
AGING I&R/A TIPS

Tip Sheet 4

National Aging Information & Referral Support Center

COMMUNICATING WITH STROKE VICTIMS AND OTHERS WITH APHASIA

Aphasia is a condition that affects an individual's ability to communicate. Aphasia is always due to an injury to the brain—most commonly from a stroke, particularly in older people.

The National Institutes of Health estimates about 1 million Americans currently have aphasia. Up to 40% of people who have a stroke develop aphasia.

With aphasia, even simple tasks like talking on the phone can be frustrating. Here are some ways to help make conversations easier.

Communicating via Phone

- **Speak clearly.** Ask how you can help the individual.
- **Don't rush.** Allow the individual plenty of time to talk.
- **Keep communication** as simple as possible.
- **Maintain a natural** conversational manner appropriate for an adult.
- **Ask yes/no** questions when appropriate.
- **Reword and repeat** information, as needed.
- **Avoid correcting** the individual's speech.
- **Be patient,** positive, relaxed.
- **Supplement phone** conversations with written material.

Face-to-Face Communication

- **Speak slowly** and loudly enough that people understand you easily. Keep a smile on your face when you talk.
- **Make eye contact** in recognition of his or her presence.
- **Allow time** for the person to formulate a response. **Be patient** and unhurried.
- **Be creative.** Use gestures, facial expressions, or pointing to objects if helpful.
- **Summarize.** State or echo back what you think the individual means to be sure you are on the right track.
- **Be honest.** Let the client know when you cannot follow or understand.
- **Follow-up** with information in writing.

SOURCES: National Institutes of Health; and Page Nalipinski, "Aphasia: A Disorder of Language," Massachusetts General Hospital Patient Care Services, Boston, MA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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