



Communicating with Patients/Clients Who Know More Than They Can Say

An Introduction to

Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA™)

Developed by: The Aphasia Institute

*Provided through: the Community of Practice in Communicative
Access and Aphasia*

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Communication Problems Occur Frequently

In addition to aphasia and dementia, people may:

- Have a hearing loss
- Not speak English as a first language
- Have low literacy skills
- Have other physical, cognitive, or mental health conditions that make communication challenging

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Health and Accessibility

The World Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 1948).

So. ...?

- Health is the ability to live life to its full potential
- For many people with disabilities, the environment must be modified to enable full participation in the life activities

Wheelchair ramps and other environmental modifications provide physical access, but **how can we provide communicative access?**

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Communicative Access

- It is considered a fundamental human right to have equal access to information and decision-making opportunities
- Meaningful healthcare participation and decision-making requires:
 - Finding and understanding (verbal) information
 - Engaging in conversation with health care providers

Talk is ‘the main ingredient’ in health care
(Roter and Hall, 1993)

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Barriers to Communicative Access

- Aphasia and other communication disorders reduce an individual's ability to engage in routine communication tasks, which are essential to participation in health care activities.
- The individual with a communication disorder is often not included in health care conversations as their competence is questioned, based on their inability to understand and express themselves easily.

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Supportive Environments

A highly supportive communication environment can greatly increase the opportunities for accurate information exchange and conversational interaction.

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Increasing Communicative Access: Effective Intervention

- The elements of a **communicatively accessible environment** include:
 - Trained service providers who use **adapted communication skills**
 - Health care information that is **translated into a pictographic format** that is more easily understood
 - Ensuring that the **individual is included in important decision-making events**, such as case conferences

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Increasing Communicative Access: Effective Intervention

The Aphasia Institute has developed a method of **adapted communication**, termed *Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia*

SCA™ is a set of techniques that includes:

- spoken and written keywords
- gesture and body language
- hand drawings
- sophisticated pictographs designed to support conversation on complex topics.

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Increasing Communicative Access: Effective Intervention

- The SCA™ method has been developed over many years of direct service and validated through research.
- It has been taught to thousands of health care workers from a variety of professional backgrounds.
- Feedback from those who have learned the method and used it in their daily practice has indicated that both the service provider and the patient benefit.

SCA™ users say:

- They view their treatment as more successful.
- They interact more confidently with patients who they may have avoided in the past.
- They are often surprised by the interactive changes possible by using a few basic techniques.

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Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA™)

**SCA™ is for patients/clients who
“know more than they can say”**

The SCA™ allows the care provider to:

- 1. Acknowledge Competence:** Using techniques to help patients/clients feel as though they are being treated respectfully
- 2. Reveal Competence:** Using techniques to get and to give accurate information

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Acknowledging Competence

Are You Treating the Patient/Client Respectfully?

Some tips to help you acknowledge competence include:

- Speak naturally (with normal loudness), using an adult tone of voice and a conversational style
- Acknowledge the patient/client's frustrations and fears of being thought of as stupid e.g. "*I know you know*"
- Deal openly with situations in which you have to communicate with a partner to obtain or give information
- Explicitly attribute breakdowns to your own limitations as a communicator (humour)

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Revealing Competence

Techniques to **get** and to **give accurate information**

- In: Is Your Message Clear?
- Out : Does the Patient/Client Have a Way to Answer or Ask Questions?
- Verify: Have You Checked to Make Sure You Have Understood?

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Revealing Competence “In” Is Your Message Clear?

The following tips can help reveal competence and ensure that the message is getting ‘in’:

1. Use short, simple sentences and expressive voice
2. As you are talking:
 - ✓ Use gestures that the patient/client can easily understand
 - ✓ Write key words/main idea e.g. ‘*pain*’ in large bold print
 - ✓ Use pictographic materials – focus on one at a time

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Revealing Competence “In” Is Your Message Clear?

3. Eliminate as much distraction as possible (noises, other people, too much material)
4. Observe the patient/client to assess comprehension (facial expression/eye gaze, body posture, gesture)
5. Use a hierarchy of techniques to support talking including talking PLUS:
 - Gesture
 - Writing
 - Pictures/objects
 - Drawing

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Revealing Competence

“Out” Does the Patient/Client Have a Way to Answer or Ask Questions?

Tips for ensuring the person has a way to get information ‘out’ include:

1. Ask “yes/no” questions and make sure that the patient/client has a way to respond
2. Ask one thing at a time
3. Ask the patient/client to give clues by gesturing, or pointing to objects, pictures and written key words (e.g. “*can you show me...?*”)
4. Give the patient/client time to respond
5. Multiple choice questions versus “yes/no” questions
6. Phrase “yes/no” questions in a logical sequence (general to specific)

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Pictographic Materials

- The Aphasia Institute has developed a large library of pictographic images that depict complex adult topics in a nonverbal format.
- For a health care provider who is using adapted communication skills, this type of pictographic support can make all the difference in the success of an interaction.
- The following 3 slides show examples of pictographic materials

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RESIDENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS




