

## **Booty Camp®**

By Nancy Goodfellow

The best word to describe how I felt when it came to potty training Lily, my 4 ½ year old with Down syndrome, was defeated. No matter how many seminars I attended (many) or how many people I talked to (a lot), every time I attempted to potty train I failed.

Although many children with Down syndrome aren't ready for potty training at 4, I knew Lily was capable of it. She was able to "hold it" for hours and hours, and had enough control to wait until she was in a pull-up for naps and bedtime. More than once we tried putting her in underwear and telling her "no more diapers" – only to have her hold her urine for so long that she ended up with a urinary tract infection. By Thanksgiving I was convinced that I needed help. Not only was I feeling incredibly defeated and depressed, I was emotionally exhausted.

Once I really thought about it, I realized that I shouldn't give myself such a hard time. After all, I wasn't an expert on potty training a child with Down syndrome. I wasn't an expert on teaching a child with Down syndrome how to walk, which is why a physical therapist showed me how to help her. I wasn't an expert on teaching a child with Down syndrome how to talk, which is why a speech therapist continues to show me how to help her. So why not get help with potty training from someone much more experienced than myself?

So I called Wendy Sweeney and enrolled in Booty Camp®. Wendy was recommended by other parents and I was relieved to finally have an expert on my side. Although Booty Camp® is not for everyone, it ended up being a great fit for Lily. Many families do not need the extra help potty training their child, or other programs will prove more successful, but Booty Camp® was exactly what our family needed.

Booty Camp® is a half-day seminar located in Wendy's house in West Chicago. Lily and I attended "camp" on a Saturday and learned the process that must be followed to ensure successful toileting. The philosophy follows Nathan H. Azrin's Toilet Training in Less Than a Day, which pertains to typically developing children. For children with special needs, the process takes an average of two weeks.

By the time we left Wendy's house, Lily had been introduced to the necessary tools for being potty trained. She knew that it was her responsibility to go pee and poop in the potty, that she had to get her own pants on and off, and that it was her job to clean up any accidents. And I knew that Lily was capable of far more than I'd thought (I always put her pants on for her), and I knew the program to follow and the language to use. After leaving Booty Camp®, Lily and I went home and set up "camp" in the kitchen. The program involves confining your child to a certain area, preferably with tile or wood floors for easy clean-up, and staying there for as long as necessary. This is imperative, so I needed to make arrangements ahead of time for my other children. I knew that in order to be successful this time, I had to commit 100% to Wendy's program - which meant I might be in my kitchen for two weeks. As it turned out, Lily and I were there for 13 days.

Although our time in the kitchen was boring and frustrating at times (you aren't allowed to do much more than eat and drink – no games, toys, books, etc.), it actually gave me a unique opportunity. Since Lily is the oldest, it was the most time I had spent alone with her since her younger brother was born three years ago. We had a great time talking, and her speech therapist is amazed at her new conversational skills. Most importantly, it forced me to slow down and let go of our usual schedule. As a result, I gave Lily the opportunity to do everything for herself. So not only was she cleaning up her own messes and putting on her own pants, she was carrying her empty plate to the sink after a meal, wiping her face with a napkin and throwing it away after eating a cookie, and much more. Wendy's Booty Camp® stresses the personality improvements that can accompany the new independence associated with being potty trained, like better response to parental instruction and an increased sense of pride and self-esteem. We definitely experienced that with Lily.

So it has been six weeks since we attended Booty Camp® and Lily has been in underwear the entire time, other than for bedtime. She still has accidents and has regressed a few times where we've ended up back in the kitchen for a couple of days. But for the most part, Lily is potty trained and doing great. She initiates every time she has to go, which means that I am not taking her periodically throughout the day just to "try." And, most importantly, Wendy has been there for guidance and support the entire time. I can call her home or cell phone at any time with questions or concerns, and I always get a prompt response. And Lily can call her when she has used the potty and Wendy sends her treats in the mail. For us, putting someone else in charge and having their program to follow was exactly what we needed. Lily responded immediately to the process. I know that we aren't completely "there" yet, but we're a lot closer than we've ever been before, and neither Lily nor I are feeling defeated anymore.

Visit the Booty Camp® website at [www.bootycampmom.com](http://www.bootycampmom.com) for more information or call Wendy Sweeney directly at 630-762-9612.