



Intensive Interaction Newsletter

March/April 2004

Issue 5

News in Brief:

- There are some spare places on the 5 morning training course in *Intensive Interaction* being given by Marion Crabbe (Speech and Language Therapist) and Graham Firth (Intensive Interaction Project Leader) at St Mary's Hospital in Leeds. The course starts in early September (8/9/04 to 6/10/04), on Wednesday mornings, 9.30-12.30. Anyone wishing to put their names forward should contact Marion Crabbe on 0113 3055393 ASAP.

• Intensive Interaction : Quality Communication

A course designed for teachers and support staff is being held on 20th May 2004 at the Park Campus, University College. The course includes two workshops on Intensive Interaction and Multisensory story telling.

The course leaders are Melanie Nind and Kathryn Crosby, and further details are available from:

The Centre for Professional Development in Education, on

Tel: 01604 735500, or

Cpde@northampton.ac.uk

Defining an interactive environment

The following principles of an Interactive approach are adapted from the work of Penny Lacey and Mark Collis which was presented at the Intensive Interaction national conference in April of 2002, as part of Penny Lacey's talk entitled :

Intensive Interaction :
Where have we been,
Where are we now and
Where are we going?

Although originally presented in quite 'educational' terms, I have altered the language so that the principles apply across all the situations where a client might be given the opportunity to engage in *Intensive Interaction*, either socially or as part of an educational or therapeutic intervention.

The principles are:

- *Intensive Interaction* is contingent upon good interpersonal relationships.
- There is sensitivity within *Intensive Interaction* to feedback from the client.
- During *Intensive Interaction* the focus is on understanding rather than outcomes or skill acquisition.

- During *Intensive Interaction* the emphasis is on respect, negotiation and participation.
- The client's contribution to *Intensive Interaction* is valued and positively built upon.
- *Intensive Interaction* is a process-based approach, in which the quality of the process becomes the objective.
- Learning about communication and social interaction is not dependent on dividing that which is to be taught into its constituent parts.
- *Intensive Interaction* is based on intrinsic motivation, rather than on extrinsic reward (the client doesn't have to be bribed).
- It is not the client who fails to interact, but a failure of an inadequately interactive environment.

Graham Firth



Stephen and graham interacting through physical contact at the Inclusive Learning Service

Quote of the month!
'The difference between participation and compliance is at the very core of the Intensive Interaction approach...'
Adrian Kennedy (2001)

Intensive Interaction - A Personal Account

Name: Christine Smith

Position: Class Teacher; Oakfield Park in Wakefield



I first came across The *Intensive Interaction* approach in 1992 whilst working with a group of 18-25 year olds at Park Lane College, all of whom had very severe learning difficulties and very challenging behaviours.

Although in those days they were not given the additional label of Autism I believe that nowadays they would be. I'd tried a range of behavioural, sensory, life skills, STAR approaches but nothing was really working. It was whilst studying for my Advanced Diploma, I came across the chapter "Returning to the

basics" by Dave Hewett and Melanie Nind in the Open University book "Curricula for Diversity in Education".

It was a revelation in that it radically changed the ethos of my approach as a teacher, and my role in the learning process. I began to rethink everything, starting by negotiating control with the learner, where they assumed a more active role and myself a more responsive one, and by making the professional judgement of prioritising the learning area of very early social skills, and skills needed to make human contact, as being overwhelmingly important for those with such extreme difficulties.

I contacted Dave Hewett who impressed me further by his genuine interest and enthusiasm in this approach. In 1995 Dave presented 2 training days within the college for all staff on the *Step by Step* and *Next Step* courses and other outside agencies with the fantastic support of Dave Swindell, then chair of SKILL.

We went on as a team to achieve a lot of individual successes and worked with a new enthusiasm and interest. In 1998 I wrote a case study of my work using *Intensive Interaction* in the college in the book "Interaction in Action" edited by Dave Hewett and Melanie Nind (David Fulton publishers: this book is now listed in the official educational autism guidelines for schools) .