► To be treated with **DIGNITY** and **RESPECT** 

► Participate in **MAKING DECISIONS** about your **CARE**

 Medication

YES NO


 Case Conference

YOU YES NO

► Know **WHO** will **HELP** you 

YOU

► **INFORMATION**

 Rules

 Speak Out

► **NO ABUSE**


 Physical

 Mental Abuse

► **PRIVACY**



Because this is YOUR HOME

 Ontario 



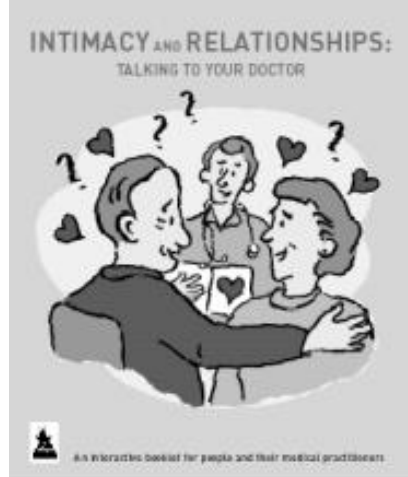


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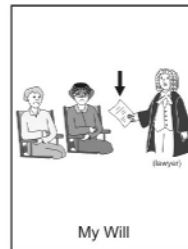
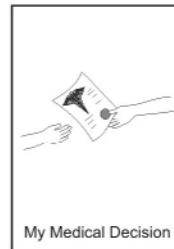
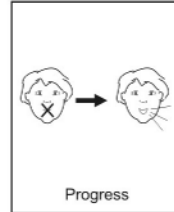
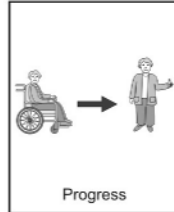




Chaplain



I Want to Talk About ...



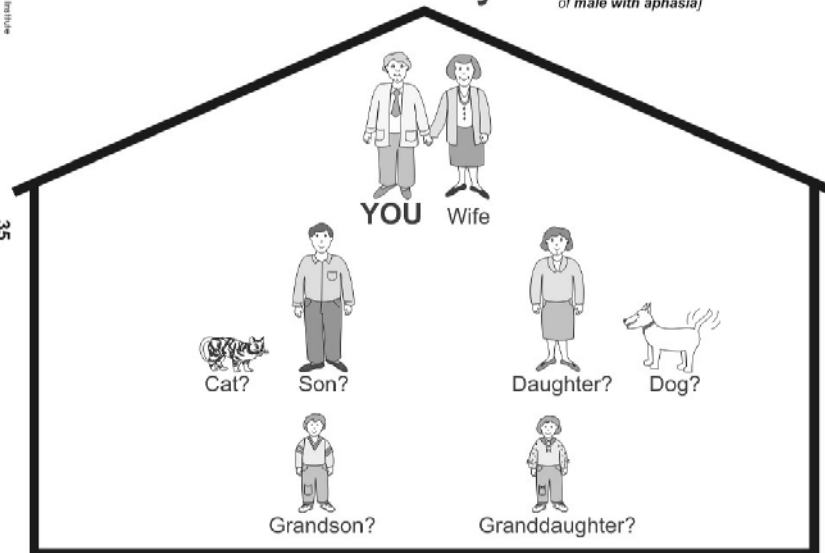
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Talking to Your Counselor or Chaplain

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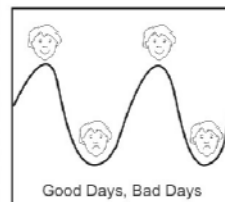
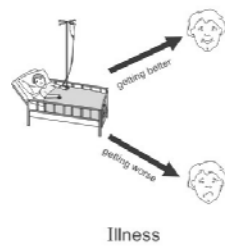
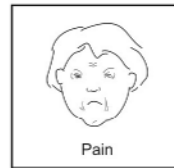
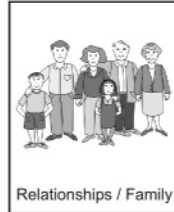
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Family [Spouse, children, and grandchildren of male with aphasia]



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I Want to Talk About ...



May I Come Back to See You?



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Talking to Your Counsellor or Chaplain

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Communion



Confession



Sacrament of the Sick



Rosary

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Hanukkah



Friday Night Candles /
Shabbat Candles



Kaddish



Shofar

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Revealing Competence

“Verify” Have You Checked to Make Sure You Have Understood?

The following tips will help you to verify that you have understood what the person is trying to tell you:

1. Reflect: repeat the patient/client’s message
2. Expand: add what you think the patient/client may be trying to say
3. Summarize: pull things together at the end of a longer discussion; summarize slowly and clearly what you think the patient/client is trying to say, e.g. ... “so let me make sure I understand. ...”
4. Add gesture or written key words, if necessary



Summary

Click to add title

Click to add first level of text

Second level

Third level

1. Communication is an essential element in health care delivery:

Health care providers routinely talk with patients in order to make diagnoses and provide treatment

Patients are more likely to participate actively in health care interventions if they are involved in discussions with providers

2. Communicative Access depends upon:

- Health care providers using adapted communication strategies, such as Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia™ (SCA)
- Health care organizations facilitating communicative access through policies, education, and organizational culture

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For more information on SCA™ and pictographic resources, please contact the APHASIA INSTITUTE

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