

2025 North Carolina Brain Injury Conference

**SLP Who?: The Speech Language Pathologist's
Role in the Brain Injury Population**

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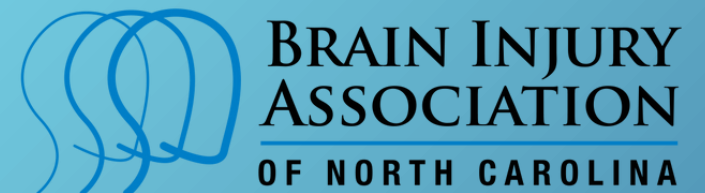
**Conversation Groups: The Critical Role of
Community in Recovery**

Katie Hoover, M.S., CCC-SLP, CBIS
& Annie Lane, Executive Director of The Aphasia Project

Brain Injury Conference

April 14-15th, 2025

Lumina on
Wrightsville Beach





SLP Who?

Exploring the Role of a Medical Speech Language Pathologist in
Brain Injury Rehabilitation.

Katie Hoover, M.S., CCC-SLP, CBIS
Carolinas Rehabilitation Northeast
Advocate Health



agenda

Introduction

What is an SLP?

Populations served

Continuum of care

About me:

Based in Kannapolis, NC

Born and raised in Rochester, NY

Speech language pathologist for 6 years

Carolinas Rehabilitation Northeast (Atrium Health), acute inpatient rehabilitation hospital

Facilitator of conversation group with Triangle Aphasia Project and founder of CR Aphasia Support Group through Atrium Health

Special interests in treating patients with brain injuries who have dysphagia and aphasia

Dog mom to Bella

Amateur potter, hiker, and kayaker



Who is an SLP?

- Speech language pathologist
- Undergraduate degree + Master's degree + fellowship year
- Work in schools, home health, outpatient clinics, specialty clinics, acute care hospitals, rehab hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, etc.
- Medical SLPs see patients with various diagnoses, including but not limited to:
 - Stroke
 - Brain injury
 - Cardiac
 - Pulmonary
 - Neurodegenerative (ALS, Parkinson's disease, MS, etc)
 - Head and neck cancer

What does a medical SLP do?



