

Introduction to Reciprocal Imitation Training



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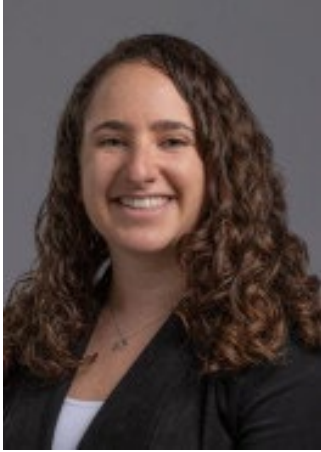
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Disclosure Statement

Alice Bravo, Catherine Dick, and Anna Hirshman have no relevant financial or non-financial relationships to disclose.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the importance of imitation in early childhood.
2. Identify the components of Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT).
3. Identify when and for whom RIT may be a beneficial intervention.
4. Describe how to use RIT with caregivers via telehealth.

Background



Why is imitation important?

Imitation is a pivotal skill!

- Early interactions with adults
- Early peer interactions
- Enables learning across diverse contexts
- Facilitates development of social, language, motor, play, and behavioral competencies

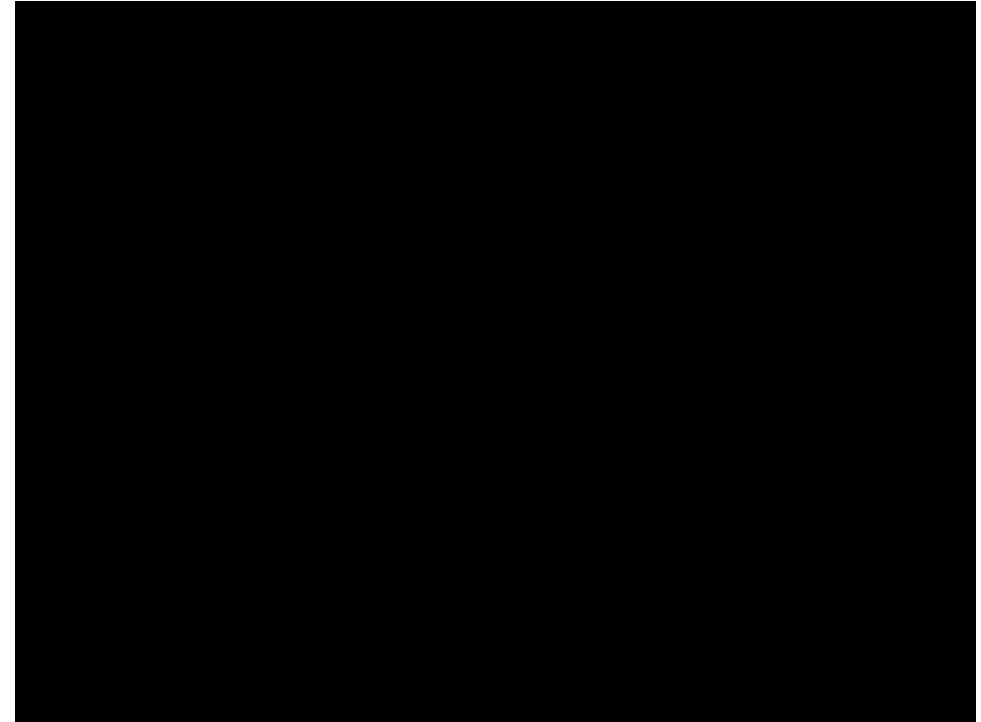
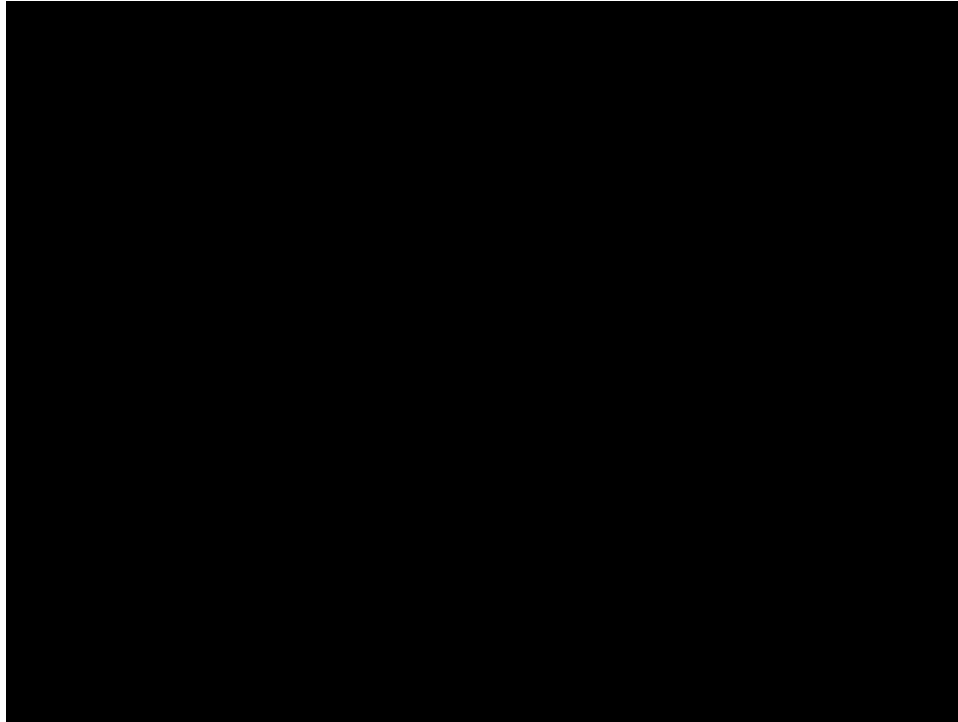


