



The Diaper-Free Baby: The Natural Toilet Training Alternative

Christine Gross-Loh

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Imagine infants free from painful diaper rash, new parenthood without thousands of dollars wasted in diapering costs, toilet training that is natural and noncoercive, and, most important, happier babies and parents

As Christine Gross-Loh reveals in her progressive, enlightening book, all this is possible and more. Infants are born with the ability to communicate their need to "go," just as they communicate hunger or sleepiness. Gross-Loh, a mother of two children who were diaper-free at eighteen and fifteen months, uses the tenets of "elimination communication," or EC, to teach parents how to identify and respond to their baby or toddler's natural cues.

Unlike the all-or-nothing approach of some parenting books, *The Diaper-Free Baby* addresses three categories of parents: full-time, part-time, and occasional EC'ers. Parents can practice EC as much or as little as fits their family and lifestyle. A support group within a book, *The Diaper-Free Baby* also includes inspiring testimonials throughout every chapter. Parents who have successfully practiced EC identify common struggles, share experiences and problem-solving tips, and provide encouragement for those new to the technique. Their motivational stories together with Gross-Loh's practical advice will appeal to all parents interested in a fresh alternative to traditional toilet training.

The Diaper-Free Baby: The Natural Toilet Training Alternative Details

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Joyce says

Simple, straight-forward book. I'm glad I read it. It has lots of testimonies from other EC parents, which is encouraging for those many-misses days. I also appreciated that the book stressed that EC was primarily about *communication* and not about a perfect score of no misses. I wish I had read this book earlier; I think I'll be trying EC with my next one a bit earlier.

Tiffany says

As someone who's already hooked on cloth diapers, I sort of stumbled upon elimination communication (or EC or infant potty learning or whatever you want to call it) by accident while visiting some cloth diaper-friendly online forums. I found the idea intuitive and interesting, and so did the hubbs. This book is great because it breaks down each infant development stage (newborn, middle infancy, toddlerhood, etc) for toilet hygiene based on whether you're interested in full-time, part-time, or occasional EC. Encouraging, concise, and full of great stories of success from other parents, this is a great book for any parent interested in expanding their horizons of communication and care for their babies.

Disclaimer: It is NOT a "toilet training" help book and in no way makes the method of ECing out to be about potty training. The basis of the book is communicating needs—just like a baby will "cue" when it's hungry, almost all babies "cue" when they need to go to the bathroom. Why not put a baby over a toilet if you know they're going to poop instead of waiting to clean up the sometimes explosive aftermath?

Margaret Heller says

Zero intention of making a lifestyle of this, but some very good ideas for a realistic approach to introducing baby to standard toileting practices. Throughout history and in many other countries (including China and India) the methods discussed in this book are standard practice, and the American way of doing things is the aberration. This is the lightweight offering in this genre, and you literally could not pay me to read one of the thicker tomes on this subject.

Caitlinleah says

This is a GREAT EC book. Parenting is so hard, I thought EC would be another thing that was impossible with an actual baby. But the author is great about showing how any steps are good steps and it's all about communication, not about results. I plan on continuing to use cloth diapers and I feel like there's still so much I learned from this book. I hope even awareness will make toilet learning easier, whenever it ends up happening for us.

Bethany Zimp says

A detailed text on teaching Elimination Communication. Yep, these are the people that have their babies use the toilet (just like the rest of the non-developed world). Written in a very compelling way that explain techniques, history, and problem-solving in a very non-judgmental way. My kids are a bit old for most of the recommendations, but it was still an informative read that offers ideas for early potty-trainers.

Rebecca says

This book doesn't break new ground, but it does lay it down gently for the uninitiated. If you've never heard of Infant Potty Training or Elimination Communication, this book is a great introduction for you. If you're curious about how you might go about trying it for yourself, this book is encouraging and full of helpful hints, tips, and lists of where to get or make the few essentials (a potty, training pants or baby panties, etc). There is a subtle humor in the book and none of the alarmist or conspiracy-frightened about it. If I were asked by someone to recommend a book about EC to a total stranger, this would be it. If I wanted to recommend a book about EC to someone who was convinced conventional diapering was not helping their child, I would suggest another...

Katie says

I felt like the author was my cheerleader in trying EC! She offers lots of advice for all stages and ages. I have an older mobile baby that I'd like to start trying this with, but am still concerned about the time and feasibility. I would totally recommend this book to someone who was interested in trying EC, but not your average parent. I kinda think most people think I'm crazy for even reading this.

Jessica says

This book is 99% fluff. It has enough content to support a single blog post, and the rest is all useless rambling and parent testimonial after parent testimonial.

I read this book because I had an 18 month old (who doesn't really speak yet) peeing all over my house, and someone suggested that elimination communication was a wonderful, respectful way to help young toddlers and even babies learn to use the toilet. It's more like clicker training your dog, though.

The one thing I got out of the book was they do give a few physical signs that indicate your child may need to poop or pee, and that at least helped me some with our peeing plight.

Still, would not recommend it. You can find that information for free on google with a little bit of digging (I know, I did).

Dawn says

Some intriguing concepts, but it could have been a lot shorter. As in pamphlet-sized.

