Leeds Community Healthcare

Intensive Interaction

Information for Carers

Intensive Interaction is a way of interacting and spending time with people with learning disabilities and/or autism.

It is based on how communication develops, in ways that are enjoyable for all. Nind & Hewett (2001)

Intensive Interaction has been used positively over the last 15 years with children and adults.

How can it benefit your child?

- Intensive Interaction sees the child as an individual - important for their self-esteem.
- It can help to strengthen the relationship that you have with your child.
- It may help your child feel more relaxed and secure. This may have a positive effect on their behaviour.
- It may help children who feel isolated, anxious and who may head bang or rock to blank out confusion. Intensive Interaction can help them to develop early communication skills.

"Through Intensive Interaction we can shift our vision of our sons and daughters from impaired versions of us, to fulfilled versions of themselves"

Comment from a parent, Intensive Interaction Newsletter Issue 22 (2008)

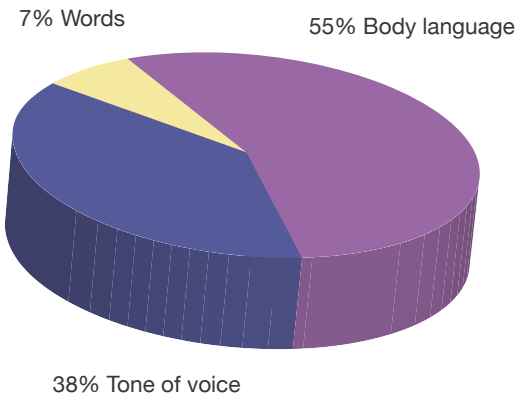
What is Intensive Interaction?

A child gradually learns to communicate as they grow, develop and socialise. Intensive Interaction builds on the existing communication skills your child already has.

It focuses on the interactions that happen naturally between parents and children throughout the course of any day. These are the lighthearted, fun, face-to-face exchanges of eye contact, facial expression, touch or sounds.

We need to communicate with children on their own level, so they can understand and relate to us. If we do this, they may be more responsive and sociable in a verbal or non verbal way.

It is important to remember that the majority of our communication is unspoken (Mehrebian 1972).



"Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say"

(Caldwell 2007)

