



# ROOM-BY-ROOM COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

Communication with your loved one with aphasia is HARD. Let's un-complicate aphasia, room-by-room.

by LIFE Aphasia Academy® 2024

# TRANSFORMING YOUR LIFE WITH APHASIA

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication is hard. Even though communication strategies aren't complicated, changing the way we communicate can be challenging. It's easy to say "reduce background noise," but what does that look like in practice? This checklist is designed to help you apply communication strategies, room by room.



## ABOUT ME

My name is Genevieve, and I am a speech-language pathologist with 30 years of experience in aphasia rehabilitation. As the founder of LIFE Speech Pathology®, LIFE Aphasia Academy®, and LIFE Aphasia Collective, I have dedicated my career to empowering individuals and families affected by aphasia. Our holistic approach combines personalized therapy, family education, and community support to ensure that everyone impacted by aphasia feels seen, heard, understood, and supported. The innovative vision and unwavering commitment to excellence at LIFE Speech Pathology® have transformed countless lives.

## MISSION

Our mission with this guide is to empower spouses and care partners of individuals with aphasia. We aim to help you improve communication, reduce barriers, and reconnect with your loved one.

# TRANSFORMING YOUR LIFE WITH APHASIA

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## **PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE**

I created this resource to provide concrete steps for applying communication strategies. Work at your own pace through the rooms of your house. Don't take on the whole house. Focus on one room today. Build your awareness and understanding and achieve success by anticipating, recognizing, and applying communication strategies.

## **HOW THIS RESOURCE FITS INTO YOUR SUCCESS PATH**

This resource is a step toward empowerment when living with aphasia. While aphasia never completely goes away, focusing on small wins is crucial. This resource won't solve all your communication challenges, but it's a good start.

By following these practical steps, you'll be on your way to making meaningful improvements in communication with your loved one. Let's get started!

*Genevieve*

# COMMON OBJECTIONS + SOLUTIONS

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You downloaded this checklist, which tells me that you are looking for help and want solutions. Before we dive in, let's address some common objections about applying communication strategies.

**OBJECTION:** I don't have time to figure this out.

**SOLUTION:** Use small pockets of time throughout your day to work on this, like while having a morning coffee.

**OBJECTION:** It's too hard.

**SOLUTION:** Take it one step at a time, room by room. Select your most challenging room, pick one strategy to use. Just start and see the progress.

**OBJECTION:** Communication is complicated.

**SOLUTION:** Yes, it is. Focus on one room today. Be present and think it through without worrying about tomorrow.

**OBJECTION:** Nothing will change.

**SOLUTION:** Change isn't easy, but it's worth it. Decide if you want to stay as you are or take a step toward improving your communication.

**OBJECTION:** Who are you to tell me about communication strategies?

**SOLUTION:** Finish reading this checklist. If it doesn't resonate or make you feel empowered to take the first step toward control over aphasia, then send me an email at [Hello@DoLIFESpeechPathology.com](mailto:Hello@DoLIFESpeechPathology.com) and I promise to respond directly to you.

## ADDRESSING VARIABLES

Communication challenges aren't just about the environment. They involve topics, people, and situations. But we have to start somewhere, right? Let's begin with practical steps you can take now that will add up over time. Small wins can lead to big victories.



# A NOTE ABOUT JOURNALING

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I encourage you to journal your experiences, frustrations, challenges, and wins. It's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day and feel like you aren't making progress. Capturing something good about each day helps you feel gratitude, even when things are tough.

## **BENEFITS OF JOURNALING**

- **Clear Your Mind:** Journaling gets the noise out of your head, reducing stress.
- **Identify Patterns:** Look for patterns in your writing to identify recurring challenges and successes.
- **Release Frustrations:** Putting frustrations on paper can help you find solutions and feel more in control.
- **Track Progress:** Seeing your progress over time reinforces your wins and motivates you to keep going.

## **THE CREDIBILITY OF JOURNALING**

Research shows that journaling can significantly improve mental health by reducing stress and anxiety, improving mood, and enhancing overall well-being. It also helps with problem-solving and cognitive processing, making it a proven and effective tool for managing communication challenges with aphasia.



# ROOM-BY-ROOM COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST



# TV ROOM

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## TOP 3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE TV ROOM

1. **Reduce Distractions:** Minimize background noise and visual distractions to maintain focus.
2. **Avoid Interrupting:** Keep the conversation relevant to the show/movie and avoid unrelated topics.
3. **Make Eye Contact:** Ensure you have their attention before speaking.