Two Functions of Imitation in Infancy

- Learning new skills (instrumental function)
 - Acquiring mastery of the environment
 - Learning how to use a spoon, tie shoes, what to do with toys, unlock a door
- Engaging with others (social function)
 - Communicating shared understanding with another person
 - I can do that too! Look at me! This is fun! We are alike!



Social Function of Imitation: Engagement



Being imitated increases young children's social attention, engagement, and prosocial behaviors!

Randall, J. [jayrandall22011]. (2011, February 14). Talking Twin Babies - PART 2 - OFFICIAL VIDEO [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JmA2CIUvUY

Pryor, D.J. [Comedian DJ Pryor]. (2019, June 6). Kingston's conversation with Me over next season [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AY35eXTKVLy>

What is Reciprocal Imitation Training?

- A skill-focused intervention for teaching spontaneous imitation skills to young children during play interactions
 - Young children with ASD often have significant impairments in imitating the actions of others
- A Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI)
 - Autism-specialized
 - Evidence-based
 - Integrate components from both behavioral and developmental science
 - Focus on improving core social communication skills, teaching in naturalistic settings, & using prompts and natural reinforcement

RIT Research Findings

- Research with toddlers and preschoolers with ASD has found:
 - Improvements in object and gesture imitation
- Gains in non-targeted skills:
 - Play
 - Joint attention
 - Language
 - Social interaction

Ingersoll, B. (2008, 2010, 2012); Ingersoll, B., & Lalonde, K. (2010); Ingersoll, B., Lewis, E., & Kroman, E. (2007); Ingersoll, B., & Schreibman, L. (2006)

