



building communication ramps

Vision Statement

To awaken hope and inspiration for all individuals and families affected by aphasia, through service, education and research.

Mission Statement

The Aphasia Institute is an internationally recognized Canadian resource that works in partnership with communities and others to break down language barriers, build communication ramps and rebuild lives for those affected by aphasia.

Purpose

Providing leadership in developing and sharing innovative solutions to living successfully with aphasia

For more information, please call:

Aphasia Institute
The Pat Arato Aphasia Centre
73 Scarsdale Road
Toronto, ON M3B 2R2
Telephone: 416-226-3636
Fax: 416-226-3706

Email: aphasia@aphasia.ca
Website: www.aphasia.ca



building communication ramps

Communicating with someone who has aphasia

Understanding Aphasia

Aphasia is a language difficulty. Imagine yourself living in a foreign country where you do not speak the language. You would continue to have thoughts, possess all your former knowledge and have the same ability to make decisions. But you would be unable to speak to the residents of the country. You could not rely on their spoken or written words to help you understand. This is similar to living with aphasia.

Communication requires at least two components: speech and language. Speech refers to the muscles you use to produce sounds. The muscles of your lips, tongue, throat, and lungs are all used to produce sounds that make up words. Language refers to the “dictionary” of words, word meanings and rules for combining words into sentences. This “dictionary” is located in your brain. Aphasia occurs when a stroke has affected the part of the brain that holds the language “dictionary”.

People with aphasia are competent adults who know more than they can say. This supplement is intended to provide you with some tools to help you in communicating with people with aphasia.

Strategies to help the PERSON WITH APHASIA get a message across:

- ✓ Encourage the person with aphasia to write down a word or draw if they can.
- ✓ Encourage the person with aphasia to point to something.
- ✓ Attempt to identify the general topic first and then move onto understanding the details.
- ✓ Ask YES / NO questions.
- ✓ Use a written YES / NO if needed.
- ✓ If you do not have the time to communicate explain this and give a time when you will return to finish your conversation. Make sure you do return.

- ✓ Encourage the person with aphasia to use some of the words you have written down to communicate.
 - *“I have heard you are a big fan of music?”*
 - *“What kind of music do you like?”*

OPERA

CLASSICAL

BLUES

Strategies to help YOU get YOUR message across:

- ✓ Look at the person with aphasia when speaking. Your facial expression can help the person with aphasia understand you.
- ✓ Speak in a tone of voice appropriate for communicating with an adult. Do not sound condescending. Do not sound like you are speaking to a child.
- ✓ Communicate one idea at a time.
 - X** *“I will help you get up, showered and dressed and then I am going to take you to the dining room for you to have breakfast but first you have to take your pill.”*
 - ✓ *“Here is your pill to take.”* Pause and give pill.
“First I am going to help you take a shower.” Pause.
“Then I will help you get dressed.” Pause.
“After all that, I will take you for breakfast.”
- ✓ Write down key words. Use a thick black marker and printed letters.
- ✓ Use gestures and facial expressions.
- ✓ Use objects from the environment to help get your message across.
- ✓ Use YES / NO questions.
- ✓ Draw.

Acknowledge that the person with aphasia is a competent, knowledgeable person who can make decisions. Acknowledge that the person with aphasia knows what they want to say but cannot say it