### **EXAMPLE:** Watching a Show Together

Start and finish the show without getting up, talking about unrelated items, or interrupting. If you think of something to say, ask, or inform, write it down and return to it when the show ends. If it's important, pause the show, get their attention, pause, then set the context and share your message. This approach helps maintain focus and reduces frustration for both of you.

### **HERE'S A BETTER APPROACH**

- Agree to watch a show and commit to being present while it's playing.
- If the show is longer than 30 minutes, agree to pause it to take a break in the middle. Use this time to chat or get beverage refills.
- When the show is over, take some time to chat about it.

Consider being more deliberate about how you watch a show together. Plan for talk breaks and interruptions to maximize the enjoyment of watching the show together. This way, you can maintain focus during the show and still have meaningful conversations without disrupting the viewing experience.



# KITCHEN

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## TOP 3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE KITCHEN

1. **Don't Call from the Kitchen:** Avoid calling out from the kitchen to say or ask something when they are in a different room.
2. **Keep Topics Relevant:** Focus on topics related to food, eating, restaurant discussions, and party planning.
3. **Make Eye Contact and Provide Context:** Ensure you have their attention and set the context, like "Tell me about your day."

### EXAMPLE: Preparing Dinner

Imagine you are preparing dinner in the kitchen and call to the other room asking what they want to drink with dinner. You don't get a response. This likely happened because you didn't have their attention, interrupted their thoughts or activities, and weren't making eye contact.

### HERE'S A BETTER APPROACH

- Keep topics related to the kitchen in the kitchen or dining area.
- Remember, people with aphasia often have difficulty shifting their focus.

Instead of calling out, walk over to them, say their name, and pause. Make eye contact, then say, "Dinner is almost ready. Would you like water or iced tea?" As simplistic as this sounds, it can be remarkably hard to do. However, when aphasia is present, you'll have more success in sending and receiving messages if you take these preparation steps before speaking.



# BATHROOM

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## TOP 3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE BATHROOM

1. **Use Visual Aids:** When talking about teeth, use a toothbrush or toothpaste to provide relevant context.
2. **Use Routine Checklists:** Keep checklists and relevant items in view and accessible to support the routine.
3. **Get Their Attention and Eye Contact:** Ensure you have their attention and make eye contact before speaking.

### **EXAMPLE:** Showering Before Bed

Your husband is showering before bed, and you suddenly remember something important from the day. This isn't the right time for that discussion. Let him finish his routine and save the conversation for bedtime when you settle in. If you're worried about forgetting, keep a notepad and pen (and every room) to jot down reminders.

### **HERE'S A BETTER APPROACH**

- Keep topics related to activities in the bathroom.
- When you think of a topic irrelevant to this room, write it down and return to it later.

For those without aphasia, our brains are constantly multitasking. However, for someone with aphasia, their focus is often on one task at a time. This is a generalization, but it's helpful to think of them as having a one-track focus. Discussions are best when no competing activities, processes, or routines exist. Waiting for the right moment ensures a more effective and less frustrating conversation.

# BEDROOM

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## TOP 3 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE BEDROOM

1. **Context:** Always provide clear context for your conversations.
2. **Chatting About Unrelated Topics After Routines are Finished:** Focus on topics like getting ready for the day or bedtime routines.
3. **Reconnect at the End of Each Day:** Make time to connect with your loved one at the end of the day.

### **EXAMPLE:** Getting Ready for Bed

Your husband requires some physical assistance in getting dressed for bed. He's determined to complete the task himself. Be quiet, supervise, and resist helping and speaking unless he is struggling. Ask if you can help and wait for a response. A quiet environment allows him to stay focused on the task at hand.

### **HERE'S A BETTER APPROACH**

Establishing a bedtime routine is essential, especially for someone with aphasia. Here's how to approach it:

- Stick to a consistent routine for getting ready for bed to ensure tasks are completed without frustration.
- Avoid discussing the events of the day until after the bedtime routine is finished to prevent distractions and missed steps.
- Once the routine is complete, take time to talk about the day—what was good, what was challenging. This is a moment to reconnect as the day ends and you both start to relax.
- Physical contact, such as holding hands or sitting close can enhance this connection. It might feel awkward initially, but with practice, it will become a comforting and meaningful part of your daily routine.