SWALLOWING



COGNITION



COMMUNICATION

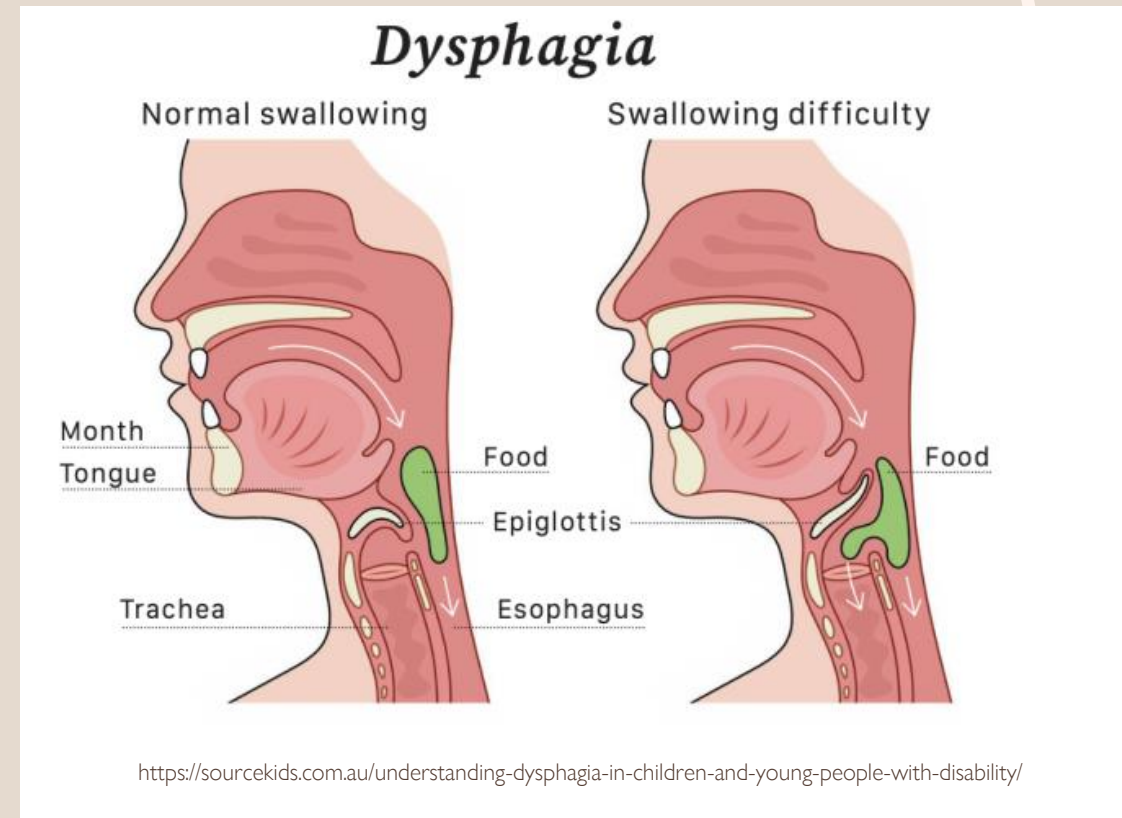
Swallowing

Dysphagia = difficulty swallowing

Many causes

Increases risk of:

- Choking
- Aspiration
- Pneumonia
- Respiratory failure
- Malnutrition, dehydration, weight loss



Evaluating the Swallow

1. Bedside swallow evaluation
2. Instrumental swallow study
 - a) Fiberoptic Endoscopic Evaluation of the Swallow (FEES)
 - b) Modified Barium Swallow Study (MBSS)



<https://dysphagiacafe.com/stand-up-for-standardization-collaborative-clarification-for-clinicians-performing-modified-barium-swallowing-studies-mbss/>



<https://langfun.com/choosing-between-fees-and-mbss-a-guide-for-providers/>

Treating Dysphagia

- Exercises
- Teaching and practicing compensatory strategies
- Respiratory muscle strength training (RMST)
- Neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) and surface electromyography (sEMG)
- Diet modification and liquid thickening

Cognition

- Brain injuries can impair cognitive processes
 - Attention
 - Memory
 - Organization
 - Executive functions
- Can impact independence and safety
- Some studies suggest up to 50% of TBI survivors report long-term problems with cognition

Communication

- Brain injuries can cause difficulty with communication
- Can decrease independence, impact safety, and cause social isolation

Receptive – information IN

- Auditory comprehension
- Reading comprehension



Expressive – information OUT

- Verbal expression
 - Writing
- Nonverbal communication

Video Examples

Aphasia

Apraxia

Dysarthria

Continuum of Care

Acute care

Inpatient rehab hospital
Subacute rehab
Skilled nursing facility

Home health
Out-patient
Community-based programs
Support groups



Questions?

Acquired Communication Disorders

Aphasia

Language disorder

Can affect one or all the language modalities:

- Speaking
- Understanding
- Reading
- Writing

Apraxia

Motor planning disorder

Message between brain and mouth gets “jumbled”

Know what you want to say, but can't get your mouth to say it

Inconsistent

Dysarthria

Caused by decreased control of speech muscles

Changes in:

- Articulation
- Phonation
- Resonance
- Respiration

Commonly presents as slurred speech

References

- Dhakal A, Bobrin BD. Cognitive Deficits. [Updated 2023 Feb 14]. In: StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing; 2025 Jan-. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK559052/>
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- Rabinowitz AR, Levin HS. Cognitive sequelae of traumatic brain injury. *Psychiatr Clin North Am*. 2014 Mar;37(1):1-11. doi: 10.1016/j.psc.2013.11.004. Epub 2014 Jan 14. PMID: 24529420; PMCID: PMC3927143.
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Conversation Groups: The Critical Role of *Community* in Recovery



What is **The Aphasia Project (TAP)**?

