during bath time

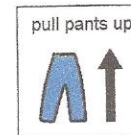
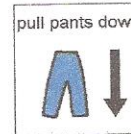




## Getting Started

- Choose the words – simple and consistent
- Find a pattern
  - ~Take notes for a few days to see patterns
  - ~Ortho and gastro colic reflexes **15 min after getting up, 15 min after meals**
- Set the stage
  - ~Clear the area – remove all toys and distractions
  - ~Step stool and trainer seat (if using toilet)
  - ~Toilet picture
  - ~Consider using a visual schedule of the steps

[www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)



- **No more diapers during the day**  
**That includes PULL UPS!**  
Your child needs to feel wet/soiled
  - ~ If diapers are a necessity, consider a potty alarm:  
[www.thepottystore.com](http://www.thepottystore.com)
- Bring in the big boy and big girl underpants!  
Use padded cotton, non-elastic and loose fitting boxer type shorts . Make sure your child is comfortable!



## Choose Reinforcers

- What are reinforcers?
- Should be immediate, tangible and *motivating*
  - ~Avoid long-term reinforcers
  - ~Use what is motivating to YOUR child – favorite candy or drinks, particular video, songs, new “potty” toy
  - ~Use something your child loves, but doesn’t get frequently
- Potty rewards bag!
- The reinforcers you choose should be used only for toilet training 🍌

## Reinforcer Promises

- First-Then Board
- Sticker Chart
- Social Stories®  
<http://touchautism.com>  
Pinterest – social stories board!
- Books:
  - “Potty Time” Training Pack, Usborne Books
  - “The Potty Book” for boys/girls
  - “Once upon a potty” for boys/girls
  - “Potty Time with Elmo”



## Choose "sitting" items



- Bring some music, toys or books that the child can look through while sitting on the toilet
- It is important that those don't distract her so much that she can't attend to the procedure
- The items also should not be as valuable as the reinforcers
- The bathroom should become a soothing, relaxing, comfortable and enjoyable environment
- Recommended:
  - ~Quiet toys, rain sticks, squishy balls
  - ~Books: Curious George "What Do You See?", touch and feel books like "Little Hands Love," colorful pop-up books

## Other things to have *readily accessible*:

- Digital timer
- Toilet picture (PECS)
- Small bits of edible reinforcers in a zip lock bag
- If possible, small bottle with drink
- Some cleaning clothes or wipes



Let's Begin!



## Day time bladder training

- Give your child **extra drinks!**

- ~Encourage him to drink 4 ounces every hour
- ~You can use drinks as a reward for having dry pants, or for actions that he completes on his own
- ~If necessary, give him salty treats such as chips and pretzels to create a need to drink

- **Dry Pants Checks**

- ~At least 4 per hour
- ~Immediately after an accident
- ~Small reward and praise should follow dry pants



## Set a Schedule

- The goal of the schedule is to teach him to go in the toilet and to **withhold at other times**, gaining **control** over bladder and bowel functions
- Taking your child to the bathroom only when you think he needs to go or randomly, will promote over-dependence and make him less likely to learn to go on his own. **Consistency is critical!**
- **Start by taking your child to the toilet every 30 minutes**
- Recommendation: Potty Baby app by OwenTech

## Every 30 minutes...



- "Let's go to the toilet" or simply "toilet." Point to the picture card and have him say or sign "toilet."
- Have your child say or sign "toilet"
- Walk him to the bathroom, and instruct him to walk to the toilet, lower his pants and sit on the toilet.
  - ~ Instructions should be simple and concrete
  - ~ Encourage him to be as independent as possible with the entire routine
  - ~ Provide manual guidance only if needed
- At the beginning, it is important to reward every step of the way!



- Sit for **5-8 minutes** (leaning fwd.); **Reward good sitting with praise and small rewards!**
- you may sing to him, play with toys and look through books while he is sitting. However, the activities should not be too distracting or stimulating that he can't attend to the procedure
- If your child does *not* go in the toilet after 5-8 minutes, praise him for trying, **re-set your timer** and try again later!
- If your child does go in the toilet at this time, he should be heavily praised and rewarded immediately! (It is very important to detect success quickly).

## Abby peed in the potty!



- PRAISE, allow her to flush the toilet and reward her HEAVILY!
- Be specific when you praise her and state the first-then contingency showing her why she received the big reward



## Readjusting the schedule



- Take good notes!
- Every time your child does not go, **shorten the next interval by 15 minutes**
- If you have a success, re-set your 30 min interval!
- **After 3 successes in a row, increase the time to 45 min, then 1 hour.**
- Fade the schedule gradually by increasing to 90 min once you've had 2 accident-free days!

You will eventually drop the schedule, as the goal for the child to start going to the bathroom independently

## Dealing with Accidents

**OOPS!**

- Accidents **NEED** to happen for your child to learn to go to the toilet independently
- It's important that you spot them quickly!
- Do a **Dry Pants Check** immediately, and in a neutral tone tell him "you are wet"
- Use manual guidance to assist him to change his underpants, and clean the area
- The cleanup process should be done quickly and the child should not be given much attention. It should not be fun for the child, and it should not be punishing or discouraging either.

**OOPS!**

- Adjust your schedule accordingly
- It is important to **keep good notes**; this data will let you know when to start lengthening the schedule, and when to eventually drop it to start shaping independent toileting
- **Wait 2-5 minutes and do another dry pants check** and be as enthusiastic as possible! Provide praise and reinforce with rewards and hugs, while stating "Tommy has dry pants!"