RIT is Well-Suited for Community Settings

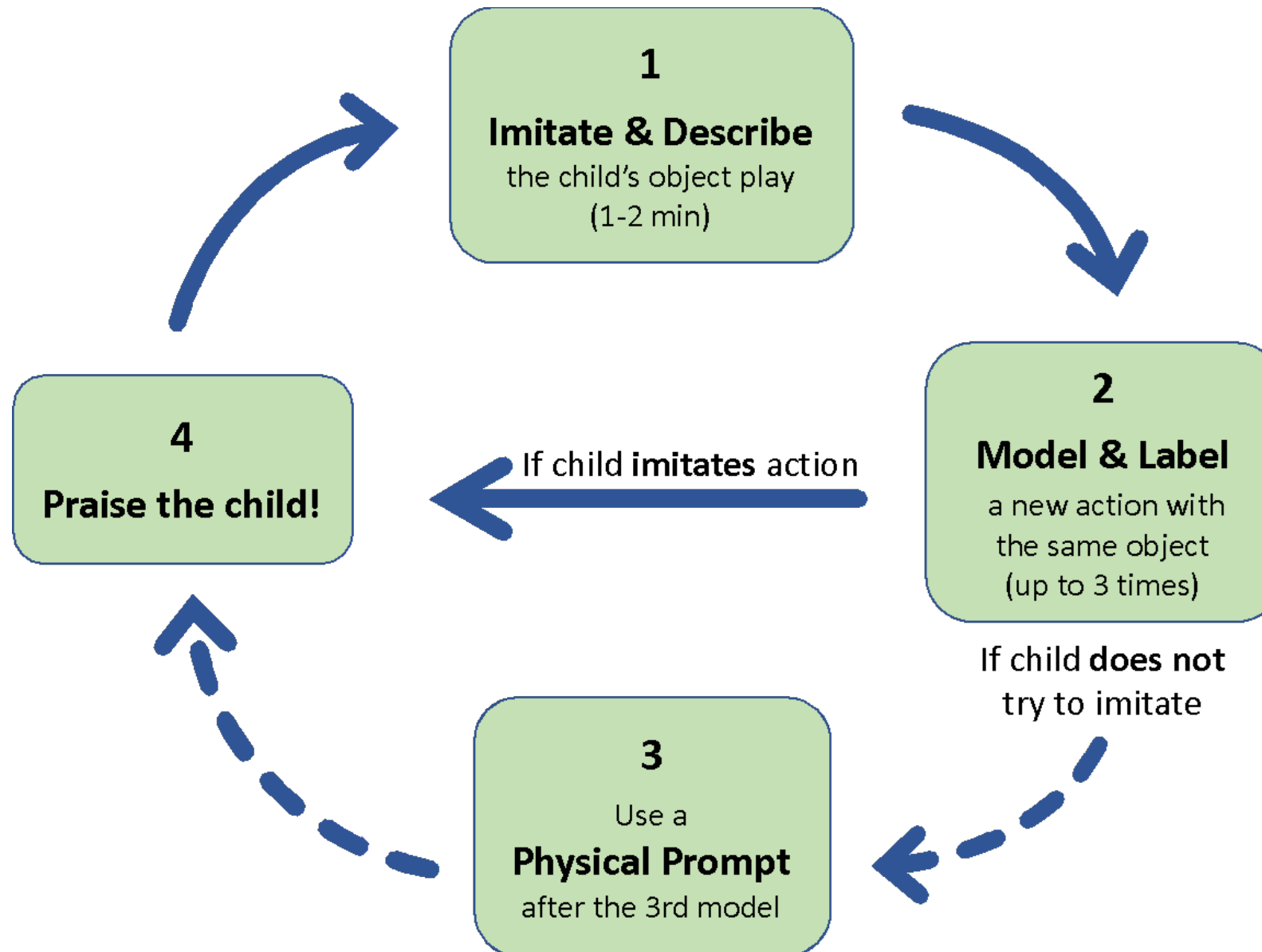
- It's easy to learn and implement
- It's inexpensive
- It's flexible
 - can be used in short sessions (low dosage)
 - can be used in different contexts
 - can be combined with other interventions
- It can be taught to (and used by) parents and siblings
- It's playful and fun

Walton, K. & Ingersoll, B. (2012); Stadnick, N., Stahmer, A., & Brookman-Frazee, L. (2015)

