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THE PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE HAD AN IMAGINARY FRIEND BY THE AGE OF 7, ACCORDING TO A STUDY PUBLISHED IN *DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY*. RESEARCHERS CONCLUDED THAT SUCH PLAYMATES CAN HELP PARENTS GAUGE A CHILD'S FEELINGS, SINCE YOUNGSTERS ARE MORE APT TO SHARE THE "FRIEND'S" FEELINGS THAN THEIR OWN.



(training ground)

LIFE OF THE POTTY

The most prosaic of household objects gets a high-design makeover with the Boon Potty Bench. This iMac-esque throne comes with a built-in toilet-paper holder and a splash guard; close the lid and it's a kids' step stool for sink access or a tubside bench for Mom or Dad. \$30, target.com.

Known for its definitive reviews of everything from golf balls to SUVs, *Consumer Reports* is now taking on health care with the website **Consumer ReportsMedicalGuide.org**. The easily searchable site, based on information from the British Medical Journal Publishing Group and California's Therapeutic Research Center, includes overviews of common ailments and a comprehensive drug index. Its latest addition is a natural-medicines database, the first of its kind widely available to consumers: You'll find ratings and an interaction checker, which will alert you if that echinacea, for example, could interfere with your child's erythromycin prescription—or your birth control. Subscriptions are \$5 a month or \$19 a year. — KAM



As a regular contributor to *Cookie's* Second Opinion column, Santa Monica pediatrician and mother Cara Familian Natterson can be counted on for concise analysis and clever child-rearing strategies. With the same straightforward voice, her new book, ***Your Toddler: Head to Toe*** (Little, Brown & Co.), has a dual agenda: to provide a physical road map of kids ages 1 to 4 and to address the questions left unanswered by lightning-quick doctor's visits. Natterson's follow-up to 2004's *Your Newborn: Head to Toe* is organized by body part, enabling parents to zero in on their child's specific ailment, whether it's a common canker sore or the mysteriously named "nursemaid's elbow." — Dana Wood