Andrea says

Hmmm...definitely intriguing but not too sure that I'm going to apply it. The concept is that humans are not programmed to soil themselves but we teach our babies to use the bathroom in their pants and hang out in it until we change them, so that when we start potty training them at 2 1/2 or 3, we are having to teach them not to go to the bathroom in their pants although they've been doing that their whole lives. The book teaches you to be in tune with your child's bathroom schedule/routine and to know the signs she gives when she is going. Then you cue the child with a sound and sign so that eventually, when you put the child on the potty and cue them, they will go. It focuses on communicating with your child and knowing her signs just like you know her signs for being hungry or tired. It is not focused on getting your child out of diapers at a world-record age. Also, it discusses how in many cultures around the world, babies don't use diapers and are potty trained at a very young age. Interesting concept, as I said.

Emilia P says

I have a friend who is doing EC and though I do not have anywhere near the discipline to do so exclusively myself, this book did a really nice thing by saying "hey, you can do this part-time like, even once a day, if you want! or less!" and also "hey, if you screw up sometimes its not a huge deal" and "this is about communication with your child, not about Training per se." So in general, I liked Gross-Loh's approach to parenting philosophy -- like, don't beat yourself up about it or try to do it perfectly, but hey? isn't this fairly logical? Aren't Indian grandmas on to something? Indeed. Maybe I will attempt this a little more with hypothetical infant #2.

Lindley Walter-smith says

I really appreciated that, unlike many parenting books, this isn't all-or-nothing. Gross-Lo provides three tracks to EC and a number of starting points, from never using a nappy from birth to giving a toddler some nappy free time and cueing once in a while. It's gentle, encouraging and nonjudgmental.

My major criticism is that, like most single theme parenting books, it stretches a little content a long, long way. It's heavily padded with anecdotes, true or invented. The information on baby wearing also promotes cross body slings while failing to warn of their dangers.

Shannon says

I read this way back when I was quite intrigued by the idea of my child just potty training himself. (This really does happen with some precocious, fastidious - both elements must be present - babies.) I remember liking it. But alas, my baby sat happily on the potty - even pooped! - from 4 to 8 months, listening to all of his books as we hung out amid the shower steam, and then as soon as he could - he started throwing his plastic throne across the apartment. We stopped soon with this after.

Ricki says

Here's my conclusion after reading several potty-training books. I think that no matter what you do, there is a very good chance that potty-training is going to be a long time commitment and huge hassle. You can do the work in the beginning (EC, from birth to possibly only up to a year), the middle (early potty-training, from 6mo to 2 years), or the end (after 2 years). With my twins, I waited until the end, because people told me to "wait until they're ready" and basically they would train themselves. Well, the kids are a few months away from 3, it's been a mess of toddler power struggles, and they still aren't really potty-trained yet (one of them is still peeing her pants regularly). At this point it's obviously a mental problem rather than one of physical readiness, which is a bit aggravating because they have proved they CAN do it and for some reason now just won't.

But obviously it's an individual choice to decide when a person wants to put in the work of potty-training. Therefore, here are my recommendations:

If you have a new baby and are intrigued by the idea of EC, I recommend:

Diaper Free: The Gentle Wisdom of Natural Infant Hygiene by Ingrid Bauer - makes elimination communication sound very appealing, although a heavy up-front commitment.

The Diaper-Free Baby: The Natural Toilet Training Alternative by Christine Gross-Loh - Explains that even doing EC part-time can show great benefits, and gives stress-free, practical ways to make EC fit into your busy life.

If you are interested in early potty-training and avoiding toddler power-struggles, I recommend:

Diaper-Free Before 3: The Healthier Way to Toilet Train and Help Your Child Out of Diapers Sooner by Jill M. Lekovic. I appreciated the scientific studies and medical evidence that supports early potty-training. I actually think this might be the easiest way and it's what I'm doing with kid #3. If it works for my newest bub, I will start giving this book out at baby showers, with the caveat that the author is totally wrong about cloth diapers. (She knows that cloth diapers with natural fibers such as cotton against baby's bum are conducive to early potty-training because baby will feel the wetness when peeing. However, she still advises against cloth diapers because she thinks they're a big pain and don't really help the environment—when in fact they aren't a big deal and hugely save the environment AND a ton of money.) But besides that, this book is crammed with good stuff and it's my fave.

If your kid is already 2 or over, I recommend:

Oh Crap! Potty Training by Jamie Glowacki. This book described my toddler twins to an absolute T and really helped me. I wish I'd discovered it six months earlier than I did. It's very funny and for my children at least it was eerily accurate. Huge recommendation to anyone starting with a toddler—read this ASAP!

Michael Clark says

My wife insisted I read it well before we ever have a baby. I think it covers all the bases and describes well what "diaper-free baby" means.

You know, one of the major criticisms I might have is the very title of "Diaper Free Baby". I prefer the subtitle "Natural Toilet Training" because I feel like that more closely aligns with what is actually going on here.

Anyway, I read through the newborn and toddler sections thoroughly and found it to be pretty complete. I am not one to find quotes from successful users overly compelling, but I suppose that works for some folks. However, I do find the appeals to logic convincing--e.g. the explanation that this is how things are done in many non-Western nations already and how historically humans have toiled trained.

I also liked the parts that explained how to get others in your life on board with the philosophy. To me, convincing grandparents and other close people to understand why you're doing it and what it is can be difficult, so some guidance there was great.