Overview of Reciprocal Imitation Training

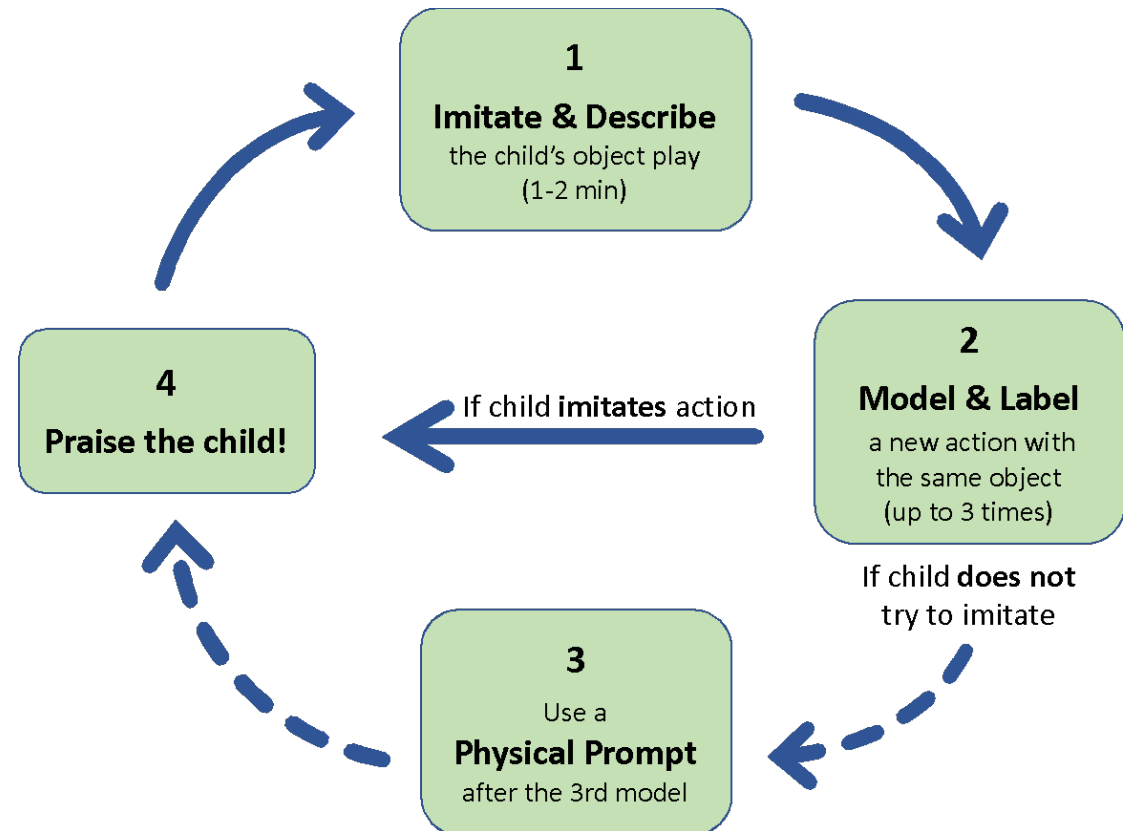


Overview of RIT Cycle



RIT Components

- Getting Ready
 - Structuring the environment
 - Selecting materials
 - Body positioning
- Imitating & Describing
- Modeling, Prompting, & Praising



1.

Getting Ready for RIT

Getting Ready: Structuring the Environment

- Create a defined space for play
- Use visual and physical boundaries
- Limit distractions



Getting Ready: Selecting Materials

- Use 5-7 pairs of objects at a time
- Rotate objects to provide a variety of options
- Select objects that are motivating, but not too absorbing
- Select objects that you can do more than one thing with