- The Aphasia Project is more often known as **TAP**
 - *Formerly “Triangle Aphasia Project”*
- A nonprofit organization 501(c)(3)
- Born in 2003 to extend, support and enhance the recovery of language abilities after a diagnosis of aphasia

TAP Mission Statement

We empower individuals with aphasia, their families, and the broader community by providing lifelong support, education, and resources to strengthen **communication**, build **confidence**, and foster meaningful **connections** for fully integrated lives.

TAP Personnel

- **Executive Director**, Annie Lane
- **Program Manager**, Olivia Herrmann
- 25 speech-language pathologists
- 2 recreational therapists
- 1 music therapist

Aphasia **Definition**

- Aphasia is an **acquired** language disorder
- Can affect one or all of the language modalities
 - Speaking
 - Understanding
 - Reading
 - Writing

Aphasia can affect people of all ages, races, and genders.

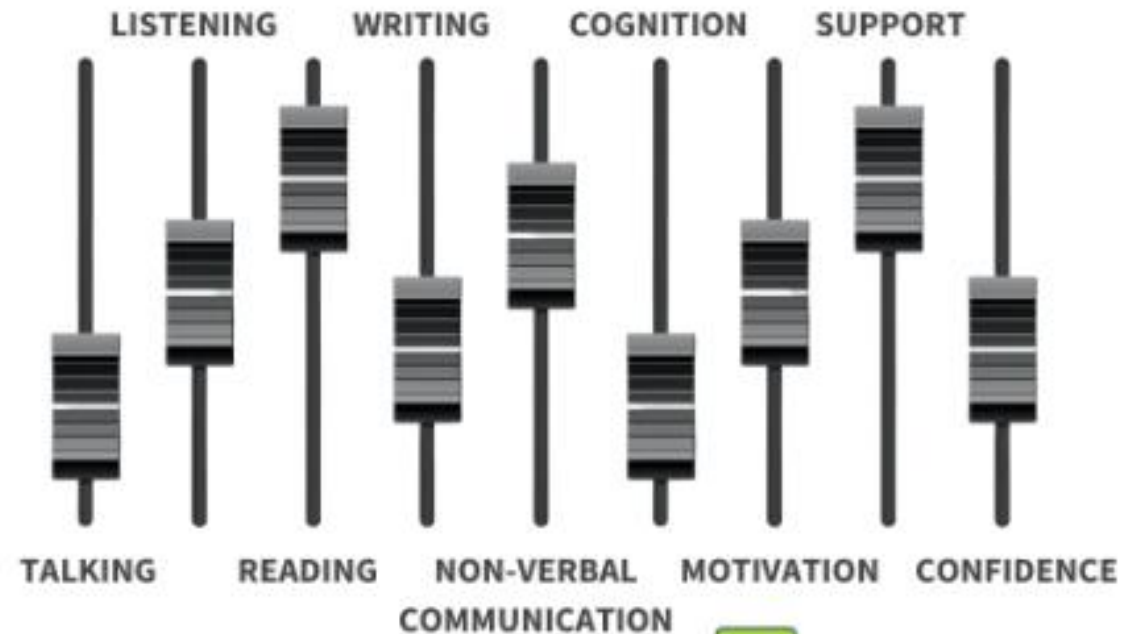


Aphasia **Severity**

We often think about aphasia severity like this:



When really it's more like this:



