

Infancy Visit #22

- PIPE: Playing is Imitation and Turn Taking



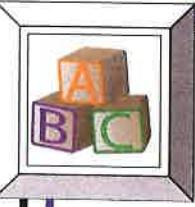
Topics for Next Visit:

10 Month Growth & Development

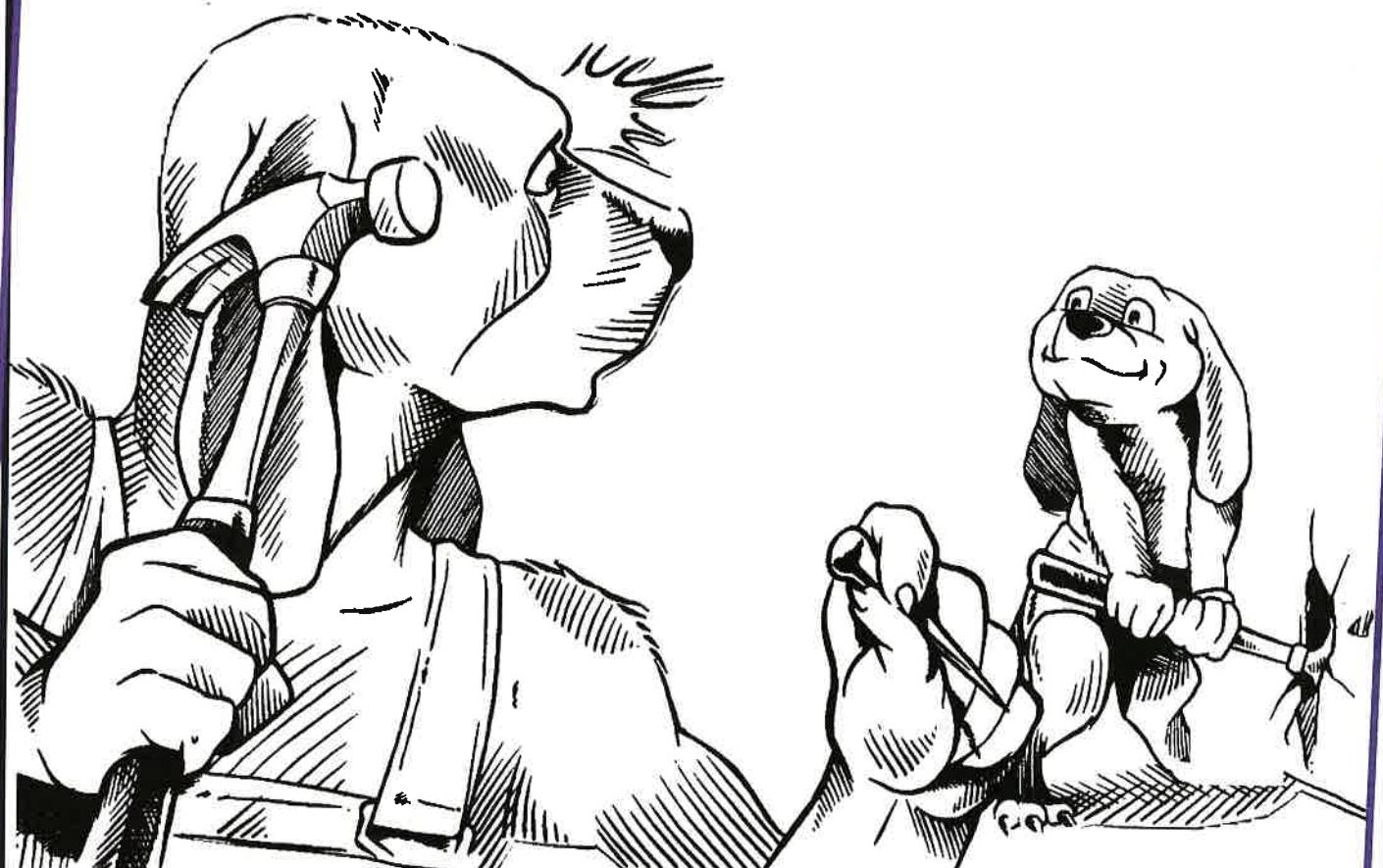
Getting to Know Myself

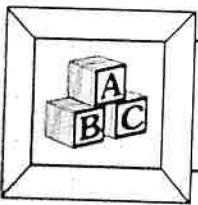
Health Role Models

Stop! Think. Go.



