

1



Introduction: Toilet Training (TT) for Children with an ASD

- · Children with an ASD have delays in socializing
- Don't respond to future achievements of 'Being a Big Kid'
- · May not care to please parents by toileting
- · May be overwhelmed by various sensations
- May get distracted by the environment e.g. Flushing the toilet over and over
- · Respond better to concrete rewards
- So, toileting requires some special knowledge and approaches, but it can be done
- I will present the 'bottom line' on how to help the children

2



Overview: Toilet Training (TT) for Children with an ASD

- Review of major methods for helping the child with an ASD to get toilet trained for parents and professionals
- For detailed instruction, I recommend the following books:
 - Potty Training in 3 Days, Brandi Brucks
 - Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism & Related Disorders by Maria Wheeler, M.Ed
 - The Potty Journey by Judy Coucouvanis
 - Teach Toileting by Deborah Bialer
 - https://www.aafp.org/afp/2019/1015/p468.html



3 Models of TT & Related Books

- 1. <u>Typical approach</u> for children developmentally ready
 - Potty Training in 3 days
- Scheduled sittings for children with ASD who are nearly developmentally ready but need support
 - Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism & Related
 Discrete by Maria Wheeler MED.
 - Disorders by Maria Wheeler MED

 The Potty Journey by Judy Coucouvanis
- 3. <u>Habit Training</u> for children with ASD who are not
 - · Toilet Teaching by Deborah Bialer

This webinar will focus on #2 (get it) which will be effective for most children with an ASD

4



6 Keys to Toileting the Child with ASD

- 1. Structure: What you need to succeed
- 2. Readiness: Ready or Not
- 3. Sensory Issues & Fears
- Rewards: Giving m&m's (Meaning & Motivation)
- 5. Expectations: A Message of Success
- 6. The Plan: Putting it all together
 - 3 Case Studies at the 'end'

Plus TT (Tee Tee) Toilet Training Tips & Tricks

5



TT Goal

Main Goal: Complete independent toilet training where the child achieves all steps without prompting, completely independently

This 'hole' process can take months to even a year, but initial success can be achieved within days to weeks

6

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6 Keys to TT the Child with ASD

1. Structure What you need to succeed

7



Structure: 3 New Habits

- · Remember: A Habit in Motion Stays in Motion
 - There are 3 new big habits around TT
 - · Wearing underwear
 - · Being in the bathroom for all toileting
 - Going in the toilet for peeing and pooping







Being in the Bathroom for Toileting



Going in the Toilet

8



Structure: 3 New Habits

Tips and Tricks (From Deborah Bialer)

- Do all toileting activities like changing pull ups in the bathroom
- Get the child use to being in the bathroom for toileting
- Have them put on underwear or be naked when in the bathroom
- Give them fluids, keep them in the bathroom when are due to pee, and play with them until they have to go
- · It's okay if the child pees in the bathtub or on the floor!

YOU'VE JUST CHANGED TWO BIG HABITS!!



Structure

- · Make a wall chart that outlines the process:
 - Get rid of pull ups for underwear
 - Go to the bathroom
 - Sit on the toilet
 - Pee or poop in the toilet
 - Get a prize/reward
- · These are the main goals but the whole process is more complicated...







10



Sequence: The Whole Enchilada

Tip: You can use a board with Velcro and icons for each of the steps and have the child put the icons in an envelope for each step

- · Enter the bathroom
- · Close the door
- · Pull down pants
- · Sit on the toilet
- · Pee/Poop in the toilet
- · Take toilet paper and wipe
- · Flush one time
- Pull up pants
- · Wash hands
- · Dry hands
- · Open the door

11



Structure: Potty Mouth

- · Consistent vocabulary for

- Toilet (Potty)
- Vagina (Vagina)
- Penis (Penis)
- Buttocks (Butt)
- Urine (Pee pee)
- Bowel movements (Poop)
"It's time to go potty" or "use the bathroom" or "Potty time!"



