

Communicating with Someone Who Has Aphasia:

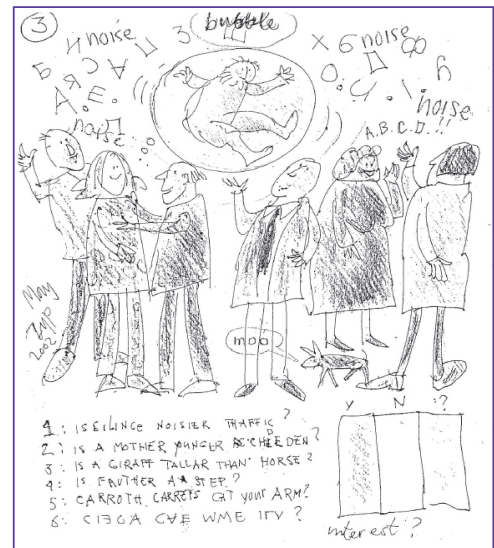
General Strategies

- **Reduce distractions.** Communicate one-on-one. Eliminate background noise (television, radio).
- **Be a respectful communication partner.** Avoid shouting. Avoid baby talk. Avoid talking about the person in their presence. Don't avoid adult topics.
- **Communicate face to face.** Seeing someone's facial expression and mouth helps the person understand.
- **Acknowledge intelligence.** Recognize that a person with aphasia is as smart as before. Say, "I know you have something to say, but it's hard to get it out." or "I know you know."

For Expressive Aphasia (Difficulty with Expressing Oneself)

If a person with aphasia has trouble getting words out, here's what you could do:

- **Accept and encourage all communication attempts** (gestures, writing, drawing, and facial expression).
- **Encourage independence.** Watch, listen, and wait for the person with aphasia to get the message out.
- **Check to make sure you understand the message.** Tell what you understand so he or she knows what information to add and ask yes/no questions to clarify. ("Are you saying you would rather walk to the store?").
- **Don't pretend you understand.** Ask the person to use a gesture or write if they're able and ask for clarification. If you don't understand, say so. If you cannot understand the message despite all efforts, let the person know you want to understand and that you will try again later.



Receptive Aphasia (Difficulty with Understanding)

If a person with aphasia has trouble understanding, here's what you could do:

- **Supplement verbal communication.** Provide additional supports, such as writing key words, drawing and pointing to objects, pictures or photographs. It is best to use one support strategy at a time.
- **Slow down your speech rate slightly.** Pause between phrases. Speak slowly.
- **Watch and wait.** Watch the person's facial expression and responses to make sure they understand you before you go on or add more information.
- **Repeat information.** Repeat the message using the same words or different ones.
- **Keep the message short and simple.** Speak in short phrases and sentences.

Additional Resources

- Stroke Recovery Association of Edmonton & Aphasia Awareness Committee
- Speech-Language & Audiology Canada
- Aphasia Institute
- Aphasia Hope Foundation
- National Aphasia Association
- American Speech and Hearing Association
- InteRACT

Information Gathered From

- Aphasia Institute
- Intensive Residential Aphasia Communication Therapy (InteRACT)
- National Aphasia Association
- Communication Carryover for Adults, Angela Tipton Dikengil
- Speech Language Pathology and Audiology Canada (SAC). (n.d.)
Facts at your fingertips.

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Getting Help

If you suspect a problem, consult a Registered Speech-Language Pathologist (R.SLP). To find a practitioner:

- Contact HEALTH LINK - Health Advice 24/7 at 8-1-1 or visit: www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca
- Find a private practice SLP:
 - Search the Yellow Pages
 - Contact the Alberta Speech-Language Association of Private Practitioners (ASAPP) website at www.asapp.ca.