## Outings

- Limit drinks about an hour before outings
- **STICK TO THE SCHEDULE WHEN YOU ARE OUT!**
- Have handy reinforcers, like a board with stickers or a mini reinforcer book or box that you can carry out of the house
- Do **not** put your child in diapers or pull ups when you are leaving the house; this will create confusion and inconsistency and will likely undermine the entire procedure
- Consider a travel potty seat



## Shaping Independence

- Teach the child to ask for "toilet" from the beginning of the program
- Fade your instruction and give your **child indirect prompts** – Don't directly prompt!
- Have your child tell you where you are going as you approach the bathroom
- **Let accidents happen!**
- Consider social stories

## Nigh time Training

- Once day time training is complete and your child is independently using familiar and unfamiliar bathrooms
- Limit your child's liquid intake at least 2 hours before bedtime
- Make sure that you take your child to the toilet before he goes to bed, and immediately after he wakes up
- Getting rid of the diapers is a necessary step!
- Use strong reinforcers

## Key to Success

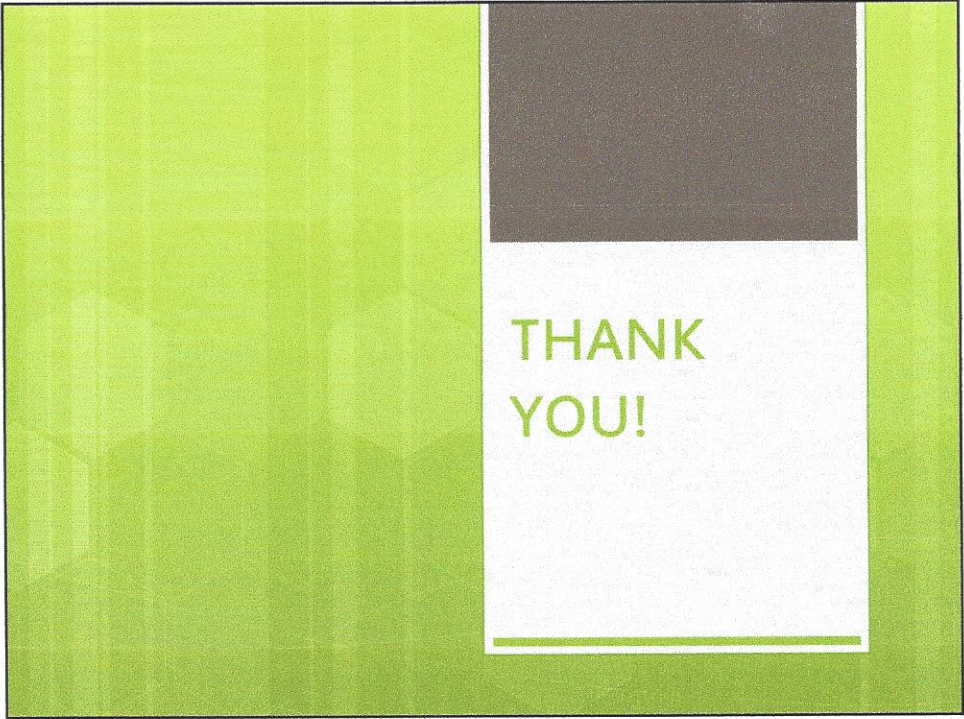
- Consistency
- Data
- Reinforcement



## Books on Toilet Training

- "Toilet Training in Less Than a Day", Foxx & Azrin
- "Toilet Training Persons with Developmental Disabilities," Foxx and Azrin
- "Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism and Related Disorders", Maria Wheeler
- "Educate Toward Recovery", Robert Schramm





## Toilet Training Checklist

Before you start, check that you have the following ready:

- Set the stage

~Clear the bathroom area – remove all toys and distractions

~Step stool and trainer seat (if using toilet)

~Toilet picture

~Consider using a visual schedule of the steps

[www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)

- No more diapers during the day - That includes PULL UPS!

~ If diapers are a necessity, consider a potty alarm: [www.thepottystore.com](http://www.thepottystore.com)

~ Bring in the big boy and big girl underpants! Use padded cotton, non-elastic and loose fitting boxer type shorts. (*Gerber, Mom Innovations, Cottontail Baby* – waterproof cotton training underwear)

- Choose Reinforcers - immediate, tangible and *motivating*. Use something your child loves, but doesn't get frequently

~ The reinforcers you choose should be used only for toilet training

- Reinforcer Promises: First-Then Board, Sticker Chart

~Social Stories: <http://touchautism.com>, Pinterest – social stories board!

~Books: "Potty Time" Training Pack, Usborne Books

"The Potty Book" for boys/girls

"Once upon a potty" for boys/girls

"Potty Time with Elmo"

- Choose sitting Items - Bring some music, toys or books that the child can look through while sitting on the toilet. The items also should not be as valuable as the reinforcers. The bathroom should become a soothing, relaxing, comfortable and enjoyable environment

- Other things to have *readily accessible*: Digital timer, toilet picture, small bits of edible reinforcers in a zip lock bag, small bottle with drink, cleaning clothes or wipes, clean underwear (at least 4 pairs).

### TIPS TO REMEMBER:

- Give your child **extra drinks!**

- **Do Dry Pants Checks:** At least 4 per hour, and immediately after an accident

~Small reward and praise should follow dry pants

- Teach the child to **ask for "toilet"** from the beginning!

- **Let accidents happen!** The only consequence should be no access to reward.

- Follow desired behaviors (sitting nicely, asking for potty, going potty) with access to rewards (reinforce).

- **KEEP GOOD NOTES** to make changes when needed and **STICK TO THE SCHEDULE!**

~ Potty Baby app by OwenTech. Also see data sheet.

