

GOLDEN RULES

of Communication

You have experienced a sudden change in communication with someone that you love and care about. This is stressful on so many levels. You may feel you have taken on new roles, including communication ones like interpreter, spokesperson. You may be at a loss to know how to navigate your relationship with your loved one, friends, family and with others that you have interacted with BEFORE & AFTER this change in communication. You may be grieving something that you feel has been lost, or a future that isn't what you imagined. You may be wondering how you can do it all, and feel whole yourself and help your loved one feel whole. You may also be noticing some beautiful pieces that are still there, or that you never noticed before!!

I hear you, I see you.

If you feel like this might help, what follows is a mini-introduction to communication and what you can try.

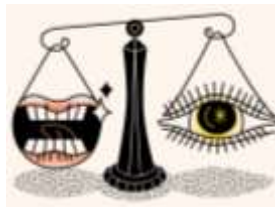
❖ Communication is ALWAYS more than words.



This is **not NEW** or **UNIQUE** to **YOU** or **YOUR LOVED ONE**. We **ALWAYS** rely on nonverbal communication as well as verbal.
Nonverbal communication can include:

body & hand **gestures**, body **stance**, **eye contact**, **facial expressions**, **tone of voice**, **physical nearness**, use of other communication **aids** (single images or media, collections of images or other media, paper or board & pencil/pen/marker, speech or communication devices, emojis, etc.).





The **BALANCE** of **VERBAL & NONVERBAL** communication may need to change for **good** communication to happen.

- ❖ **Good communication** = a **message** is **sent & received**, & the **intended meaning** is **conveyed & understood**. Communication is as **efficient & timely** as possible.



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AND



AND




- ❖ Everyone has communication **STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES**. That's **YOU**...that's **ME**...that's **all of the people with whom you communicate!**



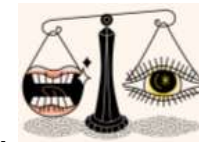
These may have shifted, but you & your loved one still have **STRENGTHS**. Maybe they are **DIFFERENT** strengths. Maybe some are the **SAME!!**



These skills **aren't STATIC**—the **balance**  **will shift** due to: stress, well-being, sleep, communication & emotional context, your communication partner's presence & actions & words.



- ❖ Communication is at least a **2-way street**. The responsibility for **good** communication is **always AT LEAST on 2 people**.
- ❖ Your loved one is **competent**, and there is a very good chance they know what they want to say.
- ❖ **You and your loved one** are **VALUABLE & NEEDED** communicators & should be **VALUED in & for** your communications!



Your loved one has experienced a **shift** in their **communication balance**.

Strategies to enhance **your strengths & their strengths** will increase both of your **confidence & effectiveness** as communicators.



❖ Because our society is built to **VALUE & EXPECT** verbal communication as the **main ingredient** in the communication recipe, communication partners **known** & **unknown** to you **MAY**:



PANIC or GET FLUSTERED



DOUBT THAT GOOD COMMUNICATION CAN HAPPEN WITH YOUR LOVED ONE



WONDER **WHAT HELP THEY NEED** TO COMMUNICATE

RESENT NEEDING TO HELP



WONDER IF GIVING HELP WILL BE **HARD**

TOO HARD??????



**Vault with
your Voice**

SPEECH & SWALLOWING SERVICES



WONDER IF THEY HAVE
TIME TO GIVE THAT HELP



WONDER IF **HELP** WILL = **GOOD COMMUNICATION**

IS THIS A REASON TO NOT TRY?

*MAYBE TALKING TO **YOU** IS BETTER? Certainly
FASTER.....*



PITY or FEEL SORRY FOR YOU
or your loved one

“**OTHER**” you or your loved one

MAKE YOU FEEL SMALL

This is unfair. You may sense a need to manage both YOUR communication anxieties + YOUR partner's anxieties + THOSE of everyone with whom you communicate. This is a symptom of society's ABLEISM. Your communication partners may lack the imagination to see how communication can work well with “Someone Like Your Loved One”. **When we DON'T SEE or HAVEN'T SEEN, it's like we CAN'T IMAGINE or BELIEVE.** *

It **STINKS** that it falls on you and your loved one to show a communication partner that good communication with THEM is possible---BUT it may be the 1st step to trigger someone else's imagination.

