



Intensive Interaction Newsletter

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Training

For those people looking for *Intensive Interaction* training in Leeds, contact **Marion Crabbe** (0113 3055393) or **Graham Firth** (0113 3055160) to check the 2006 dates and book a place.

Dave Hewett Training:

- 18th Nov '05 - The Beeches Conference Centre, Birmingham
- 17th Mar '06 - Hunton Park Conference Centre, Watford
- 7th Apr '06 - The Beeches Conference Centre, Birmingham
- 12th May '06 - Durham University. For further details visit intensiveinteraction.co.uk

Other Training

Concept Training now provide an in-house training course called '**Next Steps in Intensive Interaction**'. Facilitated by Laura Blake, this course is for people who have used *Intensive Interaction* and want to develop their knowledge further. They also continue to provide *Intensive Interaction* training days facilitated by Phoebe Caldwell and Janet Gurney. **Concept Training** can be contacted on 01524 832828 or at: www.concept-training.co.uk

For the dates of **BILD's** training with Dr Penny Lacey on working with clients with PMLD call 01562 723025 or visit: www.bild.org.uk

Intensive Interaction: Multidisciplinary Conference Supporting Sustainable Innovation in Practice Tuesday 13th June 2006 The Queens Hotel, Leeds

Following the highly successful event of June 2005, this one-day conference aims to explore issues of particular concern to practitioners of *Intensive Interaction*

The conference will provide opportunities for practitioners to reflect on their practice in the light of presentations given by some of the most experienced and respected *Intensive Interaction* practitioners. The conference will also provide genuine opportunities for open discussions on how *Intensive Interaction* can best be developed and supported into the future.

The speakers on the day are the most renowned experts in the field of *Intensive Interaction* practice and theory, and include:

Dr Melanie Nind: Academic, author and researcher in *Intensive Interaction*, School of Education, Southampton University

Dr Judith Samuel: Consultant clinical psychologist, Oxfordshire Learning Disability NHS Trust

Dr Mark Barber: Consultant in profound intellectual disability and severe communication impairment, Melbourne, Australia.

Phoebe Caldwell: Author, trainer and expert practitioner.

Cath Irvine: Speech & language therapist, Somerset Total Communications.

Dr Penny Lacey: Senior lecturer, School of Education, Birmingham University.

Dr Peter Coia: Principal clinical psychologist, Wakefield and Pontefract Learning Disability Psychology Service.

Dr Dave Hewett PhD: Consultant, author and trainer in *Intensive Interaction*.

The subjects addressed by the speakers will cover a variety of issues associated with *Intensive Interaction*, including research, individual case work, therapeutic aspects of *Intensive Interaction*, planning and record keeping to high-light attainment. There will also be time



The Queen's Hotel, Leeds

given for delegates to question the speakers on aspects of the approach that are of particular interest to them in their own particular professional context or setting. By attending this conference delegates will be able to:

- Access detailed *Intensive Interaction* knowledge related to specific professional disciplines.
- Access the latest multidisciplinary information and knowledge on *Intensive Interaction*.
- Engage in inter-delegate sharing of *Intensive Interaction* knowledge and experiences, both across and within specific professional disciplines.
- Develop more effective frameworks for sustained *Intensive Interaction* adoption within specific professional settings.

The conference is open to anyone with an interest in the *Intensive Interaction* approach, including: care staff, speech and language therapists, psychologists, teachers and F. E. tutors, day centre staff, service or unit managers, advocates, and anyone else who has an interest in promoting the use of *Intensive Interaction* for people with learning disabilities or autism.

For details of how to book a place contact Graham Firth on 0113 3055160.

Finding Harriet

By Olga Craig

25/09/2005 (Filed online at <http://arts.telegraph.co.uk>.)

Margaret Lambton watched in astonishment as her five-year-old daughter, Harriet, ran down the stairs of their Cambridgeshire home, hand in hand with Geraldine, the little girl's care worker. "When they reached the bottom, Harriet turned around, her face beaming, flung her arms around



'She had been such an unhappy, troubled little girl': Harriet responded well to Intensive Interaction therapy

Geraldine's neck and gave her a huge hug. Her face was glowing, she was so happy," she says.

