

# The toddler's final frontier



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**S**OMEWHERE in some landfill, there is a gigantic mound of diapers with my son's name written all over it.

At the ripe young-ish age of 2½ years old, Julian is still running around in pull-up elasticated disposable pants, despite my attempts to coax him out of them.

You know what they say: You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. I've led my son to the toilet many times, whenever he starts making a particular strained face, only to have him run away (yelling blue murder) each time he spies the toilet seat.

When he turned two, I took a leaf from parenting websites that said you could toilet-train

your kids when they are able to tell you when they need to pee or poo, and decided to make toilet time a big deal.

I sat on the throne in our bathroom and mimed exerting my bowels, while making encouraging sounds, in order to explain to Julian the function of the loo.

Meanwhile, he would laugh at his crazy mum, perfectly happy to squat in a corner in his diapers whenever the urge struck him.

Potty training, if you're the proud parent of a hyperactive toddler, is a Significant Milestone. The kind that looms like El Dorado, a whole glittering city faraway from earlier landmarks like first words, walking and eating solids. Succeed in getting it right, and your precious baby is one step closer to proper adulthood.

Little wonder, then, that many mums – myself included – are anxious about it.

I am, however, mindful that pushing the point may backfire.

One mum I know tells me that her son was so stressed out

about being made to go on the toilet bowl that he developed constipation.

I've witnessed another exasperated mother reasoning with her two-year-old as he pleaded piteously for a diaper to be put on him, even though he had graduated to briefs a while ago.

It is a situation that requires all the negotiation skills of the United Nations, along with the delicate handling of egos and insecurities of all involved.

Children crave the security and familiarity of catch-all, 24/7 diapers. Parents fret over arrested development, bed-wetting and power struggles.

The battle continues.

At school, when teachers remove his pull-up pants for diaper-free time, Julian prefers to say nothing when he needs to go to the toilet. Instead, he would wee in his pants, and then solemnly ask his teacher to change his clothes.

Some days, he returns home and reports to me how his friends lined up to use the toilet – only to confess at the end of his riveting story that he didn't join them.

The best way, I guess, is to keep things light and fun.

I recently enticed him to sit on his potty for a while, when he announced he needed to poo, by providing him with washable gel paints and encouraging him to doodle on the bathroom tiles as he sat there. He humoured me, and even helpfully made some exaggerated “nng nng” noises from his private art corner.

However, after waiting half an hour, nothing happened.

Oh well, at least it's a start. At least I got a nice mural out of it.

Some day, however, Julian and I will strike gold. And that's nothing to pooh-pooh at.

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## HELPDESK 我的字典

Diapers: 纸尿裤  
zhǐ niào piàn

Piteously: 可怜的  
kě lián de