

replaced by activities more academically suited and age-appropriate for the learning of particular students.

One example of how Gentle Teaching strategies could be used in natural situations was given by the methods and resource teacher, an in-school consultant to other teachers (see Chapter 8). When Sue began self-stimulating behaviours the teacher took Sue and two of her peers and began to throw a ball around in a simple game of catch. Sue was valued and redirected from her self-stimulation. This was Gentle Teaching, although at the time the teacher did not recognize it as such. It was a preventive approach rather than a reactionary one.

There is a danger that Gentle Teaching may be seen only as a response to inappropriate behaviour if it is viewed narrowly as a behaviour modification technique. Gentle Teaching, however, is broader than this. It is an educational approach that should be embedded in the daily interactions between teacher and students.

In retrospect, a one-week investment in developing a new process to deal with students was not excessive, particularly considering the time and resources spent on Sue's challenging behaviour over the years. And if the process worked for Sue, there was a possibility that it would work for other students in her school.

The school developed a cadre of people who were familiar with the process and who could teach their colleagues. It was necessary and beneficial that the principal participated in the process for its continuation in the school. Principals are the educational leaders and typically have great influence on school practices.

A follow-up meeting was planned one week after the workshop. Knowing that this was the first time Gentle Teaching was presented in an educational setting, we felt a need to regroup and discuss how things were going and to address some concerns. The teachers reported that:

1. Sue was talking more in her daily interactions with the teacher;