Getting Ready: Positioning

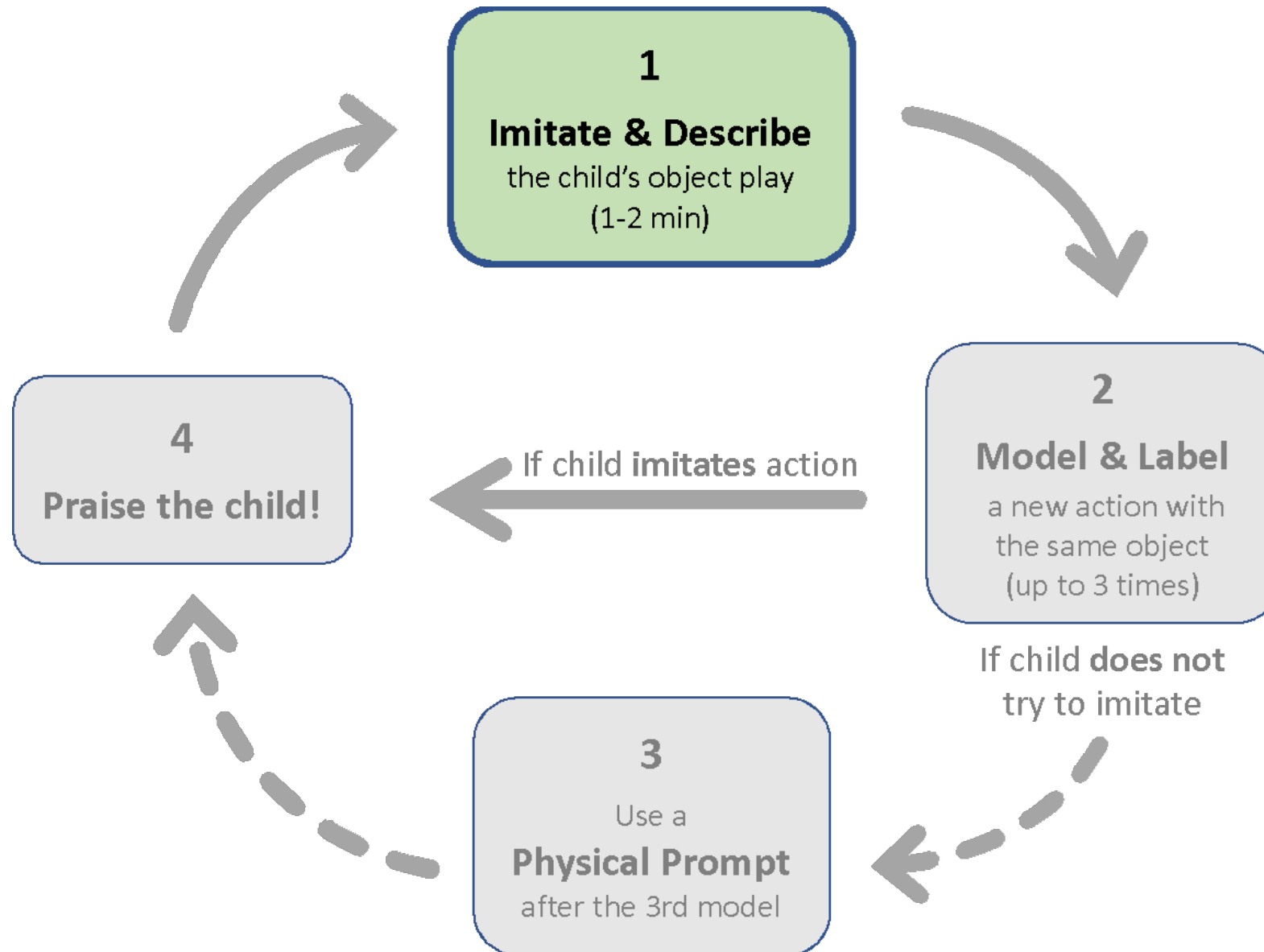
- Get on the child's level
- Sit face to face with the child
- Follow the child around the room



2.

Imitate & Describe the Child's Behaviors

RIT Cycle



Imitate & Describe: Imitating the Child

- Imitate child's actions with objects
 - *Actions do need to be functional*
- Imitate child's gestures & movements
 - *Movements do not need to be purposeful*
- Imitate child's sounds & language
- *Do not imitate dangerous or aggressive behaviors*



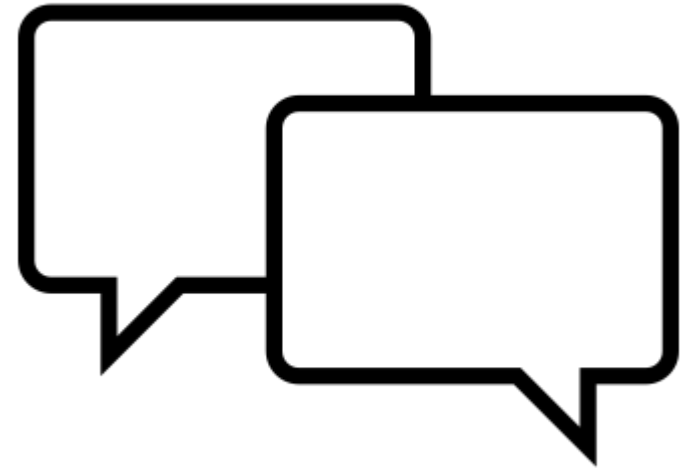
Imitate & Describe: Be Animated!

- Be excited about the activity
- Exaggerate your actions
- Use sound effects
- Wait with an expectant look