TAP PROGRAMS

Family Training

Train family and friends on how to effectively communicate with their loved one

Community Training

Train professionals and organizations on how to work with people with aphasia

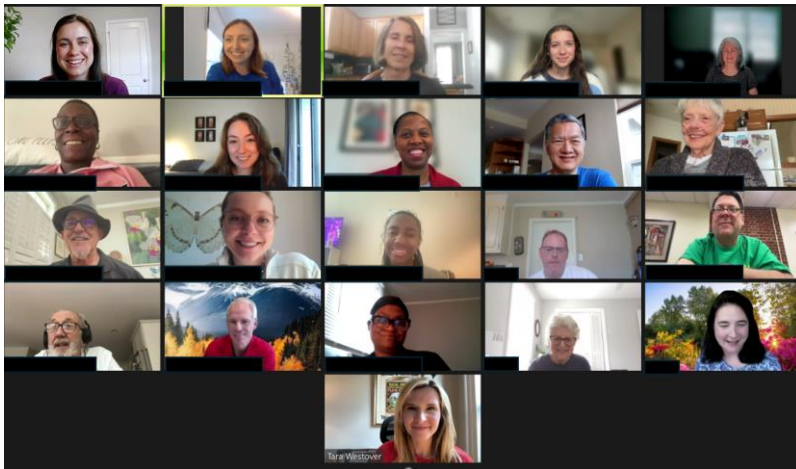
Conversation Groups

Groups led by speech therapists center around different topics and passions

TAP Group Options

Virtual



















Meet weekly via Zoom

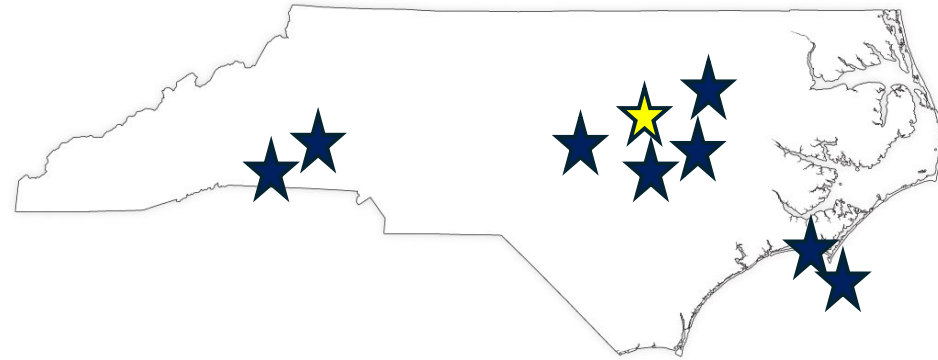


In-Person

Meet weekly at various location
across the community



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:30 AM-10:25 AM Monday Conversation 1 (Cary) 	11:00 AM-12:00 PM Conversation (Hillsborough) 	10:00 AM-10:55 AM Nuestro Encuentro (Cary) 	10:00 AM-10:55 AM Thursday Conversation (Cary) 	09:30 AM-10:25 AM TAPNewcomers (Cary) 
		11:00 AM-11:55 PM Wednesday Conversation (Cary) 	11:00 AM-11:55 AM Write On (Cary) 	10:30 AM-11:25 AM TAP into Literacy (Cary) 
		11:00 AM-12:00 PM Conversation (Clayton) 	02:00 PM-03:00 PM Conversation (Wilmington) 	11:00 AM-12:00 PM Conversation (Fuquay Varina) 
10:30 AM-11:30 AM Monday Conversation 2 (Cary) 	02:00 PM-03:00 PM Conversation (Wake Forest) 	12:00 PM-01:00 PM Wednesday Conversation 2 (Cary) 	04:00 PM-05:00 PM Conversation (S. Charlotte): Next Group on Oct 17 	11:30 AM-12:30 PM Friday Conversation (Cary) 
		04:30 PM-05:30 PM Conversation (Concord) 		02:00 PM-03:00 PM Pickleball Club (Raleigh) 



Centralized Outreach Model

In-Person Locations

- **Cary** – TAP Home Office
- **Wake Forest** – North Wake Senior Center
- **Raleigh (a)** – Jaycee Community Center
- **Raleigh (b)** – WakeMed Main Campus
- **S. Charlotte** – The Ivy Memory Wellness Day Center
- **Concord** – Resurgence Neuro Rehab
- **Fuquay Varina** – Capital City Speech Therapy
- **Wilmington** – Novant Health Acute Rehab Hospital

