



## Activity 3: Suggested Answers

### Task Answers

- 1. Do you think that having a theory of mind is important? Why? List some of the situations in which you might have to use your theory of mind.**

Being able to understand what another person is thinking/feeling is extremely important in our lives! Humans are social animals and our brains are geared towards understanding others, constantly analysing what the other person might be thinking. The consequences of not having a good understanding of the theory of mind is shown by people who have autism. They are often unable to form strong emotional bonds with others, find it hard to make friends and do not understand humour which involves 'reading' other people's intentions. So, having a theory of mind might be used in these circumstances (and many more).

- 2. Why do you think that psychologists wanted to show that infants can imitate rationally (rather than just imitate whatever action was shown to them)?**

Imitating any movement is quite a common occurrence in the animal kingdom (look at this <https://9gag.com/gag/aA3MKpg?fbclid=IwAR1GtZWBVG9tXRnZOK3KumMHx5km6yOwM4WfT0LMQOMZsS0puHaiaCyFLqs>), but rational imitation requires at least a basic level of understanding that other people have intentions which they do not always act upon. So, showing that a baby can rationally imitate, but a dog cannot, tells us something about early social development (and gives rise to many cute videos!). Whilst animals don't seem to realise that actions can be accidental and/or sub-optimal, human babies seem to have some basic understanding of this concept.

- 3. Do you think there's enough evidence to conclude that infants have a theory of mind from a very early age?**

If not the full-blown adult version, at least a very solid foundation for a theory of mind. Look back at all the evidence – the non-verbal false-belief task, the intentional stance, and rational imitation, these bits of evidence imply that babies have at least some understanding of naïve psychology from a very early age. There's a lot of research out there and people take various positions – some oppose the idea that young babies have a theory of mind from an early age, others suggest the theory of mind is innate (i.e. that we are born with it). I think that there are too many findings out there to simply say young babies don't have a theory of mind, but the extent to which that ability is developed is a different question.