Playing Is Imitation and Turn Taking





Conceptual Overview

PLAY
TOPIC 8

1. Babies' first play is imitation. Mouthing, lip smacking, or tongue pointing — when imitated by parents — become a reciprocal game which brings smiles to a 3-month-old. When parents smack their lips and then wait, the infant will copy them. This becomes a turn-taking game which both enjoy. Imitation leads to turn taking; turn taking becomes a pattern that the baby learns and anticipates. Turn taking is the basis of communication.
2. Babies learn from watching other humans. Babies are copying actions, faces, and voices from images they see and hear. The urge to imitate is another inborn motivator, one of the "voices in our heads." By copying, babies learn from other humans how to survive, how to "fit in," and how to belong. Copying another's action is a powerful way to improve a skill or to learn the rules of the game.
3. Parents are usually the first model babies imitate. Babies copy their parents' faces, voice tones, and actions. What interests parents is what will interest their babies. How parents behave is what babies will echo. Parents will model both good and bad behaviors. But, their babies cannot tell which emotions and behaviors to copy. They will copy negative emotions, anger, fear, sadness, or boredom as well as the positive emotions of interest and fun. They will copy dangerous behaviors such as lighting matches, as well as positive behaviors. Parents' actions are always teaching. They are modeling for their babies what they value.

TV is often an early model for babies. The very young child is drawn to the flashing lights and then to the images. Many parents let their babies watch TV for long periods. These images stay with the baby. Toddlers' fighting, hitting, kicking behaviors are often modeled after TV images. In addition, toddlers' bad dreams often come from TV images.

4. Imitation leads to turn taking. When parents imitate their babies, the babies feel powerful. The sounds a 4-month-old makes are experiments, voice play. When a parent imitates the baby's sounds, the baby knows his or her voice has meaning. The baby is pleased and a turn-taking game develops. Babies strive to repeat these games and soon "aah-aah-aah" becomes "da-da-da" and words develop. These early turn-taking games also set the pattern of listen and answer, which is part of learning language.

As baby develops new skills, imitation changes. A 4-month-old will reach for Mom's necklace and enjoy trying it on. A 6-month-old will grab Dad's cup and take a sip. The 9-month-old will reach for Mom's pencil and try to write. The 1-year-old will cry to use the big towel, try Dad's shoes, sit at the table instead of in a highchair. Two- or 3-year-olds will try to copy older children or other

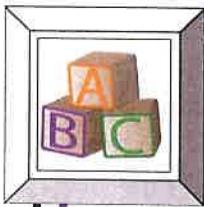
PLAY TOPIC 8

adults even if they have been scolded for doing so. They will often return when nobody is looking to copy something they have watched an older child or adult do. It is an important safety measure for parents to keep this in mind. A toddler may have been told not to use the scissors, the matches, or to ride his trike into the street, but if he sees an older person do this, the urge to imitate is almost irresistible.

5. **Pretend is an extension of imitation.** As babies gain memory, they will begin to practice what they have watched during the day. They can be heard babbling or laughing in their beds at night. When toddlers are alone, they will often relive what was seen or heard during the day, e.g., scolding or loving stuffed animals. One-year-olds with toy dishes will pour and eat just like their parents do.

Pretending is a way babies can relive situations and "try different endings." They can explore behaviors, acting out parts with positive and negative actions. It is a way to strengthen a learning path or master relationship skills. When the model is positive, babies strengthen good behavior; when the model is negative, babies copy and strengthen these kinds of actions.

Some 1-year-olds seem to have bad dreams. They begin night waking once again, or they whimper in their sleep — reliving a scolding or a frightening experience. Dreams are like pretending. They are an important way babies integrate meaning. Why were my parents cross? Was the wolf on TV really here? Parents are the regulators of these extreme memories. Babies can return to sleep peacefully when they know their parents are close and calm.