Structure: Toilet Talk

- · Toilets*
- · Toilet seat insert*
- · Potty chairs
- Positioning
- Footing
- Tip: Stand or sit?
 SIT even for boys initially





· Incorporate child's interests

*Preferred for kids with ASD

13



Structure: Schedules & Data

- Keep highly organized data using a daily chart*
 - Check pull up & chart every hour (!) BEFORE STARTING in order to document the child's elimination patterns
 - Do this daily charting for 1 or 2 weeks
- Note patterns of both peeing and pooping
- Plan to get the child to the toilet 15 minutes before usual elimination time as determined by the chart
- The more difficult the child is to train, the more strictly the parents should follow the data taking and not deviate from <u>scheduled sittings</u>

* See Coucouvanis: The Potty Journey

14



Structure: A Timer

- A timer for when a trip to the toilet begins and ends
- Or how long to sit: <u>3 minutes is the magic</u> <u>number</u>
- · Or to 'beat the clock' to get a prize
- Digital timers are good for kids who like numbers





Structure: Modeling

- Modeling: Get a dolls that pees
 - About \$20
 - Daniel Tiger Neighborhood
 Potty Time Toy got raves
- Modeling by other kids and family
 - "Daddy goes pee pee. Mommy Goes pee pee, sister goes. . ."
 - Best for boys to start by sitting
- · You can even model poop. . .





16



Making Poop

Red, yellow, and blue Play-Doh make brown*





*Add some water

17



Structure: Favorite Toys While Sitting











Structure: Books

Best Sellers in Children's Toilet Training Books

#1. P is for Potty! (Sesame Street)

#2. Potty Time! (Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood)
(Daniel Tiger Neighborhood) Scarlett Wing

#3. Potty (Leslie Patricelli board books) Leslie Patricelli

#4. Potty Book for Girls, The (Hannah & Henry Series) Alyssa Satin Capucilli

#5. Big Girl Panties

19



Structure: Books

Best Sellers in Children's Toilet Training Books curated for Children with Autism https://www.lineupthebooks.com/potty-books/

- 1. Everyone Poops
- 2. Almost Everybody Farts
- 3. The Butt Book
- 4. Where's the Poop?
- 5. Daniel Goes to the Potty

20



Structure: Outside the Home

- · Plan for travel and/or school
 - Familiar portable potty seat
 - Traveling with supplies, toys, books, etc.
 - Communicate with school and vice versa
 - Establish a new routine and picture it
 - Familiarize, desensitize new places and bathrooms
 - · See Sensory Issues 'below' (get it?)



6 Keys to TT the Child with ASD

2. Readiness Ready or Not

22



Readiness: Ready or Not

- The approach presented here is designed to help the child with an ASD whether they are fully developmentally ready or not
- Given enough structure (see above) parents can actually get their child 'ready'
- For children who are older and not developmentally ready the Wheeler, Coucouvanis, and Bialer books are best
- Let's start with those children who ARE developmentally ready. Here's the 'bottom' line on what it takes...

23



Readiness: Developmental

- Language at 18m-2yr old level (Greenspan FDL 4-6)
- Understands routines ("Time to eat." "Time for a bath.")
- · Can follow 1 step commands ("Go get the ball.")
- · Can answer simple wh-type questions (What, Where, Who)
- · Imitates others
- · Wants to please (sometimes). Likes praise.
- Understands consequences (pee = prize)
- · Is aware of being wet or dirty
- · Physically able to pull pants up and down
- Bladder capacity increasing. Can go 1-2 or more hours without wetting. Poops predictably.



Developmentally Ready? The Short Cut

- · You may not need to keep such close track
- · Try the "Potty Training in 3 Days" approach
- · Model first with a doll and give the doll a prize
- · Take off the pull ups
- · Hawk the child closely for cues
- Escort them quickly to the bathroom and verbally encourage them
- · Keep them in the bathroom without a pull up
- · Make sure toilet sitting is supported
- · Give a prize for success!

