



# Intensive Interaction Australia

COMMUNICATING WITH LEARNERS  
WHO EXPERIENCE  
PROFOUND INTELLECTUAL AND ASSOCIATED  
DISABILITIES  
USING  
INTENSIVE INTERACTION

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The AIMS of Intensive Interaction include...

To develop:-

Cognitive abilities including social cause and effect and predicting and exploring the behaviour of others

Fundamental communication abilities including eye contact, facial expression, turn taking and engagement

Sociability, including the desire and ability to be with others, taking part in and initiating social contact and understanding the ways in which social encounters can be enjoyable

[Nind & Hewett 1996; 1998; 2001]

## What is Intensive Interaction ?

Some descriptions

- A way of leaning to communicate and build meaningful ...relationships with people who don't use words or any other obvious forms of communication
- An approach to teaching the pre-speech fundamentals of communication to children and adults who have severe learning difficulties and/or autism and who are still at an early stage of communication development (Hewett,2006 )
- A practical approach to interacting with people with learning disabilities who do not find it easy communicating or being social
- An approach to developing the ability and desire to communicate and participate in social interactions
- Intensive Interaction is an approach that uses behaviour the learner will recognise as their own to develop a two way dialogue, through which the fundamental communication skills and enjoyment of social interaction can be learnt.  
Barber & Bowen [2007]
- the opportunity to practice the behaviours that sustain social encounters  
Hewett 2006
- ie; to explore the idea of 'agency'  
Barber 2006

## Who is Intensive Interaction for?

The approach was developed, and is primarily used with people who experience severe/profound intellectual impairments, or who might be described as having a high dependency on the interpretation of others to make themselves understood.

EG learners who demonstrate a

- high dependency on the interpretation of others to make themselves understood;
- level of awareness of their own intentions which is low, or difficult to determine
- level of comprehension which is low or difficult to determine.
- very limited or inconsistent ways of communicating which frequently lead to an ambiguity of meaning
- tendency to acquiesce to the suggestions of others and an inability to contradict [another's] interpretation

Grove, N., Bunning, K., Porter, J. & Olsson, C., [1999], See what I mean: interpreting the meaning of communication by people with severe and profound intellectual disabilities, Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability, 12, 190-203

Who are typically very withdrawn or who spend large amounts of time in ritualised, self oriented behaviours Nind.M & Hewett, D [2001] Handbook of Intensive Interaction BILD Publishing

### Who is Intensive Interaction for [continued]

Often People with PIMD & multi-sensory impairments

People who don't understand symbols, gestures or signs

People who are [communicatively] pre-intentional

People who don't communicate for social purposes [Barber 2007]

People with profound intellectual impairments and Autistic Spectrum Disorders

People who are "difficult to reach" – seem to be somewhere else, in their own space, on the periphery of activities – even familiar ones

People who don't show motivation to be with others

When the approach is used as a means of developing interaction skills in people who are typically very withdrawn or who spend large amounts of time in ritualised, self-oriented behaviours, it appears to contribute to a general shift from an inner to an outer, more social world.

Caldwell, P., [1998] 'Person to person' Pavilion Press Brighton UK

"People who have poorly developed social and communication abilities, usually accompanied by additional learning, sensory or behavioural difficulties". Nind & Hewett 96

**Intensive Interaction is not.... A behavioural intervention  
ie you don't use it to get rid of something [eg challenging behaviour]**

### **PIMD: What's the problem?**

Memory [or ability to recall] is profoundly compromised

High incidence of visual impairment

High incidence of hearing impairment

Mobility problems [limited learning]

Sensory integration problems

Acquired/learned helplessness

Confused

Unable to understand what is being asked of them

Different perspective of events

Orienting to internal sensory focus

**For someone with profound intellectual disabilities,  
the world looks very different from the way it does to you**

'Learners with Profound I.D. clearly differ from pre-intentional infants without disabilities....

They have had much longer than infants without LD to learn repeated patterns of unusual behaviours e.g. stereotypy or self-injury (Ephraim, 1997; Caldwell, 1996) as ways to reduce stress and shut out the unsafe external world ..... or to provide interest in an otherwise under-stimulating environment.'