...and a 1st step toward changing the imagination of society.



SPEECH & SWALLOWING SERVICES

- ❖ It can be hard to have an **OPEN MIND** about **new, unfamiliar communication partners**, but in some cases you may find that the above **assumptions** AREN'T true at all.

WE ALL MAKE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT OTHERS. This helps us figure out what **might be true** when we really don't know. **The unknown can be uncomfortable.** But just like THEIR assumptions about YOU and YOUR LOVED ONE can be various amounts of true/false, so can YOURS about THEM.

- ❖ There are communication strategies **FOR YOU, FOR YOUR LOVED ONE, FOR OTHERS AROUND YOU, and FOR THE SETTINGS/SITUATIONS you seek out.** These will be specific to YOU and YOUR LIFE.



Your **confidence** + your use of **YOUR strategies** + letting **others** know what **strategies** THEY should use = the **new RECIPE** you, your loved one, & your conversation partners will follow to be able to **SHARE RESPONSIBILITY for GOOD COMMUNICATION.**

Laying out **what to expect reassures** your communication partner, **preventing or curbing panic, negative thoughts & worries.**





You **WILL** convince your communication partners who may have been making negative assumptions that:

- 1) YOU & YOUR LOVED ONE know what it takes to have good communication with YOU BOTH, and**
- 2) good communication CAN HAPPEN with YOUR LOVED ONE...**



....that an **UNEXPECTED** shift in the communication balance **CAN** still create a good communication outcome for ALL!

Good Environment Set-up

- **No** background noise  . No visual distractions.
- **Face** each other 
- **Good lighting** 
- **Have materials** you need or your communication partner needs 
 - **Phone**
 - **Pen & paper, or white board & marker**
 - **A simple rating scale (like a number scale 1 to 10 with faces to indicate likes/dislikes)**
 - **Alphabet board**
 - **Yes, No, On the Right Track, Not on the Right Track visuals**





- Have your loved one's **Communication Card** :
 - Written materials including your loved one's **communication strengths & challenges**, what the **communication partner needs to do** to ensure good communication, what **YOUR loved one** will be **doing** to ensure good communication
- **In General:**
 - **Get a taste of strategies through this FREE, short series of modules in Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA) by the Aphasia Institute in Canada.**
 - Directed at healthcare providers, but the strategies apply to all of us!
 - <https://www.aphasia.ca/health-care-providers/education-training/online-options/>
 - **More extensive, free training (10-15 hours)**
 - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/short-courses/search-courses/better-conversations-aphasia-e-learning-resource>
 - **TO THEM**
 - **If your loved one is having trouble saying what they want to say, acknowledge the feeling & the difficulty.**
 - **Example:** I know you know what you want to say. It's tough to get it out, and that's frustrating. Let's see if we can get to the bottom of it.
 - **If you get their meaning, mission accomplished!!! There is no need to insist that they re-attempt the message in a more "grammatical" way.**
 - **Example:** if they find a picture on their phone of a dog, and you get that & confirm that they are talking about the dog, there is no need to insist they say: "the dog".
 - **No quizzing**



- Make sure they **have a way to answer you or state something themselves** (see What Else? below)
- **FOR YOU**
 - Use **yes/no questions**, or **limited choices** (list the choices—visually (written and/or pictures/drawing) and/or out loud)
 - Use a **slow-normal rate**
 - Use **short, simple sentences**
 - Tell your **topic** (Let's talk about our vacation...vacation)
 - Write it down (vacation) or draw something (airplane, palm tree) to provide more clues, as well.
 - Repeat yourself, especially important words
 - Make sure they understood YOU
 - Via point, gesture, nod—some sort of clue. Facial expressions & posture can give you clues to this as well.
 - Try a different strategy above if they didn't understand. Or try repeating.
- **What else (for BOTH OF YOU)?**
 - Add gestures to help
 - Pantomime actions
 - Draw something out
 - Make a list (for steps, choices, sequences, more complex ideas)—this can be with words or drawings/pictures
 - Use pictures (that you find on your phone, for example)
 - Use drawing (symbols, etc.)

