

Communication Strategies to use with Someone who has Receptive Aphasia

The individual has difficulty understanding what other people are saying.

1. **Speak clearly, slowly and with appropriate tone**
Do not sound condescending.
2. **Simplify and rephrase messages – and use redundancy**
Repeat information to be sure it is clear.

Here is an example of how to simplify or rephrase a message:

You have just picked up a new prescription for Bill (who has aphasia) at the drug store. You need to let him know when and how many pills to take each day.

You could say the following, but it may be too complex:

"Bill you need to take this medication twice a day – when you get up in the morning and before you go to bed."

A **HELPFUL** communication partner would simplify the information in several ways:

"Bill, take the pills two times a day. One in the morning and one at bedtime."

OR

"Bill – take one pill when you get up and one when you go to bed."

OR

(gesture with one finger) *"one pill"* (gesture waking up – or point to the clock) *"and one pill"* (gesture going to sleep – or point to the clock).

The key point is to make sure that the person understands the information. Simply saying the exact same sentence over and over again may NOT be helpful. **Rephrase** – and say the information another way.

3. **Do not shout**
Saying something louder does not help the person with aphasia to understand the message better.
4. **Use simple drawings or writing**
Draw a picture, or **write key words** to supplement what you are saying.

5. Supplement your speech with gestures

Point to objects that will clarify the message – or **act out** what you are trying to say. For example, if you would be talking about a phone call, you can gesture holding a phone with your thumb and little finger held to your ear.

6. Keep similar topics together

Let the person know when the topic is changing. For example, the following information might be difficult for someone with a receptive aphasia to understand:

"I saw Joan on the bus today and she wanted to say hello to you. She said to remind you about your hair appointment tomorrow – she'll be there. Oh, and did you pick up the mail today?"

A **HELPFUL** communication partner might say: *"Joan was on the bus today. She said hi. She'll see you tomorrow – you have a hair appointment."*

"Now let's talk about what you did today. Did you pick up the mail?"

7. Ask one question at a time

For example, instead of saying *"Where do you want to get something to eat and what time should I pick you up?"* you could say:

"What restaurant would you like to go to?" (let the individual answer) Then ask: *"What time should I pick you up?"*

OR:

You may even wish to give choices: *"Would you like to go out for pizza?"* Individual answers "yes." Then ask: *"Would you like to go to Angelo's?"*

Then ask: *"What time should I pick you up?"* (again you can provide a choice) *"7 o'clock?"*

8. Confirm comprehension before proceeding

Ask questions to be sure that the information was understood.

For example: *"OK, so we are going to Angelo's for pizza. I'll pick you up at 7 – OK?"*

9. Encourage use of assistive devices

Encourage the individual to wear his/her glasses and/or hearing aid(s).