

Intensive Interaction



What is it?

Valuing People Now (Department of Health, 2009; page 38) describes Intensive Interaction *“as an approach to facilitating two-way communication with adults with severe or profound learning disabilities and/or autism, who are still at an early stage of communication development. It can be used to teach people fundamental communication or to provide them with a means to enjoy being expressive and feeling connected.”*

Intensive Interaction is a way of building and developing relationships with people who have limited communication abilities, who may be socially isolated and withdrawn. It is simple, intuitive and fun. It is led by the person themselves and the communication is on their terms.

Why use it?

Using Intensive Interaction ensures that we communicate with people using their preferred methods and style. In effect it says to the person: “You are fun to be with, as you are.” It therefore provides acceptance and promotes emotional engagement. It is a way of reaching people who may have spent years feeling isolated.

Where can I do it?

Anywhere, any time, any place! As long as it suits the person and they are open to an Intensive Interaction session then it is appropriate. It is important also that you give them your full, uninterrupted attention. It is best to have structured sessions that are planned ahead so progress can be more easily monitored and one’s practice evaluated.

How can I do it?

A lot of Intensive interaction comes naturally. You will probably find you have been doing aspects of it already with the people you support. Begin by simply having a go.....

You can start by mirroring body posture. Don’t worry about getting it exactly the same. Join in with the rhythm of their breathing. Join in with any vocalisations. Seek out eye-contact. Watch them closely. Look for any cues – positive ones (enjoyment, smiles, eye-contact etc.) and negative ones (discomfort, restlessness) and respond appropriately.

Try some of the following: games, imitation, turn-taking, pausing, watching, waiting, repetition, eye contact, physical touch, facial expression, expectancy, rhymes, use of names, limiting verbal overload, celebrating behaviours...

Remember!

- That the use of Intensive Interaction should be in the person's care plan and agreed by their circle of support / team of carers.
- Any questions or doubts – discuss with your line manager and/or call one of the people below.
- Ensure the sessions are planned, recorded and reviewed.

Attend a one-day training course. This will give you the theoretical background to this approach, guide you in how to start and introduce ways to record progress and development. There is no set way to do Intensive Interaction. It is a person-centred form of communication so there are as many ways to do it as there are people who enjoy it's use.

Who can help me get started?

Please call either:

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Further information

Website www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk

Books: *A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction* Nind and Hewett (2001).
Published by BILD.

DVDs "Creative Conversations: Communicating with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities" by Phoebe Caldwell, Pavilion Publishers.
"Intensive Interaction" Dave Hewett 2006

Online article: "[Creative Conversations: Making a training video on the use of Intensive Interaction to communicate with people with profound learning disability.](#)" *Living WELL*, Aug 2005 by [Caldwell, Phoebe](#)