Communication Strategies for Caregivers of a Person with Aphasia

What is aphasia?

Aphasia is a language problem that is often a result of brain injuries such as a stroke. A person with aphasia has difficulty with communicating and engaging in conversation. Speaking, understanding the speech of others, reading, and writing may be affected. However, intelligence is not affected!

Getting the Message IN

You can change the way you communicate to make sure the person with aphasia understands you.

- **Speak face-to-face.** Do not turn away from the person with aphasia while speaking.
- **Speak slowly.**
- **Use intonation** in your voice. Intonation is the way your voice rises and falls as you speak.
- **Use short, simple** sentences.
- **Break down instructions** into smaller steps.
- **Rephrase** the information if the person does not understand you.
- **Support your speech with gestures, facial expressions** and body language.
- **Write** keywords, **draw** a simple picture, or use a diagram to support understanding.
- **Use visual aids**, such as calendars, maps, pictures, objects, props.
- **Verify** or check that the person with aphasia has understood you.
- **Be patient!**

Getting the Message OUT

You can help a person with aphasia express their thoughts to you.

- **Ask the person with aphasia** yes or no questions.
- **Make sure the person with aphasia has a non-verbal way to answer** yes or no questions. Will they:
  - Nod their head YES or shake their head NO?
  - Point to the written word?
- **Ask closed-ended questions.** This type of question can be answered with one word or with a short, specific piece of information.
  - Ask: “Shall we go to the grocery store or to the mall?”
  - Instead of: “Where shall we go?”
- **Provide written** keywords to allow the person with aphasia to choose the desired response.
- **Encourage the person with aphasia to print, draw, or gesture** to support their speech.
- **Encourage the person with aphasia to use objects, pictures, or communication devices**, such as alphabet boards, communication books, if available.
- **Verify** or check that you have understood the message.
- **Be patient!**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
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<tr>
<td>This information is important! If you have trouble reading this, ask someone to help you.</td>
<td>Queste informazioni sono importanti! Se ha difficoltà a leggere questo, chiedi aiuto a qualcuno.</td>
<td>¡Esta información es importante! Si tiene dificultad en leer esto, pida que alguien le ayude.</td>
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