

AN AB DISCOVERY BOOK

the wrong lesson:

big babies shouldn't
toilet train

BABY SOPHIA

*The Wrong Lesson:
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by

Baby Sophia

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Chapter One: Where I Stand

I am not toilet-trained.

I want to say that plainly, at the start, without apology or qualification, because everything that follows in this book depends on understanding what that sentence means to me. Not as a confession. Not as admission. As a simple fact, stated with the same ease with which I might say that I am left-handed, or that I prefer winter to summer. It is a fact about me that I find entirely unremarkable, and at the same time one I am genuinely, quietly proud of.

I wear nappies. I have worn them continuously for most of my adult life. I live primarily as a sub-12-month-old baby girl and often spend long periods as a two-month-old baby girl. My bladder does not wait for permission and does not require any direction from me. My bowels follow their own timetable, and I follow it with them, without resistance and without distress. My nappies are wet and frequently dirty, and this is, as far as I am concerned, precisely as it should be. I would not have it otherwise. I cannot, truthfully, imagine why anyone would.

That last sentence is worth pausing on, because I mean it sincerely rather than provocatively. I find myself, at times, genuinely uncertain why toilet training is considered the universal destination it is assumed to be, especially for big babies like me and others. The toilet solves a problem that nappies solve better. It requires interruption, attention, a specific location, and a break from whatever else is happening. It is, when I consider it honestly, rather a cumbersome arrangement. I understand its logic for most people. I do not feel its logic for myself, and I am not sure I ever did.

I am also a baby. At my core, I am an infant girl aged well under 12 months old. Toilet training is simply absurd for me.

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I was not dry at night as a child. Not occasionally, not in periods of stress, but simply and consistently never dry. Wet sheets were my ordinary morning. I did not experience them as failure. My parents did not present them as failures. They were simply what mornings were, and there was something in that, something in the warmth and the smell and the complete naturalness of it that felt entirely right. I did not lie in wet sheets wishing I had woken in time. I lay in them and felt, as far as I remember, completely at home.

Wet pants were a regular feature of my days. Some dirty ones, too. These were more visible, more socially consequential, and I understood even then that the world had a view about them. But I did not share that view from the inside. There was inconvenience, occasionally. There was not shame.

When I returned to nappies as a young adult, it was not a difficult decision. It was more like a correction, a restoration of something that had been briefly and somewhat arbitrarily suspended. The wet sheets stopped because the nappies absorbed what the sheets had been absorbing. The wet pants stopped for the same reason. My bladder, relieved of any expectation of control, settled into its natural behaviour very quickly, as though it had been waiting patiently for permission to stop trying. My bowels followed, more gradually, more consciously at first, and then with increasing ease and finally with a completeness that still gives me quiet satisfaction on the mornings I wake to a nappy that tells me I was, even in sleep, fully myself. A very young baby.

I am writing this book because I believe I am not alone in any of this, even if I am unusual. I believe there are people, adult babies, people who know themselves to be babies in the deepest and most continuous sense, for whom toilet training was always a category error. Not an achievement they failed to maintain, but an imposition that was never appropriate. People for whom the toilet represents, even now, a contradiction of who they are. People who feel the

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wrongness of it most sharply in the moments when they feel most fully themselves, small, cared for, and nappied and are suddenly required by their own body to stop being that person and perform an act coded as adult, independent, controlled.

This book is for those people. It is an argument, a reflection, and a practical guide. It will make the case that for a baby, and by that I mean a person who understands themselves to be a baby, for whom that is an identity rather than a costume, nappies are not a choice among options. They are the correct condition. And that toilet training, however universal it is assumed to be, was never meant for everyone.

I am fully untoilet-trained. I am immensely proud of that. Come with me, and I will try to explain why.

Chapter Two: The Wrong lesson

Toilet training is one of the great unexamined assumptions of human development.

It is treated, in virtually every culture that has adopted modern sanitation, as an achievement, one of the earliest and most fundamental. The child who is toilet-trained has crossed a threshold. They have demonstrated control, maturity, and readiness. They have become, in this specific and important way, more like an adult. The language around it is the language of progress: training, success, readiness, achievement. The language around its absence is the language of failure: accidents, setbacks, regression.

Nobody questions this. It is assumed with the same confidence as the assumption that children should eventually walk, talk, or feed themselves. It belongs to a category of developments so universally expected that questioning them seems, at first, simply eccentric.