Samuel, J [2003] An evaluation of Intensive Interaction in community living settings for adults with profound learning disabilities [PhD Thesis ; Oxford Doctoral Course in Clinical Psychology]

### **we tend to**

- Under estimate the extent of learner's hearing loss
- Over estimate the levels of non-verbal support we give
- Under estimate how much language we use with learners
- Over-estimate learner's comprehension skills
- Mismatch the complexity of their language and learner's levels of comprehension
- Have difficulty identifying learners' non-verbal signals/
- See positive changes in communication resulting from changes in learners rather than themselves [getting to know the learner better]

Purcell, M., Morris, I & McConkey, R [1999] Staff perceptions of the communicative competence of adult persons with intellectual disabilities. British Journal of Learning Disabilities 29, 12-16

Bradshaw [2001] Complexity of Staff communication and reported levels of understanding skills in adults with ID Journal of Intellectual Disability Research 45,233-243 Communicative interactions between experienced staff and people with severe/profound intellectual disabilities

## **The Fundamentals of Communication**

[D.Hewett 2008]

enjoying being with another person

developing the ability to attend to that person

concentration and attention span

learning to do sequences of activity with the other person

taking turns in exchanges of behaviour

sharing personal space

using and understanding eye contacts

using and understanding facial expressions

using and understanding physical contacts

using and understanding non-verbal communication

using vocalisations with meaning

layers of emotional understandings

learning to regulate and control arousal levels

### What does it accomplish?

demonstrated gains in communication, sociability and in the ability both to initiate and maintain social contact. Nind, M. (1996). *Efficacy of intensive interaction: developing sociability and communication in people with severe and complex learning difficulties using an approach based on caregiver-infant interaction*, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 11, 48-66.

...our experience and anecdotal evidence suggests that ...[I.I.]... leads to improved emotional well-being expressed through reduced self-injury, more alert posture and apparent interest in the environment. Sheehy & Nind, (2005) *Emotional well-being for all: mental health and people with profound and multiple*

### Intensive Interaction specific publications

Kellett, M. & Nind, M. (2003) *Implementing Intensive Interaction in Schools: Guidelines for Practitioners, Managers and Coordinators*. London: David Fulton.

Nind, M. & Hewett, D. (2001). *A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction*. Worcestershire: British Institute of Learning Disability.

Hewett, D. & Nind, M. (Eds.) (1998). *Interaction in Action: Reflections on the Use of Intensive Interaction*. London: David Fulton.

Nind, M. & Hewett, D. (1994; 2006) *Access to Communication: Developing the Basics of Communication with People with Severe Learning Difficulties Through Intensive Interaction*. London: David Fulton.

Caldwell, P. (2000) *You don't know what it's like: Finding ways of building relationships with people with severe learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder and other impairments*. Brighton UK: Pavilion.

Caldwell, P. (1998) *Person to Person: Establishing contact and communication with people with profound learning disabilities and those whose behaviour may be challenging*. Brighton UK: Pavilion.

### Additional references of interest

- Barber, M. & Goldbart, J. (1998) 'Accounting for learning and failure to learn in people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, in Lacey, P. & Ouvrey, C (eds.) People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties: A Collaborative Approach to Meeting Complex Needs. London: David Fulton
- Bunning, K. (1998) 'To engage or not to engage? Affecting the interactions of learning disabled adults', International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders 33 ( Supplemental) 387- 39
- Collis, M. & Lacey, P. (1996) Interactive Approaches to Teaching: A Framework for INSET. London : David Fulton.
- Irvine, C. (2001) "On the floor and playing..." Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists Bulletin Nov. 2001 9- 11.
- Nind, M. & Hewett, D. ( ) "When Age-appropriateness isn't Appropriate", in Coupe O'Kane, J. & Goldbart, J (Eds) Whose Choice: David Fulton LONDON
- Hewett, D. (Ed) (1998) Challenging Behaviour: Principles and Practices. London: David Fulton.
- Irvine, C - Somerset Partnership NHS and Social Care Trust (2002) Intensive Interaction Guidelines. Somerset Learning Disability Services.
- Ware, J (1996) Creating a Responsive Environment. London: David Fulton.

for full list go to <http://www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk/info/publications.php>

**Barber, M, "Using Intensive Interaction to add to the 'palette' of interactive possibilities in teacher pupil communication" European Journal of Special Needs Education Vol 4 Nov 2008 393-402**

Intensive Interaction is interactive play in which the learners' exploration and rehearsal of the complex communication skills that enable us to engage another person, are carefully supported.

