

WHAT YOU CAN DO— SUE'S ADVICE

The task may be huge, but take it one day at a time.

Educate yourself: Ask questions. Have a family member or friend with you as you talk with the case manager, social worker, patient advocate, doctor, nurse and therapist. Two sets of ears during this time can be critical because of the amount of information you must process.

Take care of yourself: Eat regular meals. Get plenty of rest. Let your doctor know your new circumstances. He or she may even prescribe medication to take the edge off.

Accept – and ask for – help: The task of being a caregiver can be daunting. Accept offers from family and friends to help with meals, errands, or even sitting with your loved one so you can get out for a while. There is no shame in asking for more help.

Find a support group for yourself: There are numerous support groups that offer compassionate understanding. You will get tips on how to cope with your “new normal,” and most importantly, you will get emotional support.

Find a support group for your loved one: Your loved one can also benefit from an aphasia support group where others share the same situation.

Learn communication strategies: How much speech your loved one regains cannot be predicted. Patience is key. Talk slowly and purposefully with your loved one about familiar things. Provide opportunities for a response, either verbal, written, or in pictures. Every smile, new word or gesture is a blessing that will carry you to the next.

Capitalize on strengths: Identify your loved one's inherent strengths. Many people with aphasia like to sing or draw. Simple games and puzzles are both stimulating and enjoyable.

Connect with others: Socializing is important for you both. Encourage your loved one to accompany you to social gatherings and on errands. You may become the interpreter, but just being with other people provides a significant morale boost.

WHO WE ARE

The Adler Aphasia Center, a non-profit organization, is an innovative post-rehabilitative therapeutic program that addresses the long term needs of people with aphasia and their families.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

We offer support groups for caregivers of people living with aphasia across New Jersey. Call **201.368.8585** for more information.

PROGRAMS FOR PEOPLE WITH APHASIA

For more information about our full service programs in Maywood or West Orange, NJ, or our bi-monthly two hour Aphasia Communication Groups in Bridgewater, Haddonfield, Hammonton, Maywood, Monroe, Morristown, Scotch Plains, Toms River or Union City, NJ, visit our website, **www.AdlerAphasiaCenter.org** or call **201.368.8585**.

OTHER RESOURCES

- **National Aphasia Association**
www.aphasia.org, email: naa@aphasia.org
- **American Stroke Association**
www.strokeassociation.org
Family Warmline 1-800-4-STROKE

Adler Aphasia Center

60 West Hunter Avenue
Maywood, NJ 07607
201.368.8585

Adler Aphasia Center at West Orange

JCC MetroWest
760 Northfield Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052
973.530.3981

info@adleraphasiacenter.org | www.AdlerAphasiaCenter.org

Adler Aphasia Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

A GUIDE *for* CAREGIVERS *for* PEOPLE *with* APHASIA

Shared Experiences
and Advice



A Vital Therapeutic Resource
for the Aphasia Community

MAYWOOD, NJ | WEST ORANGE, NJ
APHASIA COMMUNICATION GROUPS THROUGHOUT NJ

Aphasia, a communication disorder, usually occurs as the result of a stroke. It affects a person's ability to use words but does not affect their intellect.

Your loved one suffered a stroke (or other traumatic brain injury) resulting in aphasia. Like fingerprints and snowflakes, no two cases of aphasia are the same. Medical care will, by necessity, be directed to your loved one. But you will learn that the diagnosis affects you both.



CAREGIVER STORIES

Marilyn: “My husband was having eye issues and trouble with his right arm sensation, and then he had difficulty speaking...”

Don: “Peggy, my wife, complained of a sudden severe headache.”

Sue: “My husband, Jim, suffered a massive stroke just three days after having quadruple by-pass surgery.”

CAREGIVER EMOTIONS

Aphasia may begin differently, yet caregivers often experience similar emotional responses.

❖ DENIAL

Marilyn: “Denial kept me going. In my world there was no way my husband could lose his ability to speak. How would we be able to continue to run a business? In a few months this will all be a memory. They don't know what they are talking about.”

Don: “Denial in my case manifested itself as a complete inability to understand what was happening. Perhaps this is nature's way of allowing you to come to terms with the full implications of a situation by letting it be absorbed slowly in small doses.”

❖ FEAR

Marilyn: “Fear set in. What do I do without his help? Where do I get help? What about our business? My husband can't talk to me.”

Don: “I believed that with therapy we would get past this. When it became obvious that this was not to be the case, I experienced great fear, perhaps panic. Stress and sleepless nights took a toll.”



❖ FRUSTRATION

Marilyn: “Trying to understand what someone with aphasia is saying, it is like a game of charades. Getting through this is exhausting. My advice is to maintain a sense of humor. Laugh at yourself and laugh together.”

Don: “Frustration can come from the realization that as a caregiver you are really on your own. Reality and the responsibilities of life often prevent others, friends or family, from offering or giving as much help as you dreamed they would.”

❖ HOPE

Sue: “Even with the uncertainties of recovery, it is joyous that your loved one is alive. Every day brings hope and the promise of progress. Happiness is found in each new word, gesture or sign of understanding on your loved one's part.”

Marilyn: “Any new gesture or word is exciting and eliminates any hopelessness associated with this disability. Thank God for small miracles.”