"Geraldine was in tears. It was the first hug she had had from Harriet in the two years she had known her. The first time she had touched her or interacted with her. At best, she had only ever tolerated Geraldine. It was a truly wonderful moment." Mrs Lambton's daughter, who has severe autism, had hitherto lived in a lonely and unhappy private world. She spoke only in baby babble and was terrified in the company of strangers, preferring to hide under a table sucking her thumb.

She interacted little, even with her parents and brother. Her behaviour led to daily tantrums and her mother and father, Nigel, an RAF officer, had reluctantly accepted the blunt prognosis of a doctor who, on the day Harriet was diagnosed, told them: "Harriet will never lead an independent life, never go to a mainstream school."

Last summer, Mrs Lambton, who worked as a doctor before Harriet's birth, attended a seminar given by Phoebe Caldwell. Ms Caldwell has worked for more than three decades with people often thought of as unreachable - those who have profound autism and severe learning disabilities.

It led to an extraordinary turnaround. "That day had an enormous impact on the whole family," says Mrs Lambton, 39. "When we tried Phoebe's technique of Intensive Interaction, the reaction from Harriet was astonishing. For the first time, we, her family, were able to engage with her, to enter her world. She had been such an unhappy, troubled little girl. Nigel and I felt that, at last, we were going to have a real relationship with our daughter."

The approach Ms Caldwell employs has enhanced the lives of thousands of autistic children and adults. The condition, which affects more than half-a-million people in Britain - the majority of them male - has a wide spectrum, but all sufferers have a developmental disability that affects the way they communicate with and relate to those around them.

Intensive Interaction involves mirroring the autistic person's body language to relieve their stress, which enables their brain to function more effectively. As communication improves, the distressed and difficult-to-manage behaviour displayed by sufferers usually recedes.

If, say, an autistic child drums his or her heels, Ms Caldwell will copy the behaviour. When the child sees that someone speaks his or her "language", the interaction begins. "Intensive Interaction sounds too easy. But it works very well," Ms Caldwell, a biologist and former Rowntree Research Fellow, explains. "It uses the body language of a child or adult to communicate with them. It is based on the infant-mother exchange of 'imitation' which we have all been through - it is the way we learn to communicate.

"This approach is a liberation for those with autism. It is often the first time the world around them makes sense. We have been so determined to frog-march them into our world. Using Intensive Interaction, we can enter theirs." Ms Caldwell's success stories are many. While she concentrates mostly on adults, David Hewett, her colleague, treats children.

The approach was pioneered in the 1980s by the late Geraint Ephraim, then the principal psychologist at Harperbury hospital, Hertfordshire. "It is important that people realise this is not a miracle," Ms Caldwell stresses. "Its aim is to introduce shared activity, something those with autism find difficult. For them, relating to others, even making eye contact, can be distressing."

One of Ms Caldwell's recent patients, Peter, 25, was so profoundly autistic that his family had to pad the walls of his home because he constantly banged his head against them. When Ms Caldwell visited him, his only utterance was a deep breathing noise. When she began imitating the sound, Peter's breathing got louder and louder. Before long, he was singing. "When I left, the nurse with him carried on using the technique. As she was leaving, she said to him, 'Bye, bye.' He said 'ay, ay', repeating the rhythm of her words. It was the first time he had attempted speech."

For the Lambtons, teaching Harriet a few words has been a lengthy process. "Harriet has baby babble but little else," says Mrs Lambton. "But using Intensive Interaction I have created songs from her babble, songs that are essentially in Harriet's own language, and she absolutely loves singing them with me. Now she initiates them and engages with me."

When Harriet was born, in May 2000, she was a peaceful and cheerful baby. She progressed normally until she was 15 months old when her parents began noticing a change in her behaviour. "At two, she was terrified of company and the baby talk she had had disappeared. It was impossible to get her to make eye contact."

At Harriet's two-year-old development check it was clear that something was seriously wrong: its results, however, shocked her parents. "We were told Harriet had the developmental age of just eight months," says Mrs Lambton.



Phoebe Caldwell's approach has enhanced the lives of thousands of autistic children and adults

"Our lives changed for ever. Geraldine began working with Harriet when she was three, but it was always a difficult relationship. Harriet took a very long time to trust Geraldine and would, at best, merely put up with her. There was never any interaction, it was as though Geraldine didn't exist.

"After we had been to Phoebe's seminar, Geraldine came home with me. Harriet went to her brother's bedroom to play. As always, she closed the curtains and switched off the light.

