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A few months ago, Phoebe Caldwell asked Us in a Bus what were our “Top 5 Tips” for Intensive Interaction? This generated a **LOT** of debate within the team. We use intensive interaction every day in the services we provide – encouraging people to develop their fundamental communication abilities and their basic sociability, playfully exploring activities together in a way that feels familiar and natural. But as we all know, a lot of thought, observation and reflection supports that naturalness. So, what as a team, did we think were the five aspects of our practice that helped most? After some whittling down we came up with the following:

1. **Hold the space . . . .** don't rush to fill gaps. The spaces are where the important and exciting stuff happens for your partner (assimilation, recognition, confirmation, sense of control), so stay observant and *wait*
2. **Embrace repetition . . . .** your partner will let you know when they are ready to move on to something new. This process needs to stay at your partner's pace, not yours, so repeat your confirmation of their behaviour in clear and recognizable ways and watch for *their* signals of readiness for change (rather than yours!)
3. **Stop when you're told to . . . .** keep all your senses open to the "STOP" signs. Your partner needs to be in control for Intensive Interaction to be useful, and they need to be in the mood for it. But don't mistake "Stop" as their final answer; be prepared to offer the opportunity again, carefully considering mood, time, space etc ...
4. **Am I on purpose . . . .** keep checking the purpose behind your actions. You are exploring mutual engagement; if you find that you have slipped into entertainment or that you are wanting to get a particular 'result', then stop, get back on-purpose and then tune into your partner again
5. **Be more than a mirror . . . .** keep thinking "are there other ways to celebrate aspects of my partner's inner language? How else can I offer confirmation?" You can introduce the cognitive challenge of copying a rocking rhythm through touch or sound. Maybe you can play with the size or sound levels of your responses. The only limit is your imagination, flexibility and your willingness to simply give it a go.

There are so many more that could have made it into the Top 5! I'll cheat and one more in the form of a quote: Nelson Mandela once said “When you speak to a man in a language he understands, this goes to his head. When you speak to him in *his* language, that goes to his heart”.

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*Janet Gurney, Director of Training*

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