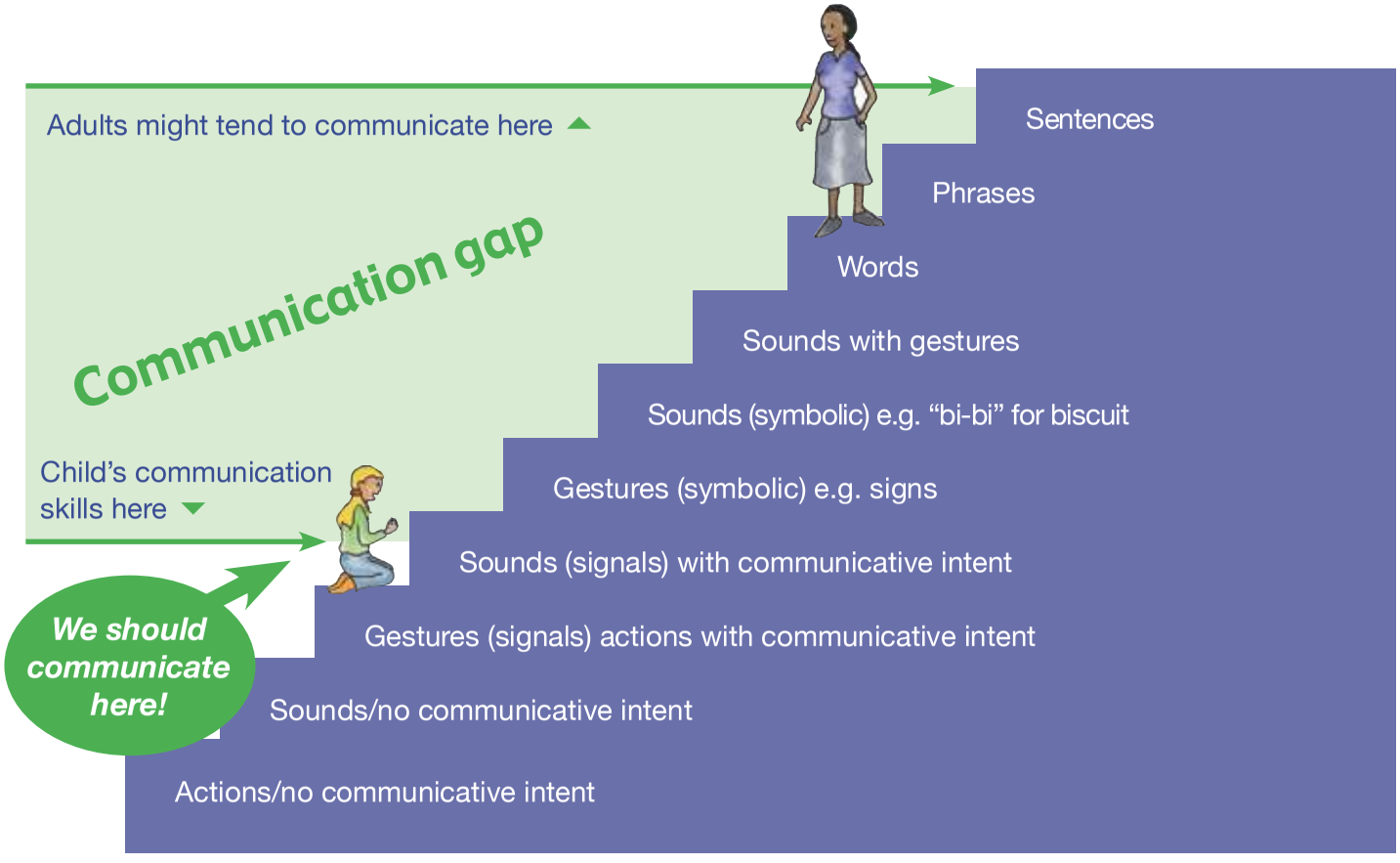
Getting started

Seek out opportunities throughout your daily routine to talk and interact with your child. You can do this while bathing, cooking, going to school or sitting down at the tea table.

Let your child take the lead. Try to respond to some of the things they are doing in terms of sounds, facial expression or body movements in a fun way. You may choose to echo their sounds or mirror their posture. You could join in their game of finger tapping, spinning on the spot or 'don't step on the cracks'.

Look for any reaction. Their face may change. They may stop what they are doing to watch or listen. This will tell you if they are interested and enjoying what you are doing.

Communicating with your child on their level



Dr J. McDonald's 'Steps to Communication'

Your response may encourage further communication. Your child may want you to react differently, or want you to repeat what you are doing many times.

If you feel they are not enjoying what you are doing, stop and alter your approach. You could try something different, or take a break and approach them again later.

As you start to notice changes in the way your child communicates, however small, vary your response. You could react in a small way, such as varying the rhythm of your tapping in response to their tapping. Your child may enjoy an overly dramatic reaction, or a playful tease from you.

Finally

Intensive Interaction aims to build on your child's current communication skills, during the course of any day. Remember you are the best form of stimulation that your child can have in terms of your ability to be sensitive, responsive and adaptable to your child's needs.

- **Do what comes naturally**
- **You are the expert**
- **Relax and embrace the possibilities that Intensive Interaction can bring.**

You can contact your child's Speech and Language Therapist, teacher or key worker if you would like someone to support you with Intensive Interaction.

Contacts

Learning Disability Service within CAMHS
c/o Little Woodhouse Hall
18 Clarendon Road
Leeds
LS2 9NT

Tel: 0113 305 7200

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Compliments, comments and complaints

We welcome feedback. If you have any comments, suggestions or concerns, please speak to a member of the Learning Disability Service within CAMHS. If you would prefer to talk to someone outside the team about a concern or complaint, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can help on freephone: 0800 0525 270, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30am.

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio or in other languages.

This information was produced by:
Julie Birmingham - Specialist Children's Learning Disability Nurse

For further information visit:

www.intensiveinteraction.co.uk
www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk

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