She liked to do that, playing alone with a torch. Geraldine went into the room and found Harriet lying on the floor, making a kicking sound. She lay down beside her, mirroring her behaviour.

Then, when Harriet began stroking the bed, Geraldine stroked the carpet. Within moments, Harriet and she established a rapport. That's when she hugged her for the first time."

The Lambtons are under no illusion about their daughter's future: they accept her life will never be normal. "But what Intensive Interaction has given all of us is a means of communication with Harriet," says Mrs Lambton. "Alex, her eight-year-old brother uses it with her, as does her teacher at her special school. The approach has made me understand Harriet better. I realise now she is not simply being awkward at times, but that I need to see things as she does.

"Before, she was trapped in her own unhappy world. Now she will let me play with her - she trusts me more. "Our aim for Harriet is that she should be happy and reach her potential, whatever that may be. Intensive Interaction is helping her do that."

Many thanks to **The Telegraph** for their kind permission to reproduce this article

Accessed at <http://arts.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/09/25/naut25.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/09/25/ixhome.html>

Jo Tinkler wins Occupational Therapists of the year 2005



Jo Tinkler

An occupational therapist who works in Portsmouth, Jo Tinkler, has won the College of Occupational Therapists' / Stannah Stairlifts' Occupational Therapist of the Year Award for 2005.

Jo was chosen out of hundreds of occupational therapists nominated for the award by a panel of judges led by consumer investigator and children's rights campaigner, Esther Rantzen, and Jon Stannah, Managing Director of Stannah Stairlifts.

Despite having only been an occupational therapist for four years, Jo – who graduated from Southampton University in June 2001 – has contributed an enormous amount to the profession it-

self and to her individual patients. She was nominated for the award twice: firstly by Sandie Davies, the mother of a young man with learning difficulties Jo helped extensively, and secondly by her colleagues on the Fareham and Gosport Learning Disability Community Team, who have continually been impressed by Jo's work and attitude.

Sandie Davies said that Jo's work with her son, Michael, has helped to enhance his life: "Michael, who is 20 years old, has profound learning disabilities and autism. He had been resorting to self-harm and was gradually losing weight and losing interest in the world around him. We felt that he wouldn't survive. Jo has spent many hours with Michael over the last eighteen months, and her work has made a real difference and stopped Michael's life from spiralling downwards. Now, he is making choices, moving around the house, and doing so much more – all thanks to the work Jo has done with him."

Jo says she developed sensory integration and intensive interaction programmes to give Michael more control over his life:

"Intensive interaction is a way of communicating with someone who doesn't speak – mimicking and responding to the noises and actions they make. We also developed calming strategies to help Michael to cope when things become too hectic or busy for him."

In her role, Jo works in community learning disability teams in Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth, Havant and Petersfield - mostly visiting people at their homes, in residential settings, day-services and respite units. She says she is "deeply touched" to have won the award:

"I genuinely love my job, and I would recommend occupational therapy for anyone seeking a career which is fulfilling, varied and interesting. It's so rewarding getting to know your patients – finding out what's meaningful to them and working around that.

Esther Rantzen said: "The role of an occupational therapist is often underestimated and misunderstood, which is why awards like these are so important. It was wonderful to meet Jo Tinkler – a real unsung hero – and I hope that these awards will help to raise the profile of the profession as a whole."



Jon Stannah, Esther Rantzen with Jo Tinkler

Accessed at <http://www.cot.org.uk/public/promotingot/intro/intro.php> on 27/09/05.

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Intensive Interaction trainees and Dr Ellie Hailstone at the recently completed Keighley training course (Sorry, its no good hiding at the back, we can still see you!)

A new *Intensive Interaction* training initiative organised and facilitated by Dr Ellie Hailstone successfully completed it first course in Keighley, West Yorkshire recently.

The trainees (pictured left with Ellie) included care-staff and members of the local Community Learning Disability Team. Many extremely positive and exciting responses to the use of the approach were recounted as the course progressed. Well done and best wishes to everyone!

