

## Communication Strategies to use with Someone who has Expressive Aphasia

The individual has difficulty saying words or sentences. They often know what they want to say, but cannot come up with the words, or words may come out sounding incorrect.

1. **Do not pretend to understand.**

If you do not understand what the person is trying to communicate, let him/her know. DO let the person know what parts you DID understand. **Guess!** Provide choices and topics.

Here is an example of what to do:

John (who has aphasia) says: *"I am going...chun...I am going Sunday."*

An **UNHELPFUL** communication partner would say: *"What?"*

A **HELPFUL** communication partner would say: *"John, I understood that you said you are going somewhere on Sunday but I didn't catch where. Can you tell me again where you are going?"*

Or another **HELPFUL** partner might guess: *"John did you say you are going to church on Sunday?"*

2. **Encourage the person to use other means of communication.**

Pay attention to non-verbal information like facial expression and body language. If the person with aphasia cannot say what they are thinking – he/she might be able to write some key words – or even letters that might give you a clue to what the topic is. Or the person might be able to draw something, or gesture a thing or action. **Guess!** from the clues that you are given.

Here is an example of what to do:

Betsy (who has aphasia and apraxia) has trouble saying words. You are going to the mall and you ask Betsy if there is something that she needs to pick up. Betsy looks at her wrist.

A **HELPFUL** communication partner would say: *"Betsy – you're looking at your wrist. Do you need to get a watch?"* Betsy shakes her head "no" and continues to look at her wrist.

The **HELPFUL** partner continues to guess: *"Gloves? A Bracelet?"*

Betsy shakes her head “no” and continues to look at her wrist.

The **HELPFUL** partner gives Betsy a paper and pen: *“Can you write down what you need?”*

Betsy writes: B...A...TT

The **HELPFUL** partner guesses: *“A watch battery.”* Betsy smiles and nods. *“We’ve got it!”*

3. **When you think you understand what the person is saying – confirm that you are right.**  
For example: *“So you need a battery and we’ll pick it up at the mall. Anything else?”*
4. **After much assistance, if you still cannot understand what the person wants, explain so.**  
Do not simply change the subject or ignore that the person is trying to get across a message.

A **HELPFUL** communication partner would say: *“George, I KNOW you know what you want, and you’re trying hard, but I’m sorry, I’m just not getting it right now. How about we try to figure out your message later?”*