25



Readiness

- · Start with pooping or peeing?
- · Assumption that peeing always goes first
 - Not necessarily true
- · Pooping patterns are actually easier to read
 - But position is important
 - A habit in motion gets the habit in motion
 - Positioning/squatting and foot support are important
- · Still, most parents start with peeing



26



Readiness: Parents

- · Are you ready as a parent?
 - Do you have support from family
 - Do you have the time carved out to start the process?
 - Long weekend?
- · No major life events?
 - New baby, new job
 - Divorce in process, major illness in the family
- Plan for a 3-week process (after establishing the child's pattern for 1-2 weeks)
- See also 5. Expectations (below)



6 Keys to TT the Child with ASD

3. Sensory Issues & Fears

28



Sensory Issues

- Noise &
- · Flushing &
- Transitions—Oh my!
- Seats
 - That are cold
 - That leave the feet dangling
 - That feel like you are falling in
- · Motor coordination issues
- · Wiping! A very late accomplishment

29



Sensory Issues, Fears & Trauma

- · Child's Fears
 - Exposure to loud flushing
 - History of being forced
 - Getting flushed down the toilet
 - Losing a part of your self





Trauma, emotional upsets, and fears will show up as severe resistance and should lead parents and professionals to seek psychological help



Sensory: Withholding

- Some children with ASD don't get the idea of peeing in the toilet
- · They have been conditioned to only go in their diaper
- · They won't initiate a stream, or they withhold
- · Tips:
 - Take the pull up off
 - Turn on water in the bathroom
 - Put their hands in warm water
 - Put them in the tub
 - Give extra fluids and keep them in bathroom until they pee on the floor (Bialer)

31



Sensory: The Darn Pull up

- Pull ups wick moisture away and allow the child to feel comfortable after they pee
- · Tricks:
 - Put underwear under the pull up to feel wetness
 - Cut a hole in the pull up
- · Some say get rid of the pull ups right away
- Some say to get rid of them after the child pees for the first time on the toilet
- · Naked might work but 'A Habit in Motion'. . .
 - Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect

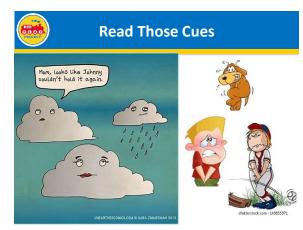
32



Sensory Issues

- · Enteroception: Recognizing internal sensations
 - Children with ASD often have a hard time reading their internal cues
 - They don't know they have to go
 - They wait till the last second
 - Holding pee or poop even when on the toilet
- · Parents get good at reading their child's cues
 - Like dancing, holding their genital area, becoming hyperactive
- · Label those cues: "Let's go potty."





34



Sensory: Desensitization

- Desensitization through progressive exposures is the way to 'go' (get it?) for sensory issues
- · Repeated positive exposures
 - Sitting on toilet <u>lid</u> with clothes on. Yay!
 - Sitting on the toilet seat with clothes on. Yay!
 - Sitting on the toilet seat with pants down not expected to eliminate. Yay!
 - Sitting for very short times then longer times
- · Give praise and a reward for each step

35



6 Keys to TT the Child with ASD

4. Rewards m&m's (Meaning & Motivation)









Rewarding

- Before we get into giving rewards for toilet training, I want to make the argument for treating the child as a human being, not an object to be conditioned
- I believe that when toileting is done right, the child can make developmental gains
- So TALK to your child in tones and rhythms that are encouraging and give the message of competence
- Even when the child cannot understand you, they understand your intent
- Make the experience 'rewarding'!
 NOW ON TO THE PRIZES!!!



37

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Rewards

- The usual motivations to feel like a big boy/girl or please parents may not be meaningful or motivating
 - Give m&m's (meaning and motivation)
- Children with an ASD love <u>things</u> and they love to collect
- They are very motivated by immediate rewards and charts
 - Put a sticker chart on the wall for each day of toilet training
- Here's some general guidance on the best way to use this important 'key to TT'







38



Rewards: Basics

- Not too big but big enough to motivate ('butt' see rewards for pooping)
- Limit access to those rewards so they are special
- Give the rewards right away for success
- · Give rewards only for success
- It's okay for school or grandparents to use different rewards
- Ignore/withdraw attention (which is a reward) from the negative (namely accidents)



Rewards should fit the situation

- · For simply going in the bathroom
 - Food, candy, edibles
 - On an *intermittent* schedule (not every time) for simply entering the bathroom
 - Flushing the toilet (once!) can be rewarding
- For peeing
 - Choose a good reward
 - Only for success, not just for trying. Be consistent.
 - Based on the child's special interests
 - · Collectibles, To Weather Channel, to trains
 - Watch out for unreasonable, difficult rewards/promises:
 - Trip to McD's every time you pee

