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## “Some things to bear in mind when using Intensive Interaction”

1. **OBSERVATION.** We can't start to reflect someone's language to them before we know what it is! Even if our interaction partner is someone we've known for a while, it's still worth creating the time to simply watch and listen to what they are doing. We often notice the big and dramatic behaviour at the expense of the more subtle actions that might mean more to that person. It's also worth remembering that people's language changes over time – the conversation you've established together based on what you observed a while ago, may become out of date. We need to keep watching and listening.
2. **MOOD.** We all know that we're not always in the mood to have a conversation. Noticing this in our interactive partners is another way of helping them know that we've listened to and respected them. Mood is also something we can use in our mirroring conversations. When a colleague storms into the office fuming about the parking ticket he's just got, we naturally reflect some of his outrage in our response to him – it's a way of expressing our empathy. When we find a service user banging her head against the wall we often feel pressure to stop her immediately, but we might be missing an opportunity to let her know that we've really noticed her distress. Briefly but clearly slapping the wall to her rhythm can be a way of expressing our empathy in a way that could form a powerful connection.
3. **TIME.** Our working environments can get pretty busy and it's easy to forget how long someone might need to recognise our response to them. If we don't allow time for their recognition to reach us, we've missed the chance to build on the effort they've just made. Sometimes, simply 'doing nothing', waiting for their response, is the most important developmental work you will ever do with your partner. For other people of course, we have to remind ourselves that we must build in breaks – don't try too much too soon.
4. **STATE OF MIND.** Intensive Interaction is about connecting and building a relationship – not about behaviour control! It's about being alongside that person, not directing them. If you find yourself trying to control the interaction instead of working out how you can take your lead from your partner, the simplest thing to do is to stop, apologise, then find the right moment to start again in a different state of mind.
5. **AGENDAS.** Sometimes we need to challenge agendas.... For example, we might be with our interactive partner in an art group and the agenda may be to paint a picture, not celebrate the rhythm he is making with his paint brush on the arm of his wheelchair. But that tapping might provide the bridge to connection and the picture might not mean as much to him without establishing that connection. It's the process, not the product that's important.

This is a process of observing, responding, waiting and developing a conversation that can be picked up and repeated and built on over time. I hope you carry on enjoying the process.

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