Can Kids Learn Determination From Adults?

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Children often imitate the behavior of the adults around them. Now, new findings published in the journal Science suggest that little ones can also learn perseverance from watching their parents strive hard to achieve a goal, reports HealthDay.

For the study, researchers assessed how 15-month-old toddlers divided into to two groups reacted to scenarios presented to them. The first set of children watched as an adult struggled for 30 seconds before accomplishing a task: removing a plastic frog from a container or taking a keychain off a carabiner, a metal loop that can be opened on one side. The other cluster of kids watched as an adult easily accomplished those same chores three times.

Scientists then gave the toddlers a musical toy with a do-nothing button that looked as though if pressed it would play music to see how many times the kids would press the button before they stopped trying.

Findings showed that youngsters who viewed adults persist at solving a problem were twice as likely to press the button compared with those who observed the adults who effortlessly performed their task. (Researchers said the unique differences between the musical toy and the items given to the adults allowed scientists to exclude the possibility that the tots merely copied the grown-ups' actions.)

"There's some pressure that parents need to make everything look effortless at times," said Julia Leonard, a doctoral candidate at the department of brain and cognitive sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the study's lead researcher. "I think this study shows that it's OK to let your kid see you sweat. Infants are watching your behavior intently and actually learning from what you do."

In light of the study's conclusions, experts advised parents to let their children watch them tackle demanding chores around the house as a way to teach the lesson that hard work can pay off.

Click here to read about how kids with working moms often fare better in kindergarten.

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