

Instructions for use of communication boards

Dear family/caregiver,

Recently, your relative had a stroke/head injury/tumor removal. This resulted in a brain impairment of their speech and language skills, known as "Aphasia". People with Aphasia suddenly lose their ability to use language. They struggle to speak, understand words, read, and write. The severity of the impairment in each of these language skills depends on the type of brain injury.

Aphasia affects a person's ability to convey their thoughts and needs. Sometimes they struggle to understand what is being said, sometimes they understand but have difficulty answering. Under these conditions, communication becomes a huge challenge for the person with aphasia and their family/caregiver and is often very frustrating. However, it is important to know that when a person with aphasia is hospitalized, there are tools and skills that can be utilized to help communication between you.

How do we communicate with someone who has aphasia?



We ask simple yes-no questions, at a slow pace, and we demonstrate with objects as necessary.



We use hand gestures and facial expressions.



When we converse, we write key words on paper/a whiteboard as we go along.



We use communication boards that are attached here.

How?

- // The communication board is made of two boards stuck together back-to-back – a basic needs board and a conversation board.
- // Show your relative the communication board and explain: "This is a picture board that can help you explain yourself".
- // Point at each cell/square and read aloud the written labels (to familiarize them with the options)
- // Suggest to your relative that they point to the message they want to convey.
- // If they cannot independently indicate what they want (either by pointing with a finger or by scanning with their eyes), point for them, one cell/square at a time, and simultaneously read the label aloud (e.g., "Do you want a pillow?" "Do you want to ask me a question?")
- // Wait for a positive or negative response based on a pre-agreed sign/gesture for yes or no (if they cannot say yes/no)
- // Repeat the message your relative chose by reading it aloud again and check that they indeed intended to convey that message.

Reach out to the speech and language therapists in the hospital if you need more help!

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