

**COMMUNICATING WITH THE APHASIC RESIDENT**

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Aphasia – Language difficulty, due to brain damage, which can affect listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Comprehension:

Simplify

1. Talk about only one idea at a time.
2. Use short sentences with simple, common words.
3. Use gestures, facial expressions, vocal inflections.

Allow Time

1. Pause between short sentences
2. Slow down rate of speech and allow the resident time to process information.

Orient Resident

1. Discuss topics of interest in the resident's life.
2. Orient resident to people, place, and time by pointing out and discussing people and items in the environment.
3. Keep resident aware of time of day via mealtimes, medications, and announcements of visitors and times they frequently come.

Confirm

Resident may respond to gestures or sound of your voice without understanding you.

1. Ask resident question.
2. Allow resident to respond.
3. Ask resident an opposite question; if resident responds the same to both questions, you are not communicating.
4. Be sure you have resident's attention.
5. Let resident know there was a misunderstanding.
6. Speak more slowly.
7. Repeat message.
8. Use gestures, pointing, and facial expressions. Do not speak more loudly if client did not understand you. Confusion increases with added noise and distractions, and when more than one person is talking.

Expression:

Allow Time

1. Be patient and accepting of resident's attempts to communicate.

### Guess

1. Determine the subject by asking more specific questions.
2. Make statements about what you think the resident means.

### Alternative Communication

1. Communication board
2. Gestural system – If you use gestures when communicating with aphasic residents, this may stimulate their use of gestures.

### Verbal Communication

1. Ask questions requiring yes/no one-word response.
2. With more verbal residents who have word-finding difficulties, encourage substitute ways of expressing meaning by asking questions like:  
“What do you use it for?”  
“Where is it?”  
“What does it look like?”  
“Why do you need it?”
3. When a resident does convey what he/she wants, in a way other than verbal, say the word for him/her.

### Respect

1. Speak to the resident in an adult manner, she/he is an intelligent adult who is aware of her/his surroundings even though language function is impaired.
2. Include the resident in the conversation; don't talk as though he/she is not there, is deaf, or is mentally impaired.