

Talking Turkey

ABOUT

APHASIA INCLUSION AT THE HOLIDAYS



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
PROMOTING INTERACTIONS,
ACTIVITIES & CONNECTION

BY LIFE APHASIA ACADEMY

BRIDGE THE GAP

A spouse, significant other, or primary family member is the key person who can model beneficial communication techniques. Modeling demonstrates to others the key strategies to help the person with aphasia feel included and maximize connection.



Be Authentic

Encourage family and friends to be themselves when interacting. Yes, there may be discomfort. Many feel self-conscious and don't want to offend. Your loved one will pick up information based on your mannerisms, facial expression, and body language. Just be natural.

MODEL GOOD TECHNIQUES

- Give choices
 - Speak *just a bit slower*, in your normal tone of voice
 - Add brief pauses in between sentences
 - No need to speak louder (unless they are hard of hearing. 😊)
 - Wait for a response, smile, breathe
 - Be relaxed
 - Quiet environment, whenever possible
 - Speak with the intention of interacting, not informing
 - Supplement your message with gestures as appropriate
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PREPARE GUESTS

1. Acknowledge to your guests that they might feel uncomfortable or self-conscious interacting. Assure them that your spouse will not break, get mad, or act-up if he isn't able to communicate.
2. Remind them that he is the same person they knew before the aphasia. Encourage them to smile, touch his arm, and squeeze his hand. If they have the inclination to turn to him during a story, they should not hesitate to say what they would naturally say.
3. Depending on the gathering size, consider recruiting one person that can act as a buddy or communication companion. Provide them with the tools you would use to bridge the gap.

“It is truly possible to converse, make memories, and connect even with limited speech. They are the person you know. Their memories, experiences, and knowledge are still there. Aphasia is the condition that has broken these connections. Figure out a way to communicate. Limited speech is not limited voice! -DP



Team Up to Play

Select an easy-to-play board game. Form two-person teams to play. This allows the person with aphasia to interact and play and takes the pressure off. Ask simple questions to get a yes or no response, make a choice between two items, or use gestures to convey choices.

ACKNOWLEDGE YOU

You, the spouse, know your person better than anyone.

You likely will feel the pressure to entertain *and* look out for your person, keeping one ear to the gathering, the other to your significant other, and not burning the green beans!

You want your significant other's success more than anything. However, the need to protect may cause you to over-help. Be aware of your feelings and let him (and your guests) figure it out. Have faith! Struggling can lead to growth. Remember, your loved one will not break, and neither will your guests!



"Worry never accomplishes anything. When you have a problem, it is best to concentrate on the solution to that problem, not the problem itself."

Thomas D. Willhite

HOLIDAY ACTIVITY IDEAS

Activities around aphasia will take a bit of imagination, planning, and execution. Get a helper involved, or recruit the grandkids! Play games in teams.

- Reminiscing over pictures and photo albums
- Watching family movies
- Card games like UNO, Go Fish, Memory
- Board games like Chutes and Ladders, Monopoly, Sorry
- iPhone app, Head's UP
- for those with an Apple TV or similar device use screen mirroring and play, Stack the States, Word Chums, WordCrossed



HOLIDAY SPECIFIC IDEAS

- Play Pictionary, Apples to Apples, Jenga, Connect Four
- Arts and crafts with the grandkids
- Caroling inside or outside the house
- Modify holiday traditions like carving the turkey, dressing up like Santa

Keep traditions alive. Make modifications. Family and friends want to be helpful and inclusive. Show them the way!



Thank you!

Wishing you a wonderful, memorable, and healthful holiday. Do you have a tip or strategy to share with others? Please let us know! Reach out via email or social media. I'll share your tips with others. Have a question about aphasia? We're here to help! Give us a ring!

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