Intensive Interaction



What is the Intensive Interaction Approach?

Intensive interaction is an approach for teaching communication skills to children and adults who have autism, severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties who are still at early stages of development.

The approach focuses on teaching the fundamentals of communication; the communication concepts and performances that precede speech development, though it may include many people who have some speech and language development.

These skills include:

- Enjoying being with another person
- Learn the ability to attend to another person
- Concentration and attention
- Learning to do sequences of activity with a person
- Sharing personal space
- Learning to regulate and control arousal levels
- Using and understanding other non-verbal communications
- Using and understanding physical contacts
- Vocalising and using vocalisations meaningfully (including speech)



It is an approach aimed at developing interaction and communication skills between children and adults with communication needs and those around them. It involves imitating the behaviours of the child, responding to them in a very highly responsive way, and mirroring what they do as a basis to communication and interaction. The aim is to develop enjoyable and relaxed interaction sequences, where the adult is available for the child to communicate.

Guidance and strategies for schools:

Who is it for?

- Children who are pre-verbal, with few or limited communicative behaviours.
- Children who are socially withdrawn, and do not readily interact with other people.

How?

- Let the child's play, movements and vocalisations guide you.
- Watch, wait and tune in to what the child is doing then respond to what they are doing using body posture, imitation and joining in.
- Make your voice, face and body language look exciting and interested in the child's actions.
- See what they're interested in and try to enter their world in terms of physical position and how they are thinking.
- Imitate and mirror the child's behaviour: copy their movement, their sounds, and facial expressions.

- Respond to what they do: watch them carefully and see what it is you do, that they respond to.
- Play with what they are playing with.
- Get down to the child's level and share their personal space.
- Give the child your undivided attention.
- Keep the sessions to a minimum.
- Relax and do not do too much or drive the activity or try to make something happen.
- Hold back, pause, leave time and space for the learner.
- When they stop you stop and when they start again, you start.

Where?

- In a safe space in a classroom, a quiet area in school or a sensory room.
- It can be done in the changing area during personal care, corridor, or playground; any activity can be done anywhere that is part of the child's school day.

How often and who with?

- Intensive interaction can be done frequently throughout the day and as much as possible in allocated times throughout the day as part of a timetable of other activities.
- Sessions can range from a few seconds to several minutes.
- Sessions are often delivered one to one by a known supporting adult.
- The adult will get down to the child's level and share their personal space.
- It can be done in a group with 2 or more members of staff alternating playfully with two or more children.
- All staff working in a positive, supportive, and encouraging manner.

The only rule is that the approach stops when the child shows they no longer want to interact.

Useful Resources



- Light up objects
- Squeezy/Stretchy objects
- Balls
- Spinners
- Tactile objects
- Mirrored paper or shiny objects
- Soft materials
- Feely boxes with pasta
- Painting and drawing materials
- Musical instruments
- Sponges/ loafers/brushes/ massagers

For more information about Intensive Interaction please ask the CAT in your school.

Also, take a look at: https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/ and the official YouTube channel Dave Hewett - YouTube