Making Communication A Success

Communication problems are common after a stroke and with other conditions that affect the brain.

Communication can include difficulty with:
- talking
- understanding
- reading
- writing

How might you feel if you couldn’t communicate?

You might experience:
- loneliness
- sadness, depression
- low self-esteem
- misunderstandings, frustration and anger

Did you know:

There are two types of communication problems:
- Receptive - trouble taking messages IN through listening or reading
- Expressive – trouble getting messages OUT through talking or writing

People with communication problems:
- do not lose their intelligence or ability to make decisions
- may understand even if they cannot talk
- may have physical or emotional outbursts due to frustration
### DON’T

- Raise your voice. Do not assume the person has a hearing problem.
- Stand over a seated person.
- Frown, cross your arms, or use non-verbal cues that indicate frustration or impatience.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Rush communication.
- Jump into a topic or move quickly from one topic to another. Don’t ask many unrelated questions.
- Feel like there are no options if words don’t work.
- Get frustrated with the person.
- Forget to acknowledge the person’s intelligence.
- Assume that you understood the message.

### DO

- Use short, simple sentences in a normal tone of voice.
- Position yourself at eye-level.
- Use positive facial expressions and body language to support your message.
- Ask simple yes/no questions (e.g., “Would you like orange juice?”).
- Be patient. Allow time for a response.
- Make each individual topic clear and all topic changes clear (e.g., “Now, let’s talk about your pills”). Then get more specific with questions.
- Print key words, use pictures, specific gestures, simple drawings, and facial expressions.
- Acknowledge the difficulty, take a break and come back later (e.g., “Can we please try again later?”).
- Use phrases like: “I know you know”.
- Always confirm and summarize the response (e.g., “Yes, you want to go to the bathroom.”).
Tips for Successful Communication

Important tips to remember:
- Ensure hearing aids and glasses are in place
- Reduce noise & distractions (e.g., turn off TV)
- Ensure adequate lighting
- One person should speak at a time

MESSAGE IN
- Position face-to-face
- Use gestures & facial expressions
- Establish topic
- One topic at a time
- Use short sentences
- Print key words
- Use simple drawings & pictures
- Watch for body language to ensure understanding
- Ask YES/NO questions

MESSAGE OUT
- Allow extra time
- Use support & encouragement
- Identify general topic first
- Encourage gestures & pointing
- Ask YES/NO questions
- Use picture/word boards
- Encourage writing
- Verify the message