

Aphasia Communication Strategies

A Guide for Caregivers

Aphasia is a language problem, often caused by a brain injury such as a stroke. A person with aphasia has difficulty communicating and taking part in conversation. Speaking, understanding others, reading, and writing may all be affected.

Intelligence is NOT affected!

Getting the Message IN — Helping Them Understand You

- Face the person and keep eye contact while you speak.
- Speak slowly, in short, simple sentences.
- Break instructions into small steps, one at a time.
- Rephrase or repeat if they don't understand the first time.
- Use gestures, facial expressions, and body language.
- Write key words or draw a simple picture or diagram.
- Use visual aids — calendars, pictures, objects.
- Check that they understood you.
- **Be patient.**

Getting the Message OUT — Helping Them Communicate With You

- Ask yes/no questions. Let them nod, shake their head, or point to a written word.
 - Ask either/or questions instead of open-ended ones — e.g. “Store or mall?” instead of “Where do you want to go?”
 - Offer written choices they can point to.
 - Encourage writing, drawing, or gesturing.
 - Use communication boards, books, or devices if available.
 - Check that you understood their message.
 - **Be patient.**
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