Virtual Options

02:00 PM-03:00 PM

TAP into Sports



01:00 PM-02:00 PM

**TAP into the
Bible**



10:00 AM-11:00 AM

**TAP into Word
Games**

11:30 AM-12:30 PM

TAP into Reading



10:00 AM-10:45 AM

TAP into Music



04:30 PM-05:30 PM

**Progressive
Aphasia Group**

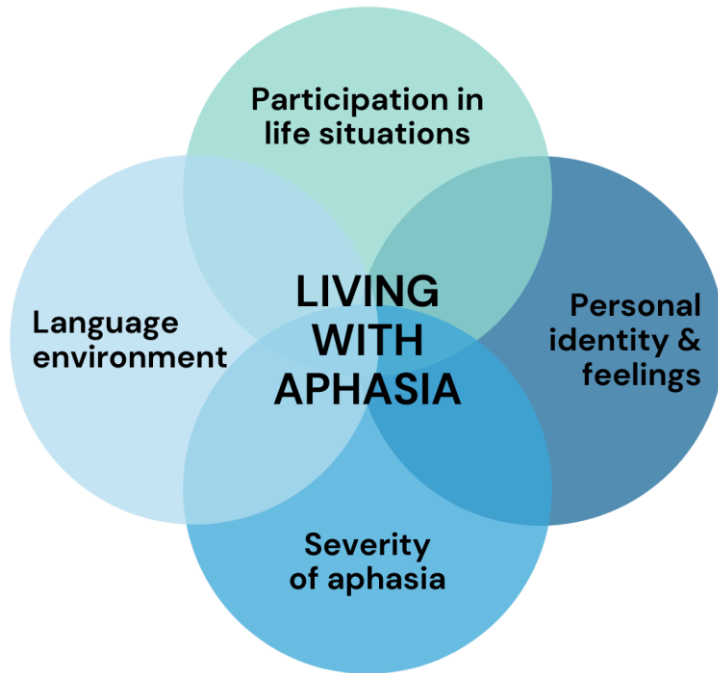


Group Dynamics

- Not traditional speech therapy, **community-based rehabilitation**
- Groups are led by **licensed speech-language pathologists** who bring their expertise and guidance to each session
- **Peer support** from those with shared lived experience

Supported conversation group + peer support group

Aphasia Care Progress



A-FROM (Kagan et al., 2008)



Neuroplasticity

Life Participation

- **Life Participation Approach to Aphasia** (Chapey et al., 2000)
 - Focus on person-centered care
 - Focus on life re-integration

Life Participation

- **Language & Communication** – How well someone can understand and express themselves.
- **Participation in Life** – How much they are involved in activities they enjoy, like hobbies, work, and social events.
- **Personal Identity & Well-Being** – How they feel about themselves and their confidence in communication.
- **Environment** – Support they have from family, friends, and the community.

Reminder...

The 3 C's in TAP's mission statement:

- **Communication**
- **Confidence**
- **Connection**

Neuroplasticity

- We used to think the brain was compartmentalized and fixed
- Now, we know that **brain circuitry can (and does) change based on the experiences it has**

*Takeaway: Brain cells get better at what they are asked to do

Neuroplasticity



Every opportunity is **reinforcing** a neural connection.

Every **missed** opportunity denies a connection, limiting full and timely skill development.

Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA™)

How to acknowledge competence

Indirect Means:

- Tone of voice
- Use of humor, choice of topic
- Talking to the individual, not the spouse or support person

Direct Means:

- “I know you know”
- State conversational roles... it’s a two-way street
- Acknowledge breakdowns
- Have supports available

