The Power of Learning Through Imitation

Vocal imitation, facial movements, body movements, and actions on objects are examples of how children learn through imitation.

Try it at Home
• Do something silly and see how your baby responds! Make a face, stick out your tongue, or make sounds like an animal. Encourage your child to play along.
• You can also imitate your child. When they do something silly, imitate it back to them. How do they respond?
• Watch as your child imitates the world around them. Encourage imitation of behaviors you’d like them to repeat.

Science Says
• From the first day of life, children watch others and imitate them to learn about the physical world and their culture.
• As they grow older, they can remember actions for longer (deferred imitation), and use them to navigate new situations (generalization).
• Children’s brains are ready to imitate – studies find similar activity in infants’ brains whether they are doing an action or just watching it.

The Take-Home
Infants are born learning! Imitation is the most powerful learning tool for infants before they can talk, because imitation provides a social-emotional connection between infants and others.

Want to Learn More?
modules.ilabs.uw.edu/module/power-learning-imitation/
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