40



Reward Initiative

- · Reward initiative itself
- · Especially when the child goes on their own
 - (Even if they are going just to get the reward!)
 - Give a reward every time the child initiates!
- · Vary the rewards
- · Put up reward posters on the bathroom wall:



41



Rewards: The Big Boy/Girl Bag

- · Tips:
 - Get a big brown paper bag
 - · Fill it with collectibles/small toys
 - Shake the bag invitingly
 - Use modeling
 - Pretend the baby doll pees or poops
 - Have the baby doll pick from the bag
 - Very motivating





Rewards should fit the situation

- For pooping
 - Often harder for the child to change
 - Choose a BIG reward.
 - · "Christmas in July"
 - Something the child will love
 - Buy the toy and put it on the shelf so the child can see it (and want it)
 - "When you go poop on the toilet, you get the big prize!"





43



6 Keys to TT the Child with ASD

5. Expectations Give the Message of Success

44



Expectations: Have Faith, Be Persistent

- Once you have the structure set up, once you have your data on timing and understand the child's schedule, once your child is developmentally ready, you've dealt with sensory issues, and rewards, then...
- · Attitude and expectations set the goal
- · Everyone gets TT before college. Just a matter of time.
- Important: Give a message of competence in your tone and attitude. 'You can do it and we'll help you!'
- Do NOT ask if the child is ready or wants to go
- · Do NOT ask permission: "Honey let's go tee tee, okay?"
- · Assume success!



Expectations: Parental Attitude

- Expect accidents: Forewarned is forearmed
- . Stay calm in the face of frustration (Don't get 'p.o.'ed)
- · Avoid blame, shame, pressure, and guilt
- No fighting. If you are arguing, yelling or even getting upset, you are doing something wrong
 - Shame on you! Just kidding
- · Don't feel pressured by your mother or husband!
- Be persistent! You can do this! Good job mom, dad Here's *your* reward:
 - Your child will be toilet trained! No more pull ups!

46



The Quick Lowdown on Time

- · Collecting date/elimination schedule? 1-2 weeks
- · Breaking the big 3s habits in motion?
- Change pull ups in bathroom? Immediately
- Going to the bathroom on the schedule? Immediately
- Time to peeing in the bathroom? 1-2 weeks
- Putting the child in pull up?
 - For easy Ezra's, within the first week
 - For difficult Dorothy's, after the first urination in the bathroom
- Continuing to prompt and withdraw prompts for the child to go on a regular schedule? 1-2 (3) months
- Complete independence? Probably a year

47



Expectations: Accidents

- Expect accidents (Did I mention this?)
- Sticking with a schedule, reading the child's cues, and being positive about success will reduce accidents
- · When accidents occur:
 - Stay calm and use the same language
 - "That's okay. When you have to go pee, go in the toilet. You'll go pee pee in the toilet soon."
- Change the child's wet diaper or underwear in the bathroom!!!



Expectations: Parental Feelings

- · Parental anxiety is felt by the child
- Be enthusiastic about success but be careful of too much praising or 'yay'ing
 - This is the child's accomplishment
- The child with an ASD may not feel proud. Still, this is an accomplishment and should be honored
 - · "You are doing good, buddy!"

49



6 Keys to TT the Child with ASD

6. The Plan

50



The Plan: A Habit in Motion

- · If you have been keeping data on a daily chart
- You now know your child's pattern of peeing and pooping
- Get the child to the toilet 15 minutes before usual elimination
- The more difficult the child to train, the more strictly the parents should follow the data taking and not deviate from scheduled sittings
- Have the child sit for 3-5 minutes. If no elimination?
 Get off the toilet for 10 minutes then return until child pees
- · Reward success!



The Plan: Reading Cues

- · Read cues closely.
 - African babies are toilet trained in infancy!
 - Cues can be obvious or subtle but they are there
- Tip: When your child shows by gestural cues that they are going to eliminate, hover, and get them to the bathroom even if not on schedule

52



The Plan: Independence

- When successful using structure, toileting and rewards, begin to fade prompting and the schedule:
 - Let the child go through the steps of toileting with minimal comments or help if/when possible.
 - Adults should not go into the bathroom. "I'll see you when you're done"
 - (Wiping help may be needed ☺)
- Some verbal prompts will initially be needed
- "OK. It's been 2 hours; time to go."
- When child initiates b/c it's time or they feel a full bladder or rectum. . .Success! Party!

