
The Brain, The Body and You: Communication and Behaviours

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- Characteristics of successful communication partners
 - Communicating with survivors (and for that matter, everyone else)
 - Post-stroke problems that make communication harder
 - Dysarthria
 - Cognitive communication impairments
 - Aphasia – the “teaser”
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Characteristics of Successful Communication Partners

- Respect
 - A clear message
 - A desire to understand the other person's message
 - Trust in the other person to listen
 - Empathy for each other
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Characteristics (continued)

When the message is not getting across:

- A sense of optimism
 - Patience and persistence
 - Creativity
 - Honest – “I’m sorry...”
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Communicating with the Survivors: The Basics

- Ask how the person wants to be addressed
 - Introduce yourself and your purpose in being there
 - Deal with private matters privately
 - Be calm, direct and positive in all communication
 - Adjust the environment
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Post Stroke Problems That Make Communication Harder

- Cannot physically get to where he/she wants to be
 - Cannot communicate eye-to-eye
 - Impaired hearing / vision
 - He/she may not be able to alter facial expressions
 - Has slower responses or inappropriate responses
 - Cannot manage personal care
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So much for the basics...now for some terminology

What do we mean by:

- Communication?
 - Speech?
 - Language?
 - Voice?
 - Cognition?
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Communication

- The exchange of information, ideas, etc. between at least two people
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Speech

- The motor movements of the lips, tongue, jaw, vocal tract, etc. that work together to create the SOUNDS we use to communicate
 - Disorders: Dysarthria and Apraxia
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Language

- The agreed-upon code that a group of people uses, made up of words, grammars, rules, etc., that allow communication to take place
 - Disorder: Aphasia
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Voice

- The sounds made by the larynx

Cognition

- The “thinking” part of communication:
 - Attention
 - Concentration
 - Memory
 - Visual perception
 - Planning
 - Problem-solving
 - Self- monitoring
 - Disorders: Dementia, strokes which cause damage to the executive centres of the brain
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What communication disorders can occur after a stroke?

- Dysarthria
 - Apraxia
 - Aphasia
 - Cognitive-Communication disorders
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Dysarthria: A Motor Speech Problem

- **DYSARTHRIA:** Difficulty making speech sounds clearly
 - Survivors with dysarthria have **NOT** lost language. They may still:
 - Think, plan, decide and reason
 - Understand spoken language
 - Read
 - Write or type
 - Use computers or other devices to communicate
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Apraxia

- A problem with the COORDINATION of the muscles of speech
 - The messages from the brain are not able to reach the speech muscles in a smooth, accurate and rapid manner
 - As with dysarthria, the person may still have full command of their ability to speak, listen, read and write
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Dysarthria: what you can do to help

- Communicate in a quiet place.
 - Repeat what you have understood. Clarify anything you have not understood.
 - Jot down notes.
 - It may be easier for the person to write down information if they are able – provide paper and pen.
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What you can do to help (continued)

- Consider using:
 - Paper and pen
 - A computer
 - Picture / work / phrase board
 - Alphabet board
 - Communicate about significant issues when the survivor is rested
 - Be open when you don't understand
 - Negotiate – does the person want you to help finish their words / sentences?
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Cognitive Communication Impairments

- Reduced ability to understand and communicate clearly related to:
 - Problems with organization of thoughts
 - Concentration
 - Memory
 - Knowledge of non-verbal communication
 - Often seen in survivors with right hemisphere strokes
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Cognitive Communication Impairments (continued)

- Survivors with right hemisphere communication impairments are able to:
 - Speak clearly in fluent sentences
 - Understand direct, concrete communication
 - Tell and laugh at familiar jokes
 - Sometimes read
 - Write some words and sentences
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Communicating When a Survivor Has Cognitive Impairments

■ Problems:

- ❑ Fluent but poorly organized or wanders off-topic
 - ❑ Leaves out relevant information
 - ❑ Makes little eye contact (especially on the left)
 - ❑ May appear rude
 - ❑ Doesn't understand / remember what has been said
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Aphasia: A Loss of Language

- May affect a survivor's ability to:
 - Talk
 - Read
 - Write
 - Understand
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Definition of Aphasia

- Aphasia is a language difficulty that happens because a stroke has affected the part of the brain that holds the language dictionary.
 - People with aphasia are competent adults who **know more than they can say**.
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Communicating When a Survivor Has Aphasia

- **Survivors with aphasia can:**
 - Think, plan, decide, and reason
 - Usually produce some clear words
 - Understand facial expressions and gestures

 - **BUT:**
 - Difficulty understanding spoken language
 - Difficulty expressing words and sentences
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Strategies to Help You Get Your Message Across

- Look at the person when you are speaking.
 - Speak in a tone of voice appropriate for communication with an adult.
 - Communicate one idea at a time.
 - Write down key words.
 - Use gestures and facial expressions.
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More Strategies (continued)

- Use objects to help get your message across.
- Use YES / NO questions.
- Draw simple pictures.
- Acknowledge that the person with aphasia knows what they want to say but cannot say it.

“I know you know...”

A Communication Scenario

Conversation	Strategies used by the caregiver
<p><i>“Mrs. Jones, I want to tell you about an event we have coming up. I think you will be interested.”</i></p> <p>“This is today.”</p> <p>“On Tuesday, the John Higgins Band is coming to play.”</p> <p>“They are coming here.”</p> <p>“Do you want to go.”</p>	<p>Comes prepared with a calendar, scrap paper, and a black marker.</p> <p>Points to the date on the calendar.</p> <p>Points to the date on the calendar and then writes down [TUESDAY OCT. 6]</p> <p>Writes down [JOHN HIGGINS BAND]. Uses hand gesture to indicate the location.</p> <p>Writes down [DO YOU WANT TO GO?] and points to the resident. Writes down [YES / NO / I DON'T KNOW] and waits for the resident to point to the response.</p>

Strategies to Help the Person with Aphasia Get Their Message Across

- Encourage the person to write down a word or draw.
 - Encourage the person to point to something.
 - Identify the general topic first and then move onto the details.
 - “Are you talking about your family?”
 - “Are you talking about your daughter?”
 - “Are you wondering if she is coming to visit today?”
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More Strategies (continued)

- Ask YES / NO questions.
- Use a written YES / NO for the person to point to.
- Encourage the person to use some of the words you have written down to communicate.
 - I have heard you are a music fan.

YES NO I DON'T KNOW

Pictographic Topic Pages

- Pictograph pages are a tool to facilitate communication.
- Use the pictographs to provide visual cues to the topic of the conversation.
- Encourage the person with aphasia to point to the relevant pictograph.

www.aphasia.ca
