

Belonging through  
Storysharing®  
Patterns of attunement and  
reciprocity

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# Openstorytellers

- Enriching lives through the sharing of stories
- A company of storytellers with learning disabilities
- Projects in schools, centres, homes, community
- 2004- project; 2009 - charity
- Reached over 2000 people with disabilities, 3000 carers
- *Outstanding Community Project 2013:  
British Awards for Storytelling Excellence*

# STORYSHARING®

- A framework for the identification and sharing of personal experiences by people with severe communication disabilities and those who share their lives
- Based on research and observation of everyday anecdotal narrative
- Focus is on building identity, relationships & social capital, belonging



# Storysharing® features

- Inclusive
- Multisensory - use of simple VOCA
- Collaborative/co-constructed
- Process over content
- Face to face, dynamic
- Active listening
  
- Certificated training programme



# Theoretical perspectives

- Ethnopoetics (Dell Hymes)
- Dialogic encounter (Meininger)
- Mutual cognitive environments (Sperber and Wilson)
- Empathy through mirroring and imitation/  
« emotional contagion »(Meltzoff, Iacobini, Trevarthen)



# Belonging in conversation the role of repetitions



# *When I was small*

- Story exchange between S (special school) and G (mainstream school)
- Patterns of repetition
  - S = 11 signs (7 are echoed by G)
  - G = 18 signs (climax of story uses 4 of S's signs)
  - Theme and emphasis: intonation and stress
    - Ve-e-ery/very very



# *Bad Leg Cat*

- Co-constructed narrative between 3 tenants with ID and 5 staff, 100 seconds.
- Story is about the cat going to the vet: the narrative is completed in the first 15 seconds.
- Remainder of dialogue is a riff on the meaning of illness in the home, led by a tenant (Victoria)



# Repetition patterns: Bad leg Cat

Total utterances = 48

Repetitions = 65% of total

	Victoria	Barney	Alice	Anna	Kevin	Nicola	
Victoria	5	1	1		1	2	10
Barney		1	2			1	4
Alice	2	1	3	1			7
Anna	1		1	2			4
Kevin	1				1		2
Nicola	1	1		1	1		4
	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>

 Tenant

 Staff

 Self repetitions



# Repetition dynamics

- Staff are as likely to echo tenants as tenants are to echo staff
- Victoria chooses significant elements from the story to repeat; these are not random
- Lexical repetitions are distinct from prosodic repetitions; warp and weft



# In conclusion

- Narrative devices used in informal, anecdotal telling establish a web of connections, harmony, promoting empathy.....
- « Imitation brings a person into the same experiential context as the one imitated » *Jones, 2009*
- « **If you want to become more empathetic, mimic how people act and move their body** » *Iacobini, 2009*



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