

## COMMUNICATION – APHASIA TIP SHEET

Most of these strategies do not involve language in an effort to facilitate meeting the needs, understanding concerns, and conveying information to aphasic residents.

1. Develop a book for the resident with photographs or simple drawings of known people, activities of daily living, and things of interest to the resident. As an example, a photograph of their wife and a car may communicate to them that their wife is coming to visit.
2. Determine whether simple phrases or words can convey ideas, such as a book with signs such as “toilet,” “sleepy” or “you in pain?” may facilitate communication in some residents.
3. Use a clock with moveable hands to remind the resident when an activity or care is scheduled.
4. Gestures can help communicate information. Be aware that the resident may develop their own sign language to convey ideas.
5. Always keep paper and pencil handy to communicate with them. Persons with problems expressing themselves through speech can also have trouble with writing their ideas but may be able to understand written and spoken language.
6. Hobbies such as puzzles, card games or exercise do not involve much language so be sure to determine which non-verbal activities they may be able to enjoy.
7. Anxiety and stress will only make the aphasia worse. If they feel anxious because they cannot seem to get their point across tell the resident you will return in a minute. This may give the resident and you the opportunity to relax a bit before you try to communicate again.
8. Make sure staff members are aware of what strategies persons are using to successfully communicate with the resident and post that information in their medical record.
9. Daily phone calls with a patient family member or friend can help work out effective communication strategies for the resident.
10. Asking yes/no questions or giving multiple choice answers can be effective in rapidly communicating urgent needs, as well as being a useful strategy for resident interaction.
11. Numbers, maps and graphics may still be used to convey information to the resident as they are still understood by many with aphasia.
12. Photo albums and camera phones can be helpful in initiating and maintaining conversation.
13. Aphasic residents may still be able to sing so they may find sing-a-longs an especially pleasant activity.
14. Make sure that the vision and hearing of an aphasic resident has been regularly assessed. Unaddressed sensory changes will only worsen the ability to communicate and lead to more frustration.

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### Video Links

- [MESSAGE Communication in Dementia Introduction](#) (3min28sec)
- [MESSAGE Communication in Dementia: Strategies for Care Staff](#) (21min34sec)
- [MESSAGE Communication in Dementia: Teaching Examples for Care Staff](#) (13min17sec)
- [Communicating with Patients with Dementia/Alzheimer's](#) (2min52sec)
- [How to Interact with Alzheimer's Patients](#) (12min00sec)
- [Working with Dementia Part 1](#) (2min41sec)
- [Working with Dementia Part 2](#) (5min38sec)
- [Working with Dementia Part 3](#) (2min43sec)
- [Working with Dementia Part 4](#) (3min14sec)
- [Working with Dementia Part 5](#) (4min33sec)
- [Working with Dementia Part 6](#) (3min59sec)

*Developed by Thomas Magnuson, MD, Brenda K. Keller, MD, CMD*