UNDERSTANDING APHASIA

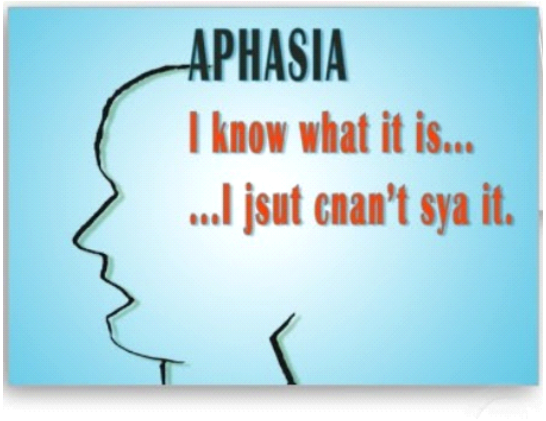
Aphasia is a disorder of communication that impairs a person's ability to use and comprehend language. People with aphasia have an inability to express themselves because they cannot form the words or think of what they want to say. It is a neurological disorder that may be the result of a stroke, injury, or even a series of little strokes or other problems that have created neurological damage in the areas of the brain responsible for speech and language.

Often people with aphasia know what they want to say, but they cannot get into their brains and retrieve the necessary words or sentences. They may also have trouble understanding what you are saying. It is not that they cannot hear, but rather that they are trying to process what you are saying and make sense of it. This can be very frustrating and can lead to withdrawal and depression or ongoing agitation.

To understand how to work with someone with this type of communication problem, start by going to an excellent overview of what Aphasia is, and what you need to understand.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Go to video: CATEGORY 3-Communication-Video 1-Helping Elders With Aphasia-(Aphasia-Patience Listening And Communicating With Aphasia Patients)



Here are some important things you can do in working with an elder who has Aphasia:

- **Be very patient;**
- **Listen actively;**
- **Slow down when you are speaking to them;**
- **Speak slowly so that they can process what you are saying;**
- **Repeat or rephrase what you are saying if they appear to be having trouble understanding;**
- **Allow them plenty of time to express themselves;**
- **Use gestures or body language to provide additional cues about what you are saying;**
- **When they speak, confirm you have understood what they are trying to say;**



- **Sometimes things may come out strange – for example when they want to say comb they may say brush, or want to say bath tub they say sink;**
- **People with Aphasia may use profanity because it comes out easily and they do not intend for it to. Never chastise them for what they have said. Generally, it just came out and they did not have control of it. They were trying to say something else, or it is a way of letting you know how frustrated they are. Never be judgmental about this. It is a symptom of the disorder;**
- **Do not interrupt them when they are trying to tell you something.**
- **Accept whatever they tell you and do not correct them. You may, however, verify what they said so that you are clear if need be;**
- **Give them respect and understanding. Imagine how it would feel if you were in their shoes and treat them the way you would want to be treated.**

- **Talk to their speech/language pathologist about any specific ways you can help an elder with Aphasia. If they have not had any speech therapy or have not for some time, ask your primary care provider for a referral. Both you and the elder need the guidance of a speech-language pathologist and it is possible there are still a number of ways improvement can be achieved. People can continue to make progress up to 5 years after an event like a stroke has occurred. Some even continue to make progress beyond the 5-year mark.**
- **Some elders may use a Language Board or an APP on a smart phone or tablet to talk for them. If they do, learn how it works so that you can help them if they need it.**