

Aphasia: Improving Communication

Aphasia happens when a part of the brain that processes language is damaged. A speech and language therapist is an expert trained in speech and language rehabilitation. This therapist will work closely with the person and their family to help the person communicate.

Speech and language therapy

During rehabilitation (rehab), the therapist may do the following:

- Use objects and flash cards to help improve naming skills.
- Use other means of communicating, such as writing, using their hands (gesturing), or other visual aids when needed.
- Ask the person to follow commands and answer questions about stories or articles.
- Help the person find ways to work around lost language skills. For example, the person may need to use a thumbs-up or eye blinks in place of “yes” or “no.”
- Help the person with conversational skills, such as turn-taking during a discussion and expressing thoughts. This may be done during group therapy.

You can help

If your loved one has aphasia, the tips below may make communicating easier:

- Speak slowly and clearly. Use common words, but don't “talk down.”
- Speak in simple sentences. Stick to 1 idea and 1 action.
- Give the person time to understand and to respond.
- Don't ignore the person. Keep them informed and involved.
- Don't pretend to understand if you don't.



Take time to read to your loved one or talk about your day.