53



The Plan: Fading Prompts

- · Progressive fading (less prompting by degrees)
 - Week 1: "Lunch is finished; it's time to go potty."
 - Week 3: "Lunch is finished; it's time to go."
 - Week 5: "Lunch is finished; it's..."
 - Week 7: "Lunch is finished..."
 - Week 9: Nod your head
 - Week 11: Say and do nothing
- Tip: DON'T teach your child to tell you they have to go unless you want that habit in motion to stay in motion. ⁽³⁾



The Plan: What if there is no pattern?

- Move to scheduled toilet sitting about every 2 hours
- Tip: Hover around child until the 2 hours is up. Hovering causes the child to hold elimination
- · Then use Structure discussed above
- · See Sensory Issues and Rewards above
- · Read cues closely (Did I mention this?)
 - African babies are toilet trained in infancy!
 - The cues can be obvious or subtle but they are there
- When your child shows by gestural cues that they are going to eliminate, get them to the bathroom!



55



The Plan: Pooping

- Get the child to the toilet 15 minutes before their usual pooping time
- Sit for 10 minutes using the timer. Do not hover.
 Give the child a little privacy/distance if possible
- Take a 20-minute timed break if no results with the first sitting
- · Then another 10-minute sit by the timer
- During the break keep an eye out. Hovering will cause the child to withhold. So hover during the break
- Change soiled diapers in the bathroom and flush them in the toilet

56



The Plan: Pooping

- · Withholding poop is a big danger: Encopresis
 - Encopresis is when stool accumulates in the rectum and child loses feeling and start to leak. A medical condition.
 - Characterized by smears and few formed stools
- So, don't let the child withhold stool. Give back diaper and privacy and let them poop in their usual way
- Try to move the private space to bathroom
- · Then move them to sitting on the toilet.
 - Be aware of positioning
 - Cut a hole in the pull up so they have the feel of a pull up
- · Use social stories and explanations
- · Offer a BIG reward



Two Cases

Easy Ezra Difficult Dorothy

58



EZ Ezra

- · 4 years old, mild ASD
- · Follows one step commands
- Talking in 2-3 word phrases
- Wears pull ups but come to parents when wet for a change
- Hides to poop behind the chair in the living room
- Loves Thomas the Tank Engine and The 'Cars' Movie characters
- The buy him underwear with *Thomas* and *Lightening*
- · They buy a toilet insert and a stool for his feet. Cozy!

59



EZ Ezra's Elimination Pattern

- Ezra's parents check his pull up every hour for a few days and his pattern emerges quickly
- He pees:
 - After he wakes up dry from sleep
 - Every 2-3 hours after that regularly
 - Sometimes after meals
 - Just before bedtime
- · He poops:
 - After lunch most of the time
 - Sometimes after dinner
 - Skips a day occasionally
 - He hides to poop behind the living room chair



EZ Ezra's Toileting Plan 1

- Parents talk about pooping and peeing on the toilet with Ezra and how much fun it will be
 - They read him books about going potty. He shows interest
- They change all wet/dirty pull ups in the bathroom and put the poop in the toilet
 - Ezra flushes! 'Bye poop!' Yay!
- · He watches his mom and dad pee (dad sits)
- Parents show him the chart of steps on the wall with stickers
 - They let him put stickers on all the pictures!
- · They made the bathroom a fun place to go
 - They time him sitting on the toilet for 3 minutes
 - M&m's just for sitting!!
 - Big prize only for peeing and pooping!

61



EZ Ezra Toileting Plan 2

- The dolly that pees and poops (with Play Doh brown poop!) picks Thomas trains from the Big Boy Bag and Ezra's eyes widen
- "You get to pick from the Big Boy Bag when you go pee and poop on the toilet!"
- When he wakes up dry and when it's been a couple of hours and Ezra is dry in his underwear...
- His parents get the Big Boy Bag filled with toys, tell him 'It's time to go potty.' and he follows like the pied piper!

62



Case 1: Easy Ezra Toileting Plan 2

- He sits by the timer. His parents put his hand in warm water and tell him to pee pee in the toilet. He goes! He gets to pick from the BBB
- (He never get tired of getting Cars cars!)
- Sibs get prizes too! (They are very supportive)
- His parents have set aside the weekend to keep up the routine.
- He has some accidents. Parents are not happy or sad but tell him to "Go potty on the toilet Ezra." and they head to the bathroom to change his underwear

The Fun Toy Bag



Ezra Poops!