These skills would include eg face to face moments, turn taking, using and reading non-verbal cues, mutual adjustment etc,

The approach recognizes that play is one of the most important learning activities there is in the lives of our students. It is a deceptively complex activity as it is the arena in which we learn the routines of being a communicator

Hewett 2008 Intensive Interaction : DVD

### **Key features of interactive process in Intensive Interaction**

- Rigorous observation to identify the learner's interests
- The creation of naturalistic open ended interactive games, so that [from the learners perspective] educator and learner are together with the purpose of enjoying each other
- Following a set of principles, the skilled partner envelopes the contribution of the learner, enabling them to maintain successful involvement in the interaction
- The skilled partner synchronises their interpersonal behaviours in order to become engaging
- 'Skilled partner' follows the learner's lead, handing over control of the activity when ever possible
- Using a palette of non-directive responses, the practitioner encourages the learner to experiment with potentially communicative acts so that the learner' can explore how to maintain and sustain interaction

Through play based on the learner's sounds and/or movements, it enables the learner to explore and experiment, so that over time s/he learns to recognise what it is s/he does, that makes us do the things s/he wants us to do

Bowen 2007

- Following: empowering.....enabling joint attention..... ....responding....
- The quality of a learner's attention is substantially greater when focussed on events of their own choosing, than to events chosen by someone else  
[eg Warren, S., & Yoder, P. (1998). Facilitating the transition from preintentional to intentional communication. In A. Wetherby, S. Warren & J.Reichle (Eds.), Transition in prelinguistic communication (pp. 65-84).Baltimore].

*The central principal of the approach is that you allow the person who is learning to more or less lead the activity, while you help to develop the content and flow of the activity, by responding to aspects of the person's behaviour. The skilled partner is responsive rather than directive – this makes the content of the interaction*

- *recognizable to the learner,*
- *engaging to the learner,*  
*at an agreeable speed or tempo for the learner*

## “We’re already doing most of this ”

### What is different?

Conventionally, intervention begins by assessing the learner to identify what skills are problematic, or which areas of the learner's performance require intervention  
*Using Intensive Interaction, observation is aimed at identifying strengths and preferences, so that these become the context for communicative encounters.*

### What is different?

Conventional styles of intervention and teaching are characterised by the teacher or therapist deciding on a predicted outcome or objective  
*Intensive Interaction is characterised as open ended – the outcome of encounter is not predicted or aimed towards*

### What is different?

Teacher therapist leads by providing the focus or interest, attracting learner's attention into joint focus [usually an object]  
*Using Intensive Interaction the practitioner looks for and responds to the learner's solitary activity or focus of interest by demonstratively joining in with it*

### What is different?

Stereotyped, self involved, or ritually organised behaviours are conventionally 'inappropriate', frequently the focus of intervention  
*Using Intensive Interaction these are probable 'doors' or indications of interest*

### What is different?

Teaching and therapy interventions frequently focus on teaching new skills or protocols  
*Using Intensive Interaction practitioners should attempt to engage the learner with 'intrusions' that are within their existing behavioural repertoire or known pleasure*

### What is different?

Conventionally, activities are limited to those considered to be age appropriate  
*Using Intensive Interaction practitioners communicate with the learner using 'intrusions' that interest them.*

Internet

**BILD Fact sheet 009 Intensive Interaction [www.bild.org.uk](http://www.bild.org.uk)**

**INTENSIVE INTERACTION NEWSLETTER: [graham.firth@leedsmh.nhs.uk](mailto:graham.firth@leedsmh.nhs.uk)**

**U.K. Intensive Interaction website [www.IntensiveInteraction.co.uk](http://www.IntensiveInteraction.co.uk)  
includes ; resources, dialogues, training details, links**

**my website..... [www.drmarkbarber.co.uk](http://www.drmarkbarber.co.uk)  
includes articles, paperwork, details of Australian courses**

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