



# Talking Turkey

ABOUT

## APHASIA INCLUSION DURING THE HOLIDAYS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR PROMOTING  
INTERACTIONS, ACTIVITIES & CONNECTION



## BRIDGE THE GAP

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ROLE MODELS IN PROMOTING CONNECTION

The most effective way to teach communication techniques to individuals with aphasia is through modeling. The patient's spouse, significant other, or primary family member can be an ideal role model, demonstrating key strategies that foster inclusion and connection.

*Be Authentic*

### ENCOURAGING NATURAL INTERACTIONS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Allowing your loved ones to express themselves freely during interactions is crucial, even if it makes you feel uneasy or self-aware. Remember that nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions and body language, can convey as much information as verbal communication. Therefore, it's best to be yourself and let the conversation unfold naturally.

### 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



## 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 normally 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 or significant other, 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.

Some ideas can include

- Pull out the family albums, yearbooks, and vacation photos and share a story
- Watching personal family movies or a favorite holiday movies
- Card games like UNO, Go Fish, Memory
- Board games like Chutes and Ladders, Monopoly, Sorry
- iPhone app, Heads UP
- for those with an Apple TV or similar device, use screen mirroring and play Stack the States, Word Chums, WordCrossed



## HOLIDAY 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 in a Christmas or Santa hat, stringing popcorn on the tree
- If they are good with their phone, ask them to take selfies with each of the family members

Keep traditions alive.  
Make modifications.  
Family and friends  
want to be helpful and  
inclusive.

Show them the way!



# Wishing you a festive, memorable, and healthful holiday!

- A little planning and consideration, you can make the holidays an enjoyable experience for your loved one with aphasia. Here are some tips to keep in mind:
- Modify family traditions to accommodate your loved one's needs and find ways to help them engage.
- Small gestures like smiling, acknowledging, and touching can go a long way in making your loved one feel included.
- Designate a buddy to assist your loved one, allowing another facilitator to lend a hand when needed.
- Keep an eye on your loved one's energy levels and engagement, and make necessary accommodations whether traveling or hosting.

Tune into our LIVE five-part holiday series on social media  
Every Thursday in October at 11:00 a.m. Central time

Considerations 🌟 Strategies 🌲 Checklists 🐔 Self-Care

🌟 Join us LIVE on your preferred social platform 🌟



*Happy Holidays!*

Replays of the episodes and more information at

[DoLIFESpeechPathology.com/Holidays](https://DoLIFESpeechPathology.com/Holidays)

