

Intensive Interaction

What is intensive interaction?

Intensive interaction is a way of teaching communication skills.

It can be carried out by anyone.

Intensive interaction works on developing essential interaction skills such as:

- Enjoying being with other people
- Building relationships
- Using and understanding eye contact and facial expressions
- Sharing attention with another person
- Using vocalisations
- Taking turns in communication

How does intensive interaction work?

The aim is to have enjoyable and relaxed interactions.

Through these interactions the student learns essential communication skills.

Importantly the student takes the lead and directs the interaction.

The adult responds to the student's lead and joins in with their behaviour.

Research has found this to be an effective way of engaging with people who are developing early interaction skills and helping to develop their communication skills.

Who is Intensive Interaction For?

Intensive interaction is designed to support people who are developing skills at the early stages of communication, cognitive and social development.

Intensive interaction can be used with a wide range of ages from very young children through to adults.

It can be carried out with people in a range of different settings including at nursery, school, at home or in hospital.

How do you do intensive interaction?

Set aside some time to be with the person.

Get to a physical level where the other person can see your face.

Give the young person your full attention.

Wait, be patient and watch carefully what the other person is doing.

Join in with the activities they have chosen and copy their movements, facial expressions, vocalisations or even breathing patterns.

You do not need to copy dangerous or undesirable behaviours.

Be very careful to let the other person lead you and let them set the pace. This will help the other person have a positive experience and show them that engaging with other people is enjoyable and rewarding.

Make the interaction fun and be relaxed.

It is ok if the sessions are repetitive or very short – this is part of the learning experience for the other person.

You do not need any special equipment when doing intensive interaction but it is ok if the other person incorporates toys or objects into the session.

Top Tips

Intensive interaction is not 'just copying' someone. When doing intensive interaction you are trying to engage with the person emotionally – we achieve this by showing the person you want to be with them through your facial expression and body language.

Some people do not like close physical contact and may be happier if there is a bit of distance between you.

If the person likes to use certain objects but doesn't like you touching them – try having your own matching set of objects so that you can still join in but using your own items and not theirs.

Look out for signals that the person has had enough and end the interaction at this point. We want it to be a positive experience.