**Intensive Interaction**

Intensive Interaction is both highly social and mainly responsive in nature, rather than being directive, or goal or target orientated. The approach focuses on using the ‘Fundamentals of Communication’ as a means of establishing and developing improved social communication exchanges.

The fundamentals of communication are those communication skills and understandings that, in developmental terms, normally precede symbolic speech development; although Intensive Interaction is now also being used with people who already have some level of speech and language comprehension.

These ‘Fundamentals of Communication’ are the social communication capabilities of:

• developing the ability to attend to another person

• using and understanding eye contact and facial expressions

• learning to share personal space

• using and understanding sociable physical contacts

• using vocalisations with meaning (for some, speech development)

• taking turns in exchanges of behaviour, and/or sequencing a social exchange with another person

• enjoying being with another person

The frequent repetition of successful Intensive Interaction activities provides the basis for the activities to gradually develop in content, duration and complexity. Within research there have been a number of common findings from the use of Intensive Interaction, these being:

• increased initiation and/or levels of social engagement

• increased toleration of, or responsiveness to, physical proximity

• increased levels of contingent smiling

• increased levels of eye contact or looking at another person’s face

• increased use of communicative vocalisations

• increased levels of socially significant physical contact

• improved levels of joint attention

Intensive Interaction ‘techniques’

Set out below are the most commonly recognised Intensive Interaction techniques. Although generally used in combination, these techniques are the most easily identified social communication practices used within Intensive Interaction engagements.

Sharing personal space

In Intensive Interaction we look to share proximity in a mutually acceptable way e.g. somehow lying, sitting, standing or even moving together, touching or apart.

Vocal echoing

Echoing some aspect of a person’s sounds (even any non-symbolic sounds) can be socially acknowledging and even develop into conversation-like exchanges e.g. echoing a person’s sounds or vocalisations, perhaps even echoing their breathing patterns.

Behavioural mirroring

Mirroring some aspect of a person’s posture, movements or behaviour can be socially acknowledging and can develop into dynamic behavioural exchanges e.g. mirroring some aspect of a person’s movements or physical activity; adopting someone’s posture.

Physical contact

Sensitive, sociable physical contact can sometimes promote mutual trust and sociability e.g. holding, squeezing or clapping hands together, hand-over-hand games, rhythmically stroking arms or shoulders, walking arm-in-arm.

Making or exchanging eye contact

Sensitive eye contact can be important for exchanging inclusive social signals e.g. looking at, and looking away games, making dramatic glances, looking in the mirror together.

Exchanging facial expressions

Using clear and sustained facial expressions with a person creates opportunities for these to be better understood and reciprocated e.g. clear smiling, winking; even pulling faces.

Joint focus activity

This is when both people focus their attention on the same object or activity, structuring their social engagement around this object or activity e.g. jointly exploring objects, books and pictures; doing a structured activity together; reading to or listening to music together.

Turn taking

Turn taking involves two people intentionally sequencing their actions in some way, for example:

• via sequenced vocal or physical exchanges

• clapping or passing things in turns

Burst-pause sequences

This is when an action is preceded by an extended pause, building an expectancy that something is about to happen e.g. hide-and-appear games; playing 'catch' with a ‘1-2-3’ countdown; using noise escalation games that gradually build then abruptly go quiet.

Using ‘running commentaries’

The timely use of a positive ‘running commentary’ on someone’s actions, or on the visible actions of others in a shared environment, can provide a socialising element to an engagement e.g. using limited language to describe a person’s activity e.g. “wow, great, yeah...”, “I can see you looking...”, “from me to you...” etc.

More information on Intensive Interaction can be found below;

The Intensive Interaction Institute offers services and products to help promote the theory and practice of Intensive Interaction.

[www.IntensiveInteraction.org](http://www.IntensiveInteraction.org)

Or, simply search Intensive Interaction on YouTube to find a range of informative videos to enhance your understanding of the basics of the approach.

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