

# 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!!



## HEAD OFFICE

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Scottish Charity No. SCO18761

## Having a Conversation

- Try to establish a reliable **yes, no** and **so-so** 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.

FACTSHEET  
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## Where to get more help

- The CHSS Advice Line can be contacted by email, fax and text message as well as by phone:

Email: [advice@chss.org.uk](mailto:advice@chss.org.uk)

Fax: 0131 220 6313

Text: Text 'chss' followed by your message and send to 07766404142

CHSS has a three part aphasia friendly series 'Your Stroke Journey' which may be useful.

The CHSS Conversation Support Book is also available free to individuals. It is an A5 laminated book with pictures and images to help conversation and communication with someone with aphasia.



- Ask the speech and language therapist for more specific individual advice.
- Connect produces two publications you might find useful:

Tel: 0207 367 0840 Website: [www.ukconnect.org.uk](http://www.ukconnect.org.uk)

- Speakability

Tel: 0207 261 9572 Website: [www.speakability.org.uk](http://www.speakability.org.uk)

**Chest, Heart &  
Stroke Scotland  
supports people  
with aphasia**



If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence, please call the

Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line

Monday – Friday 9.30am – 12.30 and 1.30pm – 4.00pm

**0845 077 6000**