

Department of
SPEECH THERAPY

**Information Booklet for Caregivers of Patients
With Communication Difficulties**



COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES AND STRATEGIES

1. Types of Communication Difficulties	02
2. Strategies for Communication Difficulties	03
3. Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC)	05
4. Communication Difficulties & Mental Well-Being	06

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

What is Communication Difficulty?

Communication is the sending, giving or exchanging of information and ideas verbally (using spoken words) and non-verbally (gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, pitch).

Stroke, traumatic brain injury, Parkinson’s disease or dementia could interfere with the ability to communicate, resulting in communication difficulty.

Types of communication difficulties include:

Dysarthria	Apraxia of Speech	Aphasia	Cognitive Communication Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakened movement of muscles that produce speech • Affects pronunciation , rate, pitch, volume <p>e.g. slurred speech</p> <p>Video example of dysarthria:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptions in the planning of how speech sounds are produced • Trouble making sounds and inconsistent in saying them e.g. difficulty • “}]}”making a correct sound, or sequencing (e.g. saying “kich-chen” for /chick-en/) <p>Video example of apraxia of speech:</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parts of the brain controlling language processing are injured <p>e.g. difficulties in understanding & getting their message across</p> <p>Video example of aphasia:</p> 	<p>Communication difficulties due to changes in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention • Memory • Perception • Insight & judgment • Organisation • Orientation • Processing speed • Problem solving • Reasoning • Executive functioning (mental processes)

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

Strategies for Dysarthria:

1. Be patient, give them time
2. Reduce distractions
3. Clarify with them, not interrupt
4. Request to repeat
5. Remind person to speak slowly, loudly with exaggerated mouth movement to pronounce each syllable and sound clearly (e.g. co-ffee-shop)

Strategies for Apraxia of Speech:

1. Be patient, give them time
2. Reduce distractions
3. Clarify with them, not interrupt
4. Request to repeat
5. Ask person to "stop" if they keep repeating wrongly
6. Give person a break if there are signs of frustration

STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

Strategies for Aphasia:

1. Observe for signs of frustration
2. Talk about one topic at a time
3. Repeat / rephrase yourself
4. Use drawing / pictures / gestures to help understanding
5. Check understanding before moving on
6. Acknowledge breakdowns
7. Observe for clues that may explain their message
8. Ask your questions in different ways

Strategies for Cognitive Communication Difficulties:

1. Organise your information clearly
2. Use short and simple sentences
3. Seek to understand their perspective
4. Show visuals or give them prompts about the current topic
5. Talk about one topic at a time
6. Communicate in a quiet environment and reduce distractions

ALTERNATIVE AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

Low-Tech AAC includes:

1. Pen and paper
2. Picture charts

Example of picture chart:

I WANT TO WEAR →	skirt 	dress 	pants 
PLEASE TURN ON / → OFF	television 	radio 	YES
I FEEL →	sad 	happy 	No

3. Communication boards/cards

Example of communication cards:



COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES & MENTAL WELL-BEING

Impacts of Communication Difficulties on Patient's Mental Well-Being:

- Inability to express self / interpret their environment
- Feelings of loneliness, isolation, inadequacy
- Face challenges in maintaining relationships
- Prone to social withdrawal

What Can We Do?

- Be respectful and converse with them as adults
- Listen, really listen!
- Take a genuine interest in their life and who they are – explore the things they are interested in
- Be prepared to learn from the person with aphasia

Clinics B1C (Speech Therapy)

TTSH Medical Centre, Level B1

Contact:

6357 7000 (Central Hotline)



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<http://bit.ly/TTSHHealth-Library>.

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