

Experience what aphasia is like

Quick facts about living with aphasia

- Aphasia is an acquired communication impairment that can affect talking,
- understanding speech, reading, and writing.
- For many people it is a chronic problem that affects every area of life.
- People with aphasia often are misunderstood by others, who may:
 - Think they are mentally impaired or drunk.
 - Walk away or hang up on them.
 - Treat them like a child.
 - Avoid talking to them.

Why experience aphasia for yourself?

- Improve awareness and empathy.
- Provide information to help advocate for your loved one.
- Give insight to help solve communication challenges.
- Help foster confidence that you and your loved one can work together to improve communication.

Online resources for experiencing aphasia

All links are found in the article linked in the footer.

1. **A day in the life, with and without communication aids.** A woman with aphasia has trouble all day long. Watch how her family turns it around.
This YouTube video is “Understanding Aphasia - A communication difficulty caused by brain injury,” posted by Understanding Aphasia.
2. **A man speaks in fluent sentences, but they don’t always make sense.**
Tactus Therapy posted this YouTube video titled “Fluent Aphasia (Wernicke’s Aphasia).”

3. **Mike Caputo, one of the founders of Voices of Hope for Aphasia, has non-fluent aphasia.** Tactus Therapy posted this video, “Broca’s Aphasia (Non-Fluent Aphasia),” to show what this can sound like.
4. **Michael shares the social and emotional impacts of aphasia after suffering multiple strokes due to a road accident.** This YouTube video, “Life With Aphasia: I Lost the Ability to Communicate, Now I’m Fighting to Regain It,” was shared by CNA Insider.
5. **A woman shares that strangers think she is intellectually impaired** in this YouTube video called “What it feels like to have Aphasia,” posted by A Life After Stroke - Aphasia Awareness.
6. **Sarah Scott has over 1.3 million views on this YouTube video,** “Expressive Aphasia - Sarah Scott - Teenage Stroke Survivor.” This video, posted by SymphUK, is one of a yearly sequence of videos which showed her communication skills slowly improving over time. This video is the earliest one, when she was 19 years old, showing halting speech.
7. **Sixteen years later, Sarah Scott Dickens’ speech has dramatically improved.** She is talking in full sentences, with some difficulty. She is a new mother, working, and volunteering. This video, called “2025 Update for Sarah Scott Dickens who has a stroke at 18 with aphasia” on YouTube, posted by SymphUK.
8. **Artist Deonna Keiser, who has non-fluent aphasia and apraxia of speech, uses drawing to help her communicate.** She also uses her art to show how she sees the world after her stroke. You can see how difficult talking is and how drawing stick figures during conversation or painting her experience helps her communicate. This YouTube video is called “When Art Speaks: Living after Stroke with Speech Aphasia and Apraxia,” posted by Providence Swedish.

Immersive activities that may help simulate aphasia

1. **Interactive simulations of what it's like to have aphasia**, in English or Spanish, from Voices of Hope for Aphasia. Try your hand at listening, speaking, reading, or writing with aphasia.
2. **Find an instructional YouTube video for an activity like origami, drawing, tying a knot, or something that doesn't involve dangerous tools.** Increase the playback speed to the maximum available. Try to follow along and either do the activity or take notes. Is there a difference if you don't look at the screen? An alternative is to find a lesson in a language you don't know. Imagine if this is how English sounded to you!
3. **Change the language of a movie or show (or mute it and add subtitles in a language you don't know).** Can you follow what's happening? Could you multi-task while listening and watching?
4. **Do you know how to say 'hello' in another language?** Do you ever come across people who speak that language? What happens if you greet them in that language? Could you ask for the time or directions? Were you able to understand the answer? Were you nervous or anxious about speaking? Worried the other person might judge your communication skills? Was the communication successful? How did it feel?

You may learn strategies that help you understand, such as slowing down, asking for repetitions, seeing demonstrations or visual aids, or having written text or line drawings to go along with verbal speech.

You may notice that familiar topics are easier to understand than new ones. Even the most basic communication might cause you to feel nervous or anxious, when you're not confident in your skills.