A+ Ideas for Imitation and Turn Taking

Imitation and turn taking start in the first three months of life.

2-4 months

- Mouth games — lip smacking, tongue pointing, kissing motions.
- Cooing sounds, vowel tones — O, O, O; AH, AH, AH; IE, IE, IE.

4-6 months

- Feet games: Gently push on your baby's feet in a rhythm — two to the left, two to the right. Do this several times and then wait. Your baby will begin to push back, wanting more. This becomes an expected pattern, a turn-taking game.
- Reaching and hand games: When your baby reaches out, kiss his or her hand. Then wait. Your baby will begin to reach again for another kiss. You can make this a turn-taking game.
- Sound games: When your baby makes a sound you like, imitate it! Ma, Ma, Da, Da, Ba, Ba. When he or she babbles, babble back. This is how language begins.
- Eye blinks: Wink at your baby slowly, several times. Or blink your eyes fast. Then stop and wait. Your baby will imitate. Then you repeat.
- Finger games: Give your baby your open hand to grab. Move your fingers open and shut as your baby holds on. Then stop. Your baby will try to open and shut your hand.

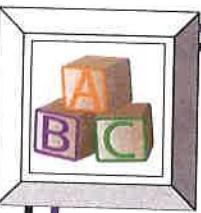
7-12 months

- Sticky Notes: Use small sticky note pad. Stick one paper on your baby. The baby will pull it off and stick it back on you. Great! Then try another.
- Pat-a-Cake and Bye-Bye ... of course!
- Blow on his or her feet. Your baby will ask for more! This is a good diapering game.
- Sound games: read a book about animals and make animal noises.
- Pouring games: pour and fill up containers with water or Cheerios®.

12 months ... and beyond

- Your baby will imitate everything you do.

Copying a model leads to following directions, focus, persistence, and feelings of mastery.



Steps to Imitation and Reciprocal Turn Taking

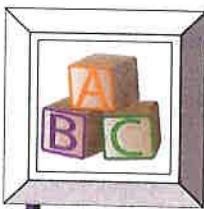
Imitation

- Start an action.
- Talk about what you are doing.
- Wait for your child to think about it.
- Praise your child's attempts to imitate.
- Repeat your action. Then wait.

Reciprocal Turn Taking

- Follow your child's lead.
- Keep it going.
- Take it further.





Developmental Stages of Imitation and Reciprocal Turn Taking

AT ABOUT
1-3 months

Babies imitate facial expressions and cooing sounds.

Waiting for a baby's response is important. It takes several demonstrations and a long waiting period for a baby to start imitating.

4-8 months

Babies practice many different sounds. They repeat those that parents respond to.
Begin turn taking with foot tapping, handing objects back and forth, and rhythm games. Remember to wait a long time for the baby's response.

6-9 months

Babies begin imitating sounds and actions of others. They will imitate several actions in a row such as bye-bye or pat-a-cake. Sometimes a baby imitates after the game is over (i.e., waves bye-bye after Gramma has already left).
Don't scold. Join into the delayed game.

10-15 months

Babies use toys to imitate actions seen around them: hug a dolly, drive the car, stir the pot, drink some tea.

When others are talking, expect a baby to babble too. Babies imitate by joining the conversation.

14-18 months

When they are left alone (often in their cribs) children begin to imitate what they have seen or heard. They attach to an object (blanket or stuffed animal) that represents a favorite person, and they will pretend and talk with this object.

Do not disturb this relationship.

16-24 months

When children are alone, they like to copy adults (e.g., cooking, gardening, playing ball, reading books, etc.). They begin to play pretend games with others.

Keep some safe adult objects in a kitchen drawer or dresser for the child to play with.

24-30 months

Children demonstrate more complex imitation. They can copy a model such as a block structure. They act out different parts, taking turns with self. Pretend becomes a prominent game when children are alone or with others.

Parents can initiate pretend with puppets or stuffed animals.

30-36 months

Children like costumes and imaginary friends. They set up pretend situations to relieve emotional tensions or practice rules and routines. They imitate adult activities (e.g., cutting, striking matches, pounding, cooking, walking alone).

Parents should be watchful.