Imitate & Describe: Describing the Play

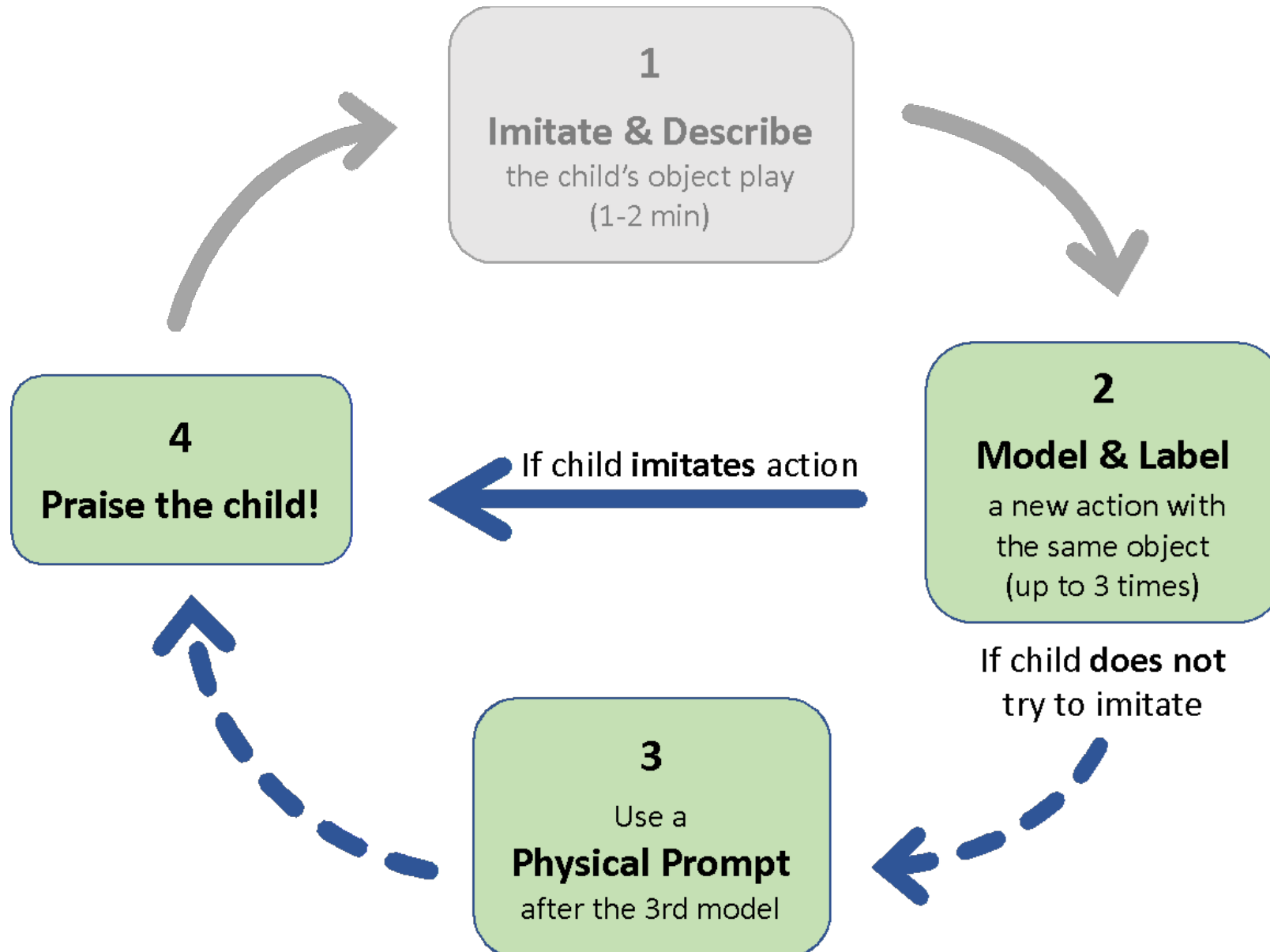
- Use simple language to describe child's actions
- Speak slowly
- Stress important words
- Be repetitive
- Expand child's language by imitating speech + more information
 - E.g., "Buh" → "Buh – Ball!"



