



EASEYS for ASN

Encourage And Support Early Years Skills for Additional Support Needs

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'Intensive Interaction'

A bit about...



Intensive Interaction strategies promote positive relationships by focusing on the foundations of early interactions; being attentive, showing interest, anticipating, sharing, turn taking and building trust/respect. The practical approach can be particularly useful with children with complex communication issues including Autism Spectrum Disorder. As the relationship develops, awareness, understanding and interaction is increased, leading to more meaningful communication.

'Intensive Interaction is a fun, practical approach to encourage the development of relationships with people, who are typically pre verbal, with little inclination to acknowledge, interact or be social with those around them. The approach helps the person with learning difficulties and their communication partner to relate better to each other and enjoy each other's company more.'

(see Nind & Hewett, 1994, Access to Communication)

'Intensive Interaction is based on research showing the style of interaction that is connected with effective learning for infants (in Western culture). The use of this style in Intensive Interaction with people with learning disabilities has been positively evaluated. Nind's (1996) study showed that the participants developed behaviours that helped to sustain interactions (looking, smiling, and vocalising), developed their ability to be engaged in interaction and learned to initiate social contact.'

From British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) Fact sheet

What can you do?

If you are supporting a child that you are having difficulty building up a relationship with, arrange short spells of 1:1 time to work with the child (5 to 10 minutes could be enough to start with)

- Remember to let the child take the lead. Begin by simply copying what the child is doing; if they are playing with a train pick up a similar one and copy them
- Initially resist the urge to talk, comment or make suggestions relating to what the child is doing. Immerse yourself in the moment and continue to copy
- Be respectful of their space and come in gently to start with, possibly from the side
- Copy the child's physical movements; if the child darts over to the other side of the room or jumps/flaps hands, you do the same
- Read the subtle signs of communication that may emerge e.g. eye contact, facial expression, etc. and return them
- If they vocalise, return the vocalisation in the same way
- If a vocalisation is used with intent, recognise it as a positive attempt to communicate and try to interpret its message e.g. it may be to communicate that you are in that person's space, therefore, continue but perhaps create slightly more distance between the two of you. It may be to ask for more or to show pleasure
- The session should be enjoyable and playful so it is really important to read and interpret any communication signals, particularly if they appear negative. You may have to keep the session very short to begin with if the child shows signs of stress
- To begin with you may only receive a flashing sideways glance when the child begins to realise that someone is doing the same as them, but to receive this is very positive. It shows that the child has noticed you and has given some attention to you
- Repetition is key to building on this approach. Try to find time to engage in this way regularly and within different activities. The breakthroughs will be very rewarding
- Once the child has accepted you into their space, the relationship should naturally develop into a more communicative one over time.
- There may be an increase in sharing, turn taking, laughing, eye contact, vocalising, commenting and suggesting

Hints and Tips!



- Relax, go with the flow; be 'in the moment' to help develop attuned interactions
- Remember to have fun and make activities motivating
- Once you have established a positive relationship and understand what may upset or motivate them, you can use this to support learning
- Be patient, progress may only show in very small subtle steps but each one is worthwhile
- Use and share the information you learn from your interaction with the child and apply it to other situations



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- The next step might be to extend the play by doing something different rather than copying but with the same toy. You may find your attempt is rejected so just return to copying. Try again another time
- Eventually you may feel that you can take a slight lead or initiate play every so often e.g. you might pick up a different toy and say 'Ball!' Offer it to the child or roll it to them. See how the child responds. They may reject your initiation or they may divert their attention to you.
- Try to develop a non-threatening balance between copying and initiating until the child feels comfortable
- Once this positive relationship of trust and respect has developed your child may be ready to receive more suggestions and requests e.g. sharing toys, activities and looking at pictures or books
- By engaging in this strategy you will begin to know the child very well and be able to advise others regarding your interpretation of subtle communications signs
- As part of being as reflective practitioner you could share your thoughts and observations with parents, a colleague or a Speech and Language Therapist.

Useful websites, apps and publications

Nind, M. & Hewett, D. (2001) A Practical Guide to Intensive Interaction. Kidderminster: BILD publications

<https://www.sense.org.uk/get-support/information-and-advice/communication/intensive-interaction/>

<https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/find-out-more/about-intensive-interaction/what-is-intensive-interaction/>

<https://network.autism.org.uk/knowledge/insight-opinion/top-5-tips-autism-professionals-using-intensive-interaction>

Taster videos on YouTube

<https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/resources/audio-visual-materials/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGWxZSvHNHE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gJruQPRx3Jk>

More ideas:

- Observe the child to find out:
 - How they react in different environments and situations
 - What interests/motivates them - what activity works best?
 - What upsets them (any sensory issues?)
- Observe another adult modelling the approach who is familiar with using it
- Watch sections of Intensive Interaction on the DVD by Dave Hewitt or short YouTube clips of others, such as Phoebe Caldwell, practising this strategy
- Enrol on a CPD course on Intensive Interaction, in your area
- Share how you are working to build a relationship supporting communication with parents and other professionals involved with the child.
- Ask a colleague to take some photos for the child's profile, to show changes over time