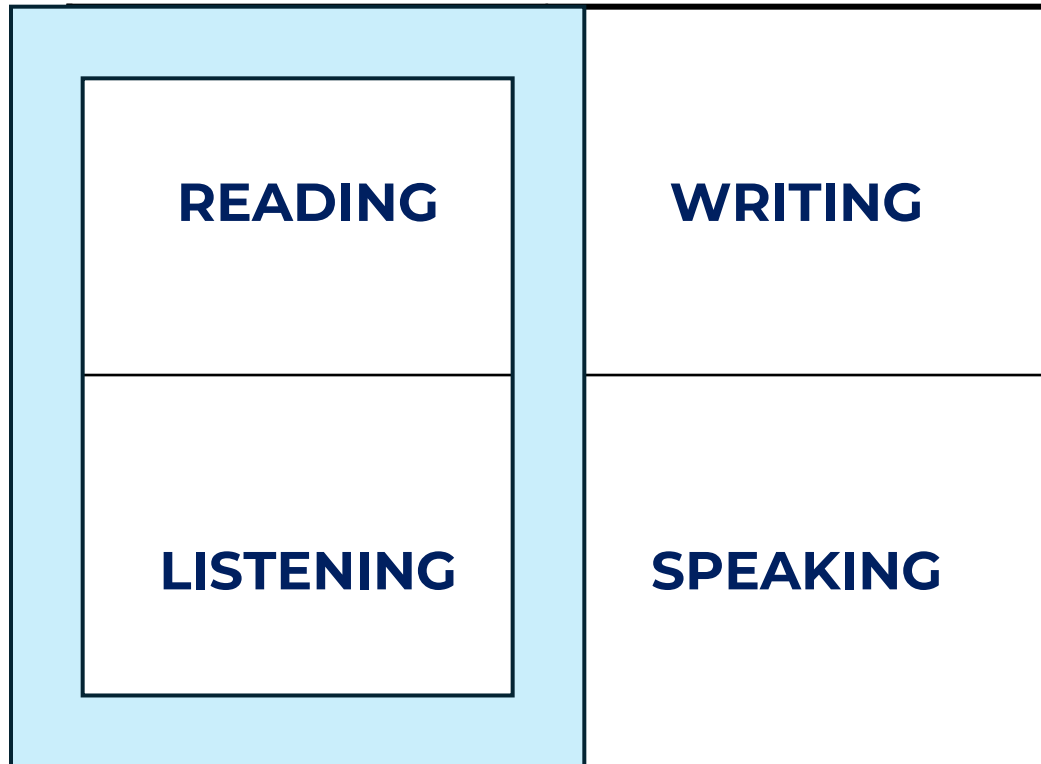
Supported Conversation for Adults with Aphasia (SCA™)

How to reveal competence

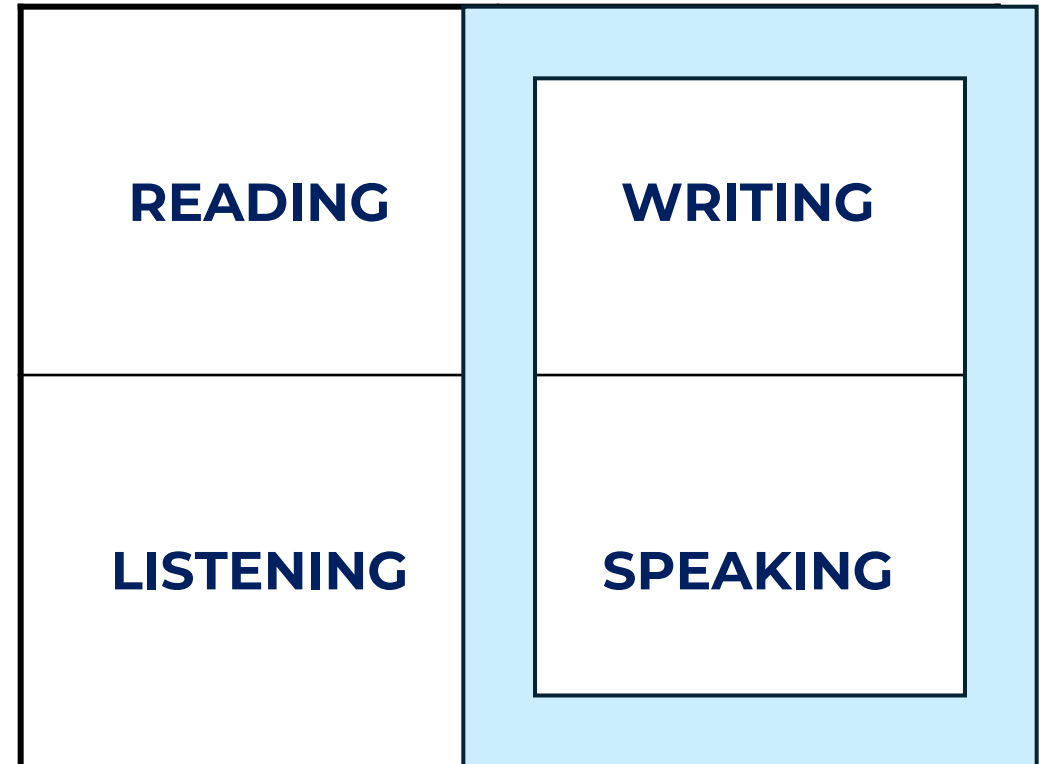
- Help get information **IN**
- Help get information **OUT**