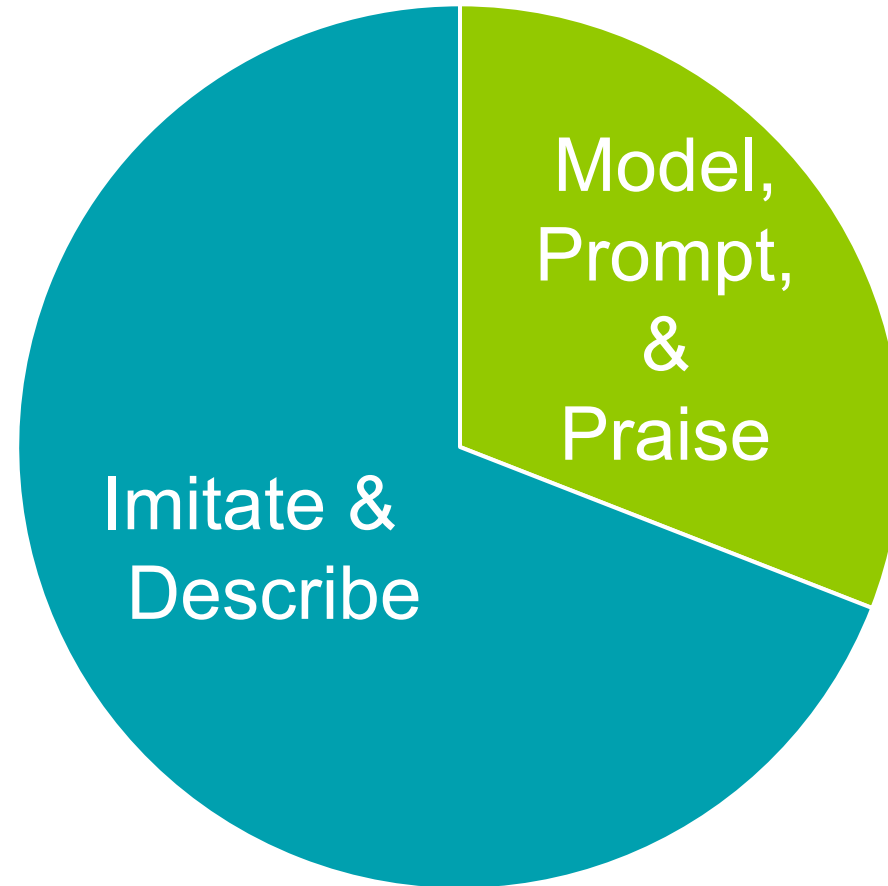
3.

Model, Prompt & Praise the Child

RIT Cycle



Pacing During RIT



Model, Prompt & Praise:

Model New Actions

- Child spontaneously imitates 1st model:
 - Provide praise
 - Immediately return to imitating
- Child does not spontaneously imitate 1st model:
 - Model same action with same verbal label a 2nd time
 - Wait 5-10 seconds
- Child does not spontaneously imitate your 2nd model:
 - Model same action with same verbal label a 3rd time
 - Wait 5-10 seconds

Model, Prompt & Praise:

Prompt the Child to Imitate

- Child does not spontaneously imitate your 3rd model:
 - Help child perform action via prompting
- Once you begin a modeling sequence, it should end with the child's imitation of the action (and your praise)!

Model, Prompt & Praise:

Praise the Child After Imitating

- Praise both spontaneous & prompted imitation
- Praise good attempts
- Praise can include:
 - Physical actions (e.g., tickles)
 - Verbal praise (e.g., “great job”)

Then...

