

## Intensive Interaction

Intensive interaction is a communication approach aimed at developing interaction and communication abilities between children and adults with communication needs and the people in their environment. This approach is based on the interactions seen between caregivers and their babies - who respond to the actions and noises that babies make and interpret this as communication.

## What is Intensive Interaction?

The Intensive Interaction approach involves interacting with people with communication needs by imitating their behaviour, responding to them in a very highly responsive way, and mirroring what they do as a basis to communication and interaction. Therefore, this does not necessarily mean interaction will be verbal. Intensive Interaction focuses on teaching the 'fundamentals of communication' – the communication that precedes any speech or language development. The fundamentals of communication are:

1. Attention and concentration span;
2. Enjoying interaction or being with another person;
3. Turn taking in behaviour exchanges;
4. Sharing personal space;
5. Using and understanding touch or physical contact;
6. Using facial expressions;
7. Using vocalisations with meaning;
8. Understanding/using eye contact;
9. Using non verbal communication;
10. Regulating arousal levels.



The Intensive Interaction approach also includes a range of techniques, such as:

- Physical contact;
- Eye contact;
- Vocal echoing;
- Exchanging non verbal communication, including eye contact and facial expression;
- Behavioural mirroring;
- Turn taking;
- Running commentaries;
- Joint focus activity.

## Why use Intensive Interaction?

There are a range of benefits to using this approach, including (but not limited to):

- Increasing understanding and use of the fundamentals of non-verbal communication (e.g. attention and listening, eye-contact, turn-taking, and so on - see points outlined above for more);
- Increasing understanding and use of the fundamentals of verbal communication (e.g. meaningful vocalisations).

## Who can benefit from Intensive Interaction?

The Intensive Interaction approach can be used with a range of clients, including (but not limited to) children and adults with:

- Autism Spectrum Conditions;
- Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities;
- Severe Learning Disabilities;
- Multi Sensory impairment.

## Who can deliver Intensive Interaction?

A range of people can implement Intensive Interaction on a one to one and regular basis, including family members, carers, professionals and teachers. It is important that those implementing Intensive Interaction understand the principles underpinning the approach and have training by a Speech and Language Therapist on how to facilitate two way communication using the Intensive Interaction approach.

## Evidence for Intensive Interaction

Research into the effectiveness of Intensive Interaction has predominantly taken the form of small-scale case studies, where the general finding is that clients have demonstrated increased social responsiveness (Firth, 2006; Goldbart & Caton, 2010).

## References

Girth, G. (2006). Intensive Interaction: a research review. *Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 3, pp.53-62.

Goldbart, J. & Caton, S. (2010). Communication and people with the most complex needs: What works and why this is essential. Research Institute for Health and Social Change Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Available at: [http://www.netbuddy.org.uk/static/cms\\_page\\_media/52/Communication.pdf](http://www.netbuddy.org.uk/static/cms_page_media/52/Communication.pdf).