Language

Receptive language:
Getting information IN



Expressive language:
Getting information OUT

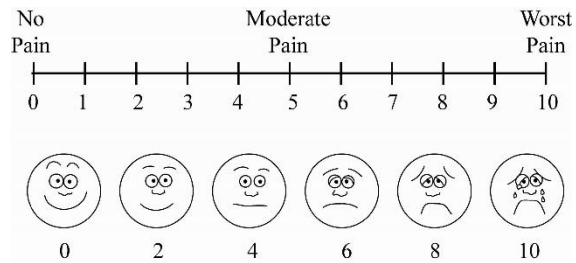


Communication Barriers

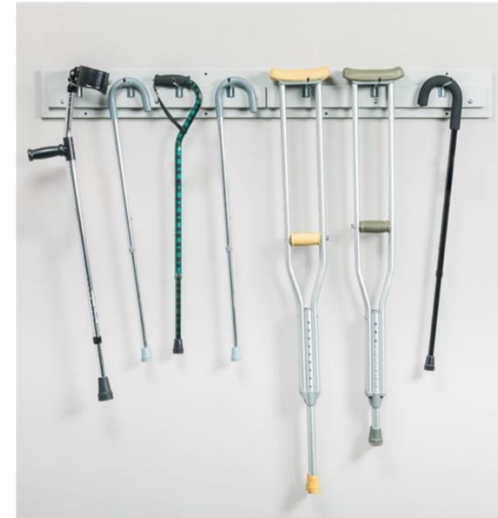
- **Compensation:** What will get a person *around* the problem?
- **Rehabilitation:** What does the person need to *do to get better*?

Communication Supports

Preparation



Accessibility



Communication Supports

Make it personalized and user-friendly!



Personalized Communication Book



Communication Supports

Pencil & Paper

Calendar

Alphabet Board

Number Board

Ways to Tell Time

Maps (local and world)

Color Chart

Pictures of Family

Pictures of Relevant Places

Phone/ tablet

Anything to help!



Client Testimonials

- TAP is **like a family** to me.
- TAP is a **way to learn from others** with aphasia.
- TAP offers a **space for others to care about me** and my family.
- TAP groups have **greatly improved my speaking**.

Care Partner Testimonials

“I wanted to let you know how appreciative we are for TAP and the Wednesday group. After yesterday’s group, [my partner] looked at me and said, ‘I’m funny!’... I said ‘Yes, you are!!’. And he IS funny!! I haven’t seen that side of him in quite a while.”

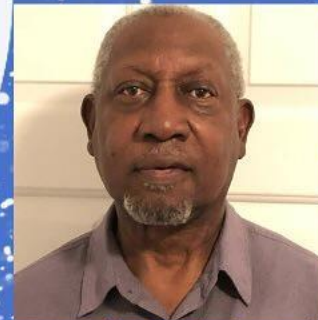
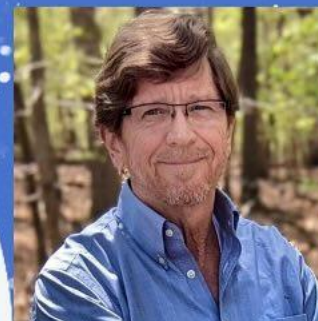


2024 Year in Review...

75% INCREASE
IN CLIENT ATTENDANCE HOURS

66% INCREASE
IN TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED

SERVING 5 NEW CITIES
WITH IN-PERSON GROUPS







THANK YOU!

Questions?

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