- They buy a huge Mack the Truck and tell him when he poops, he get Mack
- When he goes to hide and poop his parent hover and tell him to "Go poop on the toilet and get Mack!"
- They have a stable platform by the toilet that he can stand on and squat in his usual position for pooping
- · He goes!



- · He needs help with wiping
- He gets the idea over the weekend. When grandma baby sits during the week, she keeps the routine going

64



Difficult Dorothy

- Dorothy (Dot) is 6 years old and has moderately severe ASD and a tendency to 'do her own thing'
- Verbally, she uses one-word phrases and some signs for basic needs/food with some scripting from videos
- Takes parents by the hand to get what she wants
- · Understands routines but not 1-step commands
- Loves videos especially 'iPad Baby Einstein', songs, candy, flipping thru books, 'get you' games and head squeezes
- Doesn't seem to care if she's wet or dirty
- · Rigid and does not like transitions
- Afraid of the toilet flushing but loves water play

65



Difficult Dorothy: Strategy

- A child like Dot is in some ways simpler than Ezra
- The plan will be to 'Toilet Teach' and not depend on Dot to initiate. Our plan will be to prompt and train and then withdraw prompts
- · See 'Habit Training' Chapter 5 in Wheeler.
- The key is the establishment of a suitable schedule
- Here I would use the strict charting and data collection process for 2 weeks (Coucouvanis) and be as precise as possible
- Regularize eating and drinking to create a 'standard day'



Difficult Dorothy: Strategy

- The parents put Dot's underwear <u>under</u> her pull up to make her feel the wet more and to create some change
- · They changed all wet/dirty pull ups in the bathroom
- They gave <u>candy</u> intermittently for just walking into the bathroom and sitting on the toilet lid
 - Then on seat with its insert and foot stool
- · They put a simple 3 step picture chart on the wall:



67



Difficult Dorothy: Strategy Pt 2

- They began to limit video watching over the next few weeks to make it special. She was not happy!
- Her parents followed the schedule and prompted Dot to go about 10 minutes before she usually eliminated
- She willingly sat on the toilet for 3 minutes by the timer based on the schedule multiple times per day
- They let her flip through her favorite books while she sat
- It didn't work. She would sit but not pee. She held it
- · They ran water over her fingers
- · It didn't work. She held it and held it

68



Difficult Dorothy: Strategy Pt 3

- Finally, they tried the Toilet Teaching (Bialer) approach and took off her pull up, gave her fluids, and kept her in the bathroom telling Dot 'lt's time to go potty'
- A little frantic, she couldn't hold it any longer and. . .
- She peed in the bathtub of warm water!
- They cleaned her up, gave lots of praise, and gave her iPad Baby Einstein. She was thrilled!
- After that she peed on the bathroom floor
- Then they kept having her sit on the toilet and telling her to go potty and she would get the "iPad Baby Einstein."



Difficult Dorothy: Strategy Pt 4

- It worked! She peed on the toilet and got her iPad Baby Einstein
- They took off pull ups except for pooping otherwise she would hold her BMs
- Peeing became routine. They weaned the iPad and just gave head squeezes, then nothing because. . .
- · A habit in motion stays in motion
- For pooping they moved her into the bathroom with her pull up on, they didn't hover, and she pooped in the bathroom. iPad Baby Einstein! And lots of praise



70



Difficult Dorothy: Strategy Pt 4

- Then they cut a hole in her pull up and had her sit on the toilet in her squatting position and she pooped in the toilet!! iPad Baby Einstein!!
- She had established a habit of going to the bathroom.
- After that the schedule sittings worked for both peeing and pooping
- She has not yet initiated going but her parents are slowing fading prompts
- · Yay Dot!!

71



The Poop on TT for Children with ASD

- These methods are time tested and will work for the large majority of children
- · As the I Ching says: Persistence furthers
- Almost all children WILL get toilet trained 'in the end'
- For those children who are resistant even with all the methods mentioned here, consultation with medical and/or behavioral specialists is indicated
- That's the poop on toilet training for children with ASD

PLAY Project Model