I want to question it. Not for everyone. For most people, toilet training makes complete and obvious sense, and I have no argument with it. But the universality of the assumption is precisely the problem. Because built into it is the premise that everyone is developing toward the same destination, and that toilet training represents a point on that universal journey that all people will reach and remain at. That premise is wrong. Not for most people. But for some, it is profoundly wrong, and the consequences of applying it regardless are worth examining carefully.

What it means to be a baby

When I use the word baby in this book, I am not using it loosely or metaphorically. I am not describing someone who occasionally enjoys infantile comforts, or who finds relaxation in regression, or who has an affection for nappies as a fetish object or

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a soothing practice. I am describing something more fundamental: a person for whom babyhood is their natural state. Their baseline. The condition in which they are most fully and authentically themselves.

This is not a condition that switches on and off. It is not a mode entered and exited. It is, for the person I am describing, simply who they are continuously, in the background of every day, whether or not they are wearing a nappy in a given moment, whether or not they are in baby space in any visible sense. They are a baby the way a person is left-handed, not only when they are holding a pen.

For such a person, and I am such a person, and I suspect you reading this may also be, the developmental trajectory that toilet training assumes simply does not apply. The model says: the child begins in nappies, the child develops toward continence, the child achieves toilet training, the child leaves nappies behind. It is a journey with a clear direction and a clear destination. But that model assumes the child is becoming an adult. A baby is not becoming an adult. A baby is a baby. The journey goes nowhere, because there is nowhere it needs to go.

Toilet training a genuine baby is therefore not an achievement. It is a category error. It is the application of the correct process to the wrong person. And like most category errors, it produces not progress but a kind of persistent wrongness, a mismatch between the person and the system built around them that generates friction for as long as it persists.

What the category error costs

The costs are not always visible, and the person bearing them may not have language for what they are experiencing. But consider what toilet training actually requires of a baby who is genuinely, continuously a baby.

It requires them to treat their body as something to be controlled and directed. To monitor signals, interrupt activities,

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relocate to a specific room, perform a specific act, and return. This is not merely inconvenient. It encodes a relationship to the body that is fundamentally at odds with babyhood. Babies do not manage their bodies. Their bodies simply are, and what happens in them happens naturally and without negotiation. The nappy exists precisely to support that natural, unmanaged state. Toilet training replaces the nappy not just physically but philosophically. It installs a system of control and monitoring where naturalness once was.

For most people, this is fine. For a baby, however, it is a daily contradiction.

And then there is the deeper cost, the interruption of identity. The regressive baby in full baby space, wearing a nappy, feeling small, being cared for, inhabiting their truest self, who is suddenly required by their body to stop, stand, walk to a bathroom, perform an adult act, and return. The nappy goes back on. But something has been broken. The continuity is interrupted at exactly the moment when it was most complete. The body has issued a reminder that *you are actually an adult who uses a toilet*. At the moment when the person knows most surely that they are not.

This is not a minor inconvenience. For some people, it is experienced as a kind of violence against the self, a forced ejection from the only place they feel real. And it happens, for a toilet-trained baby, many times a day, every day, indefinitely.

On shame

I want to say something about shame here, though I will return to it at greater length later.

Shame about wet or dirty nappies, about wet sheets, about the visible evidence of a body that does not conform to adult expectations. This shame is almost universal among the people this book addresses. It was not universal in my own experience, and I believe that accident of my upbringing gave me a clarity about these

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things that many people have to work harder to reach. But I understand where the shame comes from, and I want to name its source precisely.

The shame is not a response to something *actually shameful*. It is a response to a comparison, a comparison between the person as they are and the person that toilet training assumes they should have become. Remove the assumption, and the comparison has no basis. Remove the comparison, and the shame has nothing to attach to.

Wet sheets are not shameful. They are the natural consequence of a baby sleeping. Wet nappies are not shameful. They are what nappies are for, and what they will always contain, because a baby's bladder does not wait and should not have to. Dirty nappies are not shameful. They are, again, simply what happens in the body of a person who has not imposed an unnatural system of control upon themselves.

The shame comes from measuring these things against a standard that does not apply to you. Stop applying the standard, and the shame loses its power. That is easier said than done, I know. But the first step is understanding that the standard was never yours to begin with.

The argument, plainly stated

Let me say it as directly as I can, because I think it needs to be said without cushioning.

If you are a baby, genuinely, continuously, in the deepest sense of that identity, then toilet training was the wrong thing to do to you. Not a rough necessity. Not a reasonable social requirement you must accommodate. The wrong thing. An imposition made before you had any way to recognise or resist it, based on a developmental model that assumed you were someone you were not and were going somewhere you were not going.