The Leeds *Intensive Interaction* Trainee follow-up session:

Tuesday 18th October 2005

At this follow-up session for *Intensive Interaction* trainees, the practical experiences of using the approach were discussed. The trainees discussed the success they had had, and also the issues that concerned them or had proved problematic. What was particularly pleasing was when the issue of 'sustainability' was discussed, the feelings were that *Intensive Interaction* was still just as much a central issue as immediately after the training. As one trainee recounted, 'it was always there', and so hadn't fallen away in practice like other training. Below is a brief summary of the follow-up session:

Successes: One day services staff member highlighted particular changes in one client's responses to staff, with a clear increase observable in the client's toleration of their proximity. What was viewed as of particular importance for this client was the pace of interactions, with an easy pace being the vital factor i.e. 'not rushing too quickly', thus allowing the client time to generate a response. Another staff also acknowledged increased toleration of proximity as a major outcome when working with one client who displayed challenging behaviour. This staff member saw his use of *Intensive Interaction* as having been effective in building a trusting relationship with his client, leading to a reduction in the frequency of challenging outbursts. Another trainee saw greater staff collaboration as a positive outcome of the *Intensive Interaction* training, with all the staff at a local FE establishment, feeling more included in the process. Also significant was an increased focus on communication for the students there.

Difficulties: One identified difficulty was when initially using the approach in front other staff in a less than ideal situation, there being a pressure to succeed that made success less likely. Also we discussed how to balance the 'goals' or 'aims' of using *Intensive Interaction* with other services aims for clients e.g. encouraging socially appropriate and acceptable behaviour in public places. Another difficulty experienced by one staff member concerned the use of *Intensive Interaction* techniques in front of other clients who apparently viewed these non verbal interactions negatively.

The group also watched '**creative conversations**' the new training video by Phoebe Caldwell and Pene Stevens which highlights the use of *Intensive Interaction* with clients with profound and multiple learning disabilities. There seemed to be particular interest among the trainees about the issue of pacing interactions appropriately to the client's level of activity and/or arousal levels, as the potential for over arousal (or 'winding the client up') was recognised.

The next follow-up session: is planned for early next year, and it is open to anyone in Leeds using *Intensive Interaction*. If you would like more details please contact Graham Firth or Marion Crabbe. We hope to see you then.

My own account: Cath Rostron



I started to use *Intensive Interaction* with a tenant which I hoped would enable him to do more activities freely in his daily life. The *Intensive Interaction* session takes place in his bedroom for about 20 minutes daily. During the session he sometimes sits at a table and we explore objects together, one at a time. We move our hands around the object, holding them and exploring them together. By doing this we found what kind of

objects he likes to explore the most. He seems to prefer hard surfaces such as wood and metal. He also prefers small balls rather than big balls because they fit in his hands better and are easier to grasp. We made a box for his own objects, and put in the things he liked to explore the best. I think that doing the *Intensive Interaction* has nearly eliminated some of the behaviours that he displayed through boredom, such as thumb sucking or poking his fingers in his eyes and nose. *Intensive Interaction* is still an on going program and it has helped the client and staff work together much better.

Cath Rostron: social care worker, Leeds

(Do you have a story or account of using *Intensive Interaction* and would like to share it?

If so, contact Graham Firth for further details)

NEW Publications

Finding You Finding Me

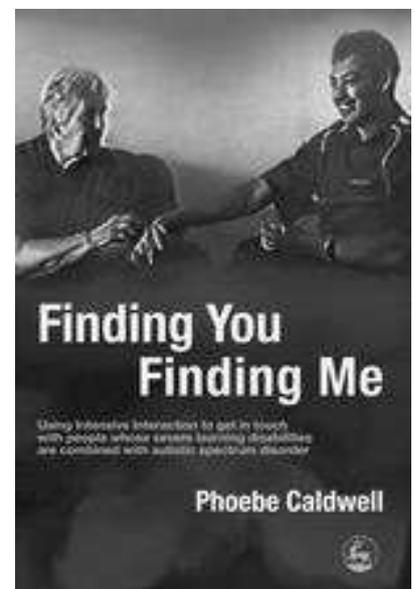
by Phoebe Caldwell

Using *Intensive Interaction* to get in touch with people whose severe learning disabilities are combined with autistic spectrum disorder

According to the publishers, Phoebe's new book 'makes accessible for the first time the complex, intricate inner and sensory worlds of people whose learning disabilities are combined with autistic spectrum disorder and, often, difficult-to-manage behaviour.' Based on Phoebe's extensive experience of working with such people, this book 'explores the different sensory reality they experience showing it to be infinitely more complex and varied than is widely understood'.

This book covers 'not only the practical aspects of introducing this technique [Intensive Interaction] but also the thinking behind it'.

ISBN 1-84310-399-0 Jessica Kingsley Publishers



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.

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