

1996

3.5 son bladder since 2/5/ not yet b trained tried everything. REFUSES.

SAYS NOT NEED THEN HIDES AND DOES IN PANTS. NOW REFUSE TO CLEAN. 4 SOON.

HU & I FEEL HE SHOULD BE TRAINED

8 MO OLD SIB: I NOT ACCEPT THIS IT

NO ACCIDENTS IN SCHOOL

HAP[PY

Your question suggests that you both feel that something is amiss, and I agree. Since your son has no accidents in school and has enough control to hide when he moves his bowels, it is unlikely that there is a physical problem with development. Now when bowels are only bowels, small children go right along and actually would just as soon be trained. So let's assume that his bowels have come to assume some additional meanings to your son.

What could these meanings be? You are probably right that a very simple reduction of bowels to jealousy of his 8 month old sibling would be too simple. I assume that you are right because you are there and have already explored such a line with no convincing results.

However, this sibling came about through a process that small children find of enormous interest and given to all kinds of misunderstandings. The most common misunderstanding is equating mother's pregnant belly with the child's own distended tummy after eating. According to this logic, pregnancy is acquired by eating.

The other end of this misunderstanding is that babies come out where things usually come out, that is they are excreted from the anus. According to the logic of a small child, a distended belly, such as the one he has to contend with prior to evacuation, could end up in excreting a baby. If you add to this the separation from mother for delivery, you can add a wish to be like mother and have a baby like her, together with a fear that intestinal peristalsis may derail into labor and delivery. If there is jealousy of the sib, it is only part of this broader set of meanings.

Your son is asking for your help with two problems. The first involves the extra meanings that make his bowels unmanageable. The second and more important problem involves his feeling that his soul has become unknowable - to himself and to you. I think his hiding is a way of expressing the fact that he feels a mystery to himself and to you. He is asking for more than training, and he is asking for it from the only people who can provide what he needs, a sense that he can be understandable to you and to himself. He has brought you to the point of curiosity, and he is inviting you to search with him not for *the single reason* for his behavior, but rather for a variety of special meanings that he needs help in getting to know and to be known by you. Since his behavior votes confidence in your ability to help him, I would rather assume his vote is correct. So don't sell yourselves or him short because you don't yet have *the* answer. Become curious and explorative with him if you feel you can. Go for help to restore this curiosity if you feel you are becoming swamped with frustration. Don't settle for less than restoring to yourselves a firm inner feeling of security that you and your son can sort out and solve this mystery that he has temporarily become.