# ROOM-BY-ROOM COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

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## TV ROOM

- Pause or turn off the TV before talking
- Limit interrupting a show to talk
- Make eye contact
- Plan for breaks to talk during commercials
- Avoid rushing them when talking

## BEDROOM

- Focus on routines before talking
- Introduce topics and when changing topics
- Ask if you can help if they are stuck on words
- Reconnect at the end of each day

## BATHROOM

- Keep topics relevant to the task and room
- Use routine checklists as needed
- Get their attention and make eye contact
- Use simple directions
- Maintain a calm environment

## KITCHEN

- Avoid yelling from one room to another
- Keep topics relevant to the room or introduce new topics
- Maintain eye contact and provide context
- Repeat back what you heard them say so they can make corrections
- Use supportive strategies like gestures, props, and written words

# THE BASICS: A COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

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## **Eye Contact**

- Make sure you have your loved one's attention before speaking. Eye contact helps focus their attention.

## **Slow Down**

- Speak slightly slower than usual. This gives them more time to process what you're saying.

## **Use Simple Sentences and Pause**

- Use short, clear sentences. Pause between them to give time for understanding.

## **Repeat Key Points**

- Repeat important points to reinforce understanding. Be patient and respectful.

## **Verify Understanding**

- Check if they understood by asking them to repeat or respond to your message.

## **Use Supportive Techniques**

- Use gestures or facial expressions to support your message.
- Use objects to help explain, like pointing to a clock when talking about time.
- Write down keywords as you talk to support understanding.

## **Observe and Adjust**

- Notice how they react in different settings. Adjust by reducing noise or moving to a quieter place if needed.



# DEBBIE'S KITCHEN SUCCESS

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Debbie has aphasia that impacts her ability to find words or explain precisely what she is thinking. She also has trouble shifting her attention from person to person or activity. Here's what she changed:

- Prepared most dishes ahead of time so she could socialize in a relaxed environment outside the kitchen.
- Asked just one person to help her serve the meal, reducing noise and simplifying the situation.
- Her husband became the go-to person for any questions, allowing her to focus on cooking without interruptions.
- Chose a quiet spot in the house for one-on-one conversations after the meal.
- Sat at the table and enjoyed listening without the pressure of carrying on a conversation.

**OUTCOME:** These changes helped Debbie enjoy hosting again, making socializing and cooking more manageable. Small adjustments led to big improvements.

## **PROMISE OF TRANSFORMATION:**

Just like Debbie, you can conquer communication challenges by using this checklist. It's not a magic wand, but a tool to help you create your own magic in improving communication.

# NEXT STEPS

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## IDENTIFYING YOUR TRANSFORMATION

Reflect on your wins and challenges. Celebrate small successes and continue to apply new strategies.

## SOLVING THE NEXT PROBLEM

If you want to keep solving communication problems, continue using this checklist and consider joining our membership community for more support and resources.

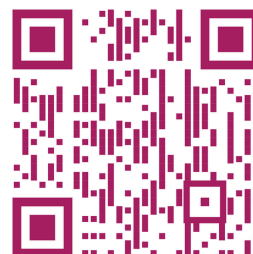
## GUIDING YOU BY THE HAND

We are here to support you every step of the way. For more personalized guidance, reach out to us at [LIFE Speech Pathology](#) or join the [LIFE Aphasia Collective](#) by registering your interest. When you do this you'll receive curated guidance on your next steps with aphasia. The Collective will open in fall of 2024.

## IT'S YOUR TURN

Register your interest in learning more about how the [LIFE Aphasia Collective](#) can support and train you on your journey with aphasia so you can build the life you want. Register your interest now and as a bonus, receive weekly emails to support your aphasia journey.

SCAN HERE  
TO LEARN MORE



THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE  
PRINTABLE VERSIONS OF THE TWO  
CHECKLISTS MENTIONED.

PRINT THEM OUT  
AND PLACE THEM AROUND THE HOME



# THE BASICS: A COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

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Effective communication is crucial, especially with aphasia. Here are some simple strategies to improve your interactions:

## **Eye Contact**

- Make sure you have your loved one's attention before speaking. Eye contact helps focus their attention.

## **Slow Down**

- Speak slightly slower than usual. This gives them more time to process what you're saying.

## **Use Simple Sentences and Pause**

- Use short, clear sentences. Pause between them to give time for understanding.

## **Repeat Key Points**

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