

HELPING COMMUNICATION AFTER A STROKE

Having a conversation with someone who has communication problems is just as much a two way experience as for anyone else.

You both share responsibility for making the conversation successful.

Your communication skills can make a difference.

Here are some things that can be helpful.

General Information

- Do be prepared to **give** the person you want to converse with your full **attention**.
- **Minimise** distractions and background **noise**.
- **Reassure** the person you will give them the **time** they need.
- Remember that a person may have **more difficulty** on some days than others, particularly if they are **over tired, upset or under pressure**. If so offer support and be prepared to wait.
- Remember the other person has **opinions** and **thoughts** which are important and **valid**.
- Difficulty communicating does not mean the person has impaired intellect – treat them as you would like to be treated.
- Remember communication is much more than just words; **WATCH** and **LISTEN** to how something is being communicated; It's not **WHAT** you say, it's the **WAY** you say it!!



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Scottish Charity No. SCO18761

Having a Conversation

- Try to establish a reliable **yes** and **no** between you. Remember **gesture** may be more reliable than speech.
- Speak **slowly** and **clearly** and at **normal volume**.
- Use short sentences keeping **language simple** and offering **choices** when asking questions.
- Encourage the use of simple **gestures**, thumbs up or down, pointing, miming- such as feeling hot, cold, tired, and hungry for example. Be prepared to support your **own** speech with the use of simple gestures too.
- Keep a **pen & paper** handy for both you and the other person to use.
- **Writing** and **drawing** may be helpful.
 - Write down **important words** to help focus the conversation.
 - Write down **choices** to help someone pick the right word.
 - Encourage the person to try and write – even a couple of **letters** may help you find the word he is searching for.
 - Write down words which summarise the conversation, the person can then agree/disagree with what **YOU** think has been said.
- Encourage the use of other **resources** such as maps, pictures or photos, diaries, newspapers and calendars. Be prepared to use resources to support your own conversation too.
- Ask for **repetition** – especially if someone’s speech is slurred or indistinct.
- Clearly indicate when you have understood – use **facial expressions** and **intonation** to support your speech when conveying meaning, understanding and encouragement.

Remember: *the person with the communication difficulty is usually trying their best to communicate; the person who can make the difference may be YOU and how you change YOUR communication.*



Don't

- **Don't pretend** to understand if you do not. **SAY** you have not been able to understand and **go back** to a point in the conversation where you were both clear.
- **Don't ask other people** for information that the person could provide.
- **Don't speak FOR** the person **assuming** he or she can't respond/understand.
- **Don't** turn a conversation into therapy or a test by making someone say a word over and over.

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Where to get more help

- Ask the speech and language therapist for more specific individual advice.
- The charity Connect produces two publications you might find useful:
 - ‘Better conversations’ (£7.50 plus p&p)
 - ‘The stroke and aphasia handbook’ (£20 plus p&p)
- The charity Speakability also provides a range of information:
 - Tel: 0207 261 9572 Website: www.speakability.org.uk

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If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence,
please call the Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland Advice Line

Monday – Friday 9.30am – 12.30 and 1.30pm – 4.30pm

0845 077 6000