At this time when we were all working as a close team with some real success it was very unfortunate that the course funders in Leeds City Council Community Benefits and Rights decided to withdraw the funding from the college situation and reallocate it under the management of the very different Waldon based approach.

At this point I left and worked for 18 months at Field head Hospital School with children with profound learning, physical, medical disabilities. Again the same priorities were apparent, of developing communication at a very early level, to develop a human quality of life.

The school was reorganised and I was reallocated to Oakfield Park Secondary Special School. Initially I worked with a class of teenagers with severe learning difficulties/Autism and this year with group with PMLD/Medical difficulties.

Although I have completed the TEACH autism training, I had most success from using an *Intensive Interaction*/Interactive drama/Circle work, in that the group began to notice each other more, to make forms of contact, to appear happier and more comfortable within class. Parents said their children were happier and more communicative at home.

I am now using *Intensive Interaction* sessions and principles with my new group. I have days when I go home happy after a hand squeeze is returned, a "stilling" or facial concentration shows recognition of a sound being echoed back. Recognition of being involved in human communication, that thing which surely brings us all the most happiness. I sometimes position my pupils on mats close to each other so they are aware of each other and can hear each other's sounds and breathing. In National Curriculum terms *Intensive Interaction* can be fitted in to Communication, Language, Citizenship, PSHE, Thinking Skills. Much of *Intensive Interaction* is noted in Equals and the new QCA guidelines. Almost all my IEP's are on stages of *Intensive Interaction*.

I have been appointed as *Intensive Interaction* coordinator. My managers are keen for *Intensive Interaction* principles to take a higher profile within the school and I am currently writing an *Intensive Interaction* policy.

Christine's chapter in the book "Interaction in Action" (eds Nind & Hewett) is called:

'Jamie's Story: Intensive Interaction in a college of Further Education'

The book is published by David Fulton publishers: ISBN 1-85346-461-9.



Elgie, S. & Maguire, N. '*Intensive Interaction with A Woman With Multiple And Profound Disabilities; A Case Study*', in *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, 2001, Volume 6, Issue 3.

This study reports on the use of *Intensive Interaction* with a remote and withdrawn adult with severe learning disabilities and visual impairments, who engaged in serious self-injurious behaviour. The participant was a 39-year-old woman with profound learning disabilities who was blind and was socially isolated; she had literally cut herself off from the outside world. She had no verbal skills and used very limited non-verbal communication.

The woman had engaged in serious self-injurious behaviour since childhood to the extent that her face and eyes had become extremely disfigured. To protect her from damaging her face and eyes further she wore plastic arm splints for 25 minutes in every hour. Prior to the intervention, baseline measures of her self-injurious behaviours were collated for six months prior to the start of *Intensive Interaction*. When the woman's splints were removed she immediately started to be self-injurious, by eye gouging or pressing her fingers under her collarbone. During the intervention the woman was seen three times a week in her room for 16 weeks by both therapists (named as the authors above). The sessions of *Intensive Interaction* contained physical contact, vocal interaction and vocal imitation.

Results:

There was an obvious increase in the amount of hand contact initiated after the *Intensive Interaction* began. No spontaneous reaching out by the woman had been observed in the six months before the intervention, despite the fact that she had been receiving the same amount of quality individual time with a therapist (when the first author was unsuccessfully attempting to engage her in a behavioural program involving reward and tactile stimulation).

This new behaviour was seen to be an exciting and striking response to *Intensive Interaction*. The results also showed that the woman made more vocalisations during the *Intensive Interaction* sessions than when she was alone. According to the authors, the decrease in vocalisation when she was alone suggests that the woman's noises were an attempt to communicate with and respond to the therapists' interactions in a dialogue type fashion. However, there was no appreciable change in the presentation of the woman's self-injurious behaviour over time; this was explained as to be expected at this early stage of intervention, given that she had used self-injurious forms of stimulation for most of her life.



John Paul and Julie interacting through joint focus and action.

Contact us!

Have you got any pieces of news or information that you think might be of interest to other people working in this area? It might be your own story of using *Intensive Interaction*, perhaps a book review, or some information on a training event. Anything will be very gladly received.

If you have, then just send it in to the address below.

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