



SHORT STORY: Room for Mess

Once my son turned 18 months, I finally found a rhythm. As a much easier toddler than an infant, Jack provided me with an easy, everyday routine. I had my life's schedule down to a fine

science. Did I really want to disrupt that precious, only-child bond I had with Jack by bringing another child into my world?

I decided to take a huge leap of faith and trust that God would use another child to change me for the better, just as he had with Jack.

Jude came along two weeks after Jack turned 3, and any normalcy I had once regained flew out the window.

Thanks in part to MOPS, I've learned this year that whether you are an artist mom or a scientist mom, you're going to get messy! Yet beauty is the result in both cases.

My life is now replete with new "mommy scientist" inventions and "artist mom-my" canvases in progress. I've learned to let go of perfection and delight in the disarray. I know God has a plan for my family.

— Crystal Kupper, Oregon



With Thumb as My Witness

One by one, I'd watched the kids kick the habit, until it seemed my daughter, at age 4 ½, was the only one left. A MOPS friend of mine told me that her husband had told their son, "Big boys don't suck their fingers," and that was the end of thumb sucking for him. Another lady told me, "When I took the blanket away, the thumb soon followed on its own." Really?

Others tried to make me feel better by saying, "You know, my brother/husband sucked his thumb until he was 10 (or 12 or 14) and he turned out just fine." This might be true, but with kindergarten approaching, I was concerned about the teasing that thumb-suckers sometimes face and felt it was time to take a more proactive approach with my child.

But what? I remembered my sister and brother-in-law had sent my niece to bed with mittens taped over her hands, and though it worked, my now-18-year-old niece says she can still feel her little hands sweating uncomfortably in those mittens. A counselor who spoke to my MOPS group suggested that when your children have something really tough to get through, go through it with them. He believed that while learning a lesson through consequences has its place, it's not always the best method for building relationship between you and your child.

So every night for nearly six months, we prayed together until shortly after her fifth birthday. Then I suggested she try to fall asleep without sucking her thumb. I stayed in the bed with her and rubbed her back until she fell asleep. And for the first time in five years, she fell asleep *without* sucking her thumb!

For the next six nights I slept in her bed, rubbing her back, and each night was a little bit easier. There were just a few slip-ups. But now she is thumb-sucking-free. **M**

FINESSE

"...when your children have something really tough to get through, go through it with them."



by Lydia Rueger

mom of two, ages 5 and 1

Crossroads MOPS, Wheat Ridge, Colorado

The Hard Lessons of Potty Training

Hundreds of diapers. Peed pants and undies found shoved under the bed. Accidents at home, at parks, at restaurants, in the car. Six million loads of laundry. Pulled out of preschool and back in pull-ups. Graduated to underwear. Back to diapers.

Rewards, consequences, charts, incentives and not making a big deal out of it. Advice from friends, teachers, acquaintances and Facebook. Two trips to the doctor's office to make sure it's not medical. (It's not.) Anguish, prayer, frustration, excitement, hope, disappointment, discouragement, apathy. *For nearly two years!*

My daughter is 4 ½ years old. She may be the kid who they say doesn't exist — the one who goes to kindergarten without being fully potty trained. So what tips do I have for potty-training a strong-willed child? None. Sorry. I still haven't figured out how to get my daughter to pause what she's doing and head for the john, but I have learned a few other things along the way.

Every child is different. Sometimes there is no art or science to potty train your child. And that's one of the things that make him or her so great. (Not peeing-the-pants, but being unique.)

Moms are resilient. Other moms have been through this long-term potty-training action. And they've survived! Other moms are currently experiencing the same types of potty-training challenges that I am. We will survive! We will look back and laugh — and because our postpartum bods are kinda falling apart, we will likely pee our pants while laughing. Oh the irony.

God is at work. No, he's not potty training my child (*wouldn't that be awesome?*), but he is shaping me. That's right, potty training has become spiritual. God is teaching me about his love and forgiveness and reminding me to extend it to my daughter when the smell of pee permeates my DMV (dirty minivan).

I read a Bible verse this month that hit me in the potty-training face: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Colossians 2:12-14 **M**



by Wendy Hagen

mom of three, ages 7, 5 and 3

Previously attended Cornerstone Fellowship MOPS, Livermore, California