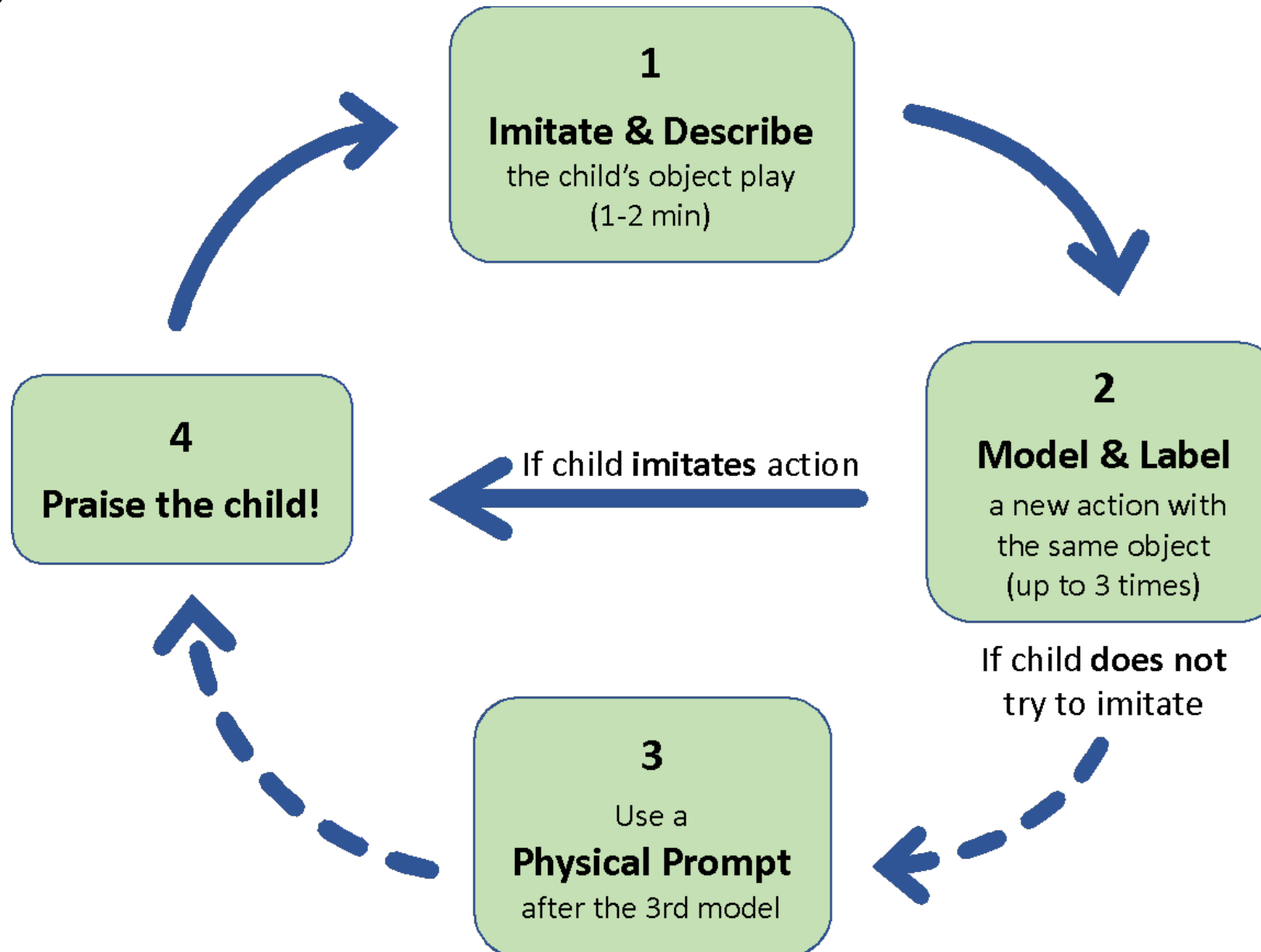
- Let child return to their play
- Continue imitating child



Tips for Modeling New Actions

- Model an action using the same (or similar) toy as the child is using
- Model an action the child is likely to imitate
- Make sure the child sees your model
- Remain face-to-face & on the child's level

RIT Cycle



RIT & Telehealth



RIT & Telehealth

- Status of current research
- Using everyday materials and routines
- Caregiver coaching
- Research opportunity

RIT & Telehealth: Current Research

- It works!
- Strong, growing research base
- Self-directed and provider-assisted
- Emotional, psychological and developmental outcomes for parents and children
 - Language and social skills
 - Self-efficacy and positive perceptions of child



RIT & Telehealth:

Using Everyday Materials & Routines

- Materials

- Adapt to existing resources
 - Technology
 - Space
 - Toys
 - People: parents, grandparents



- Routines

- Snacking
- Toothbrushing
- Bath time
- Take advantage of the mobility of cellphones!



RIT & Telehealth:

Caregiver Coaching

- Teaching all of these skills to the caregiver instead of doing it yourself!
- Connect imitation with child's IFSP goals and/or caregiver concerns
- Describe the importance of imitation for:
 - Helping children learn new skills
 - Helping children connect with other people
 - Developing other key social communication skills such as joint attention and communication

RIT & Telehealth:

Caregiver Coaching

- Highlight RIT's ease of implementation and effectiveness
- Choose one skill/technique to focus on per session
- Video record sessions to review with caregivers

RIT & Telehealth:

Benefits of Caregiver Coaching

- Caregiver plays a role in goal-setting and targets
- Increases direct intervention
 - Automatically includes opportunities for independent practice
- Utilizes natural environment
 - Physical space and people
 - Increases generalizability



RIT & Telehealth: Mirror Me Open Access

Family/Caregiver Access:



 **Thank you!**
