Supported Communication for Individuals with Language Impairment

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Aphasia

- Language disorder that can affect speaking, understanding, reading and writing

**#1 cause: Stroke**

**Can also result from:**
- traumatic brain injury
- brain tumor
- brain infections
- progressive brain disease

- *Can impact communication, identity and relationships*
Supported Communication

- Training approach for communication partners
  - language impairment (i.e., stroke aphasia)
  - cognitive impairment
  - limited English proficiency
  - hearing loss
Supported Communication for Adults with Aphasia™ (SCA™)

You are the “communication ramp”

https://www.aphasia.ca/communication-tools-communicative-access-sca/
SCA™ Goals

❖ Acknowledge Competence

• RESPECT

❖ Reveal Competence

• IN: helping get your message in

• OUT: helping get their message out

• VERIFY: making sure you understand
Acknowledging Competence

- Acknowledge your limitations as a communication partner
- Deal openly with communication breakdowns
- Say “I know you know”
- Be flexible and willing to drop the topic or circle back
- Be relatable; avoid saying things like “maybe I have aphasia too”
- Ask the person with language impairment what helps
- In situations where you are asking question about someone else, ask permission and be inclusive
Revealing Competence (IN)

- Eliminate distractions
- Use short, simple sentences
- Expressive voice
- Repeat - same message, different way
- Gestures that are easy to see and understand
- Write down key words / main ideas
- Use pictures – one at a time
- Observe the person for subtle cues
Revealing Competence (OUT)

- Provide pen and paper
- Provide pictures
- Ask yes/no questions (general to specific)
- Ask fixed choice questions
- Request clues (e.g., “can you show me?”)
- Give enough response time (patience)
YOU: Do you want to have lunch next week?

   CP: Yes, lunch. Monday no but Tuesday, Tuesday, I don’t know.

YOU: Where do you want to eat?

   CP: I know, that place, me and you before, the name, I can’t

YOU: A place we’ve eaten before? What kind of food?

   CP: Cuban

YOU: Oh, Buena Gente?

   CP: Yes!

YOU: I loved that restaurant. Let’s take a look at your calendar so we can choose a day.
Revealing Competence (VERIFY)

- Reflect: Repeat the person’s message
- Expand: Add what you think the person is trying to say
- Summarize: Pull it all together

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
George Bernard Shaw
YOU: How was your drive here?

   CP: The car was long. I turned and the lady said no and then I turned and turned. So late, sorry.

YOU: No problem. It sounds like it was a long drive.

   CP: Yeah

YOU: Maybe you made a couple wrong turns?

   CP: Yeah

YOU: But your GPS helped you?

   CP: Yeah

YOU: I got lost the first time we came here. I’m glad you made it!
Other Good Communication Behaviors

- **Commenting**
  - keep it short and relevant

- **Listening**
  - actively listen, give eye contact

- **Maintaining conversation**
  - introduce new topics, use transitions
To learn more about aphasia treatment research:

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