

It's funny the things that you think about when you receive your child's diagnosis. I will never forget what my husband's response was when I told him Riley's diagnosis of Rett syndrome, "Will we ever be able to potty train her?" I was naturally taken back by, what I thought was, such an insignificant question. That is, until we were preparing to send Riley to school. At that time, I realized that someone else would be changing my daughter's diapers. How embarrassing that must be for her, not to mention the forfeiture of independence and privacy. It was then that I knew that my husband's concern was not so insignificant.

Over the past 3 years, we have tried potty training Riley four times. Riley was not ready for until this fourth time. In the fall of last year, we teamed up with Riley's ABA therapists, Christina Giuliano and Kim Muhich of the May Institute, for intensive training on toileting based on habit training research. We made a spreadsheet labeling every thirty minutes from the time that Riley wakes up in the morning, to the time that Riley goes to bed at night. We assigned every action that takes place in between a code. So a successful urination on the toilet is labeled an **S1**, a successful bowel movement on the toilet is labeled **S2**. An accidental urination in her pull-up is an **A1**, and accidental bowel movement in her pull-up an **A2**. Riley's meal times are marked by an **F** and her liquid intake by an **L**. Lastly, Riley's naps are indicated by an **X**.

For a period that spanned over two weeks, we took Riley to the bathroom every half an hour and labeled what action had taken place all the while showering her with praise for every success. We then reviewed the compiled information and determined that it was not necessary for Riley to go to the bathroom every half hour. What Riley needed, instead, was a program that is set up like this: Riley goes to the bathroom when she wakes up. If Riley has a success on the toilet, she does not go again for one hour. If she has had an accident or does not go, she will return to the toilet in 30 minutes. That will repeat until she has a success. She goes to the bathroom immediately after a nap. Riley also goes to the toilet 30 minutes after food and/or liquid intake. To help Riley learn to request toileting on her own, we have also paired going to the bathroom with a toilet icon and repeating the phrase "go potty" while in route.

After a few failed attempts, we felt like all hope was lost on potty training, but this schedule has brought Riley up to over 70% accuracy in the last six months. We have added a reinforcement item (Honey Bun) coupled with praise to help improve her accuracy.