



The Aphasia Challenge

June is National Aphasia Awareness Month, which is a great time to give some information and tips about a condition that affects over 1 million Americans, including seniors. According to the [National Aphasia Association](#), aphasia is an acquired communication disorder that impairs a person's ability to process language. It does not affect intelligence, but instead impairs the ability to speak with, and understand, others.

Our team at [Visiting Angels Wayzata](#) is well versed in the challenges that can come with working with people who live with aphasia. Seniors can find aphasia is a part of their daily lives after suffering a stroke or living with a disease that affects the communication centers of the brain. We often see clients living with aphasia as a result of their Alzheimer's disease or other dementia diagnosis.



It can be difficult or frustrating for family members, and even caregivers, to communicate with adults with aphasia. After all, humans rely on verbal communication often as our main source of connecting. People living with aphasia cannot communicate as fluently as the rest of us. For example, someone with aphasia might call objects the wrong word, or have difficulty naming an object in the first place. People with aphasia might also leave out words when speaking or might not be able to form a coherent sentence.

As you might imagine, people living with aphasia can often feel embarrassed about their decreased communication skills. This embarrassment can lead to decreased social interactions and conversations, which leads to isolation and feelings of depression. We strive to communicate with our clients who live with aphasia in ways that are suited to their preferences and strengths so that they do not feel embarrassed or isolated. Here are a few of our tips on how to make your next interaction with your loved one who has aphasia more meaningful, and less stressful, for everyone involved.

- Don't rush them. Often times, those with aphasia will eventually find the word or phrase that they want to use to communicate. During your conversation, don't rush them or try to fill in the words for them. Instead, be patient and encouraging.
- Watch non-verbal cues. When speaking with someone with aphasia, watch for the non-verbal cues that they might use to better get their point across. For example, watch where your loved one's eyes go to as they are trying to find the right word or ask them to point. Be sure to take note of non-verbal signs of frustration as well such as clenched fists or tightening shoulders.
- Know when to back off and try again. Your interaction with your loved one should be calm and loving, not stressful or frustrating. If you or your loved one becomes anxious or frustrated, end the conversation and try again later.
- Find joy in activities besides talking. Enjoy listening to music together, gardening on the porch together, snapping green beans in the kitchen together, or reading silently together. Sometimes we can feel like we aren't having a meaningful experience if we aren't speaking. However, often the best memories and interactions happen when you are doing something together instead of talking at one another.

Our caregivers have plenty more tips that they have learned over the years working with clients. If you are looking for someone to assist your loved one who lives with aphasia, you can rest assured that [we are ready](#) to form a trusting relationship and communicate with your loved one.

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