



Mid-Atlantic Aphasia Conference Newsletter



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www.midatlanticaphasiaconference.org

Talk With the Future of Speech

Mark Harder, *President-Mid-Atlantic Aphasia Conference*

MAAC has been talking with the speech students of various universities to share our stories, experiences, and insight of aphasia recovery. We find this to be a good opportunity to work on our speech and outlook of life.

We were at the Thomas Jefferson University, Temple University, Moravian University, and others during the last few months. Our next venture is in April at The College of New Jersey. We talk with the future of speech therapy, pathology, and research.



GET THE WORD OUT!! APHASIA!!

Ducks, Dogs, D’Cats, ...

We have Aphasia Awareness Ducks to advocate for people with aphasia. We have Awareness Aphasia Dogs and D’Cats at advocate for people with aphasia. See MAAC for our next event (calendar on page 8). If your pet wears the **“Get the Word Out! Aphasia!!” bandana** or you have an **Aphasia Awareness Duck**, share them on your social page and tag **#MAACDUCKS**, **#MAACAphasia**, **#GettheWORDOUT**, **#Aphasia**.

You can also post your pet on **Aphasia Ducks, Dogs, D’Cats Facebook Group!**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1559581832274903>



Talk Slow Day

be deliberate. feel relaxed. face to face.
give the other person a chance to understand.

Communication can break down in various conditions – cannot hear because it is too loud, too many voices in a room, not face to face, and talking too fast.

Talk Slow Day is for assisting people with **neurological communication disorders** like **aphasia** caused by **stroke, head trauma, brain tumor, brain infection, or diseases** like **multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, or cerebral palsy**.

BUT remember, don't talk to us as if we were babies.



Will you join our campaign to **Talk Slow Day on June 10th**?
It is an unofficial day, but the struggle is real.

Receptive Aphasia

<https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/talk-slow-day/>

Benefits of Talking Slowly

Slowing down benefits communication for the listener and for the speaker

- When someone speaks more slowly, it projects a sense of calm and allows everyone involved to relax in their bodies just a bit
- Words that are spoken slowly often carry more weight and power, allowing the listener to better understand and value each word more carefully
- Clear, slow speech is beneficial to everyone, but especially those who may struggle with neurological issues or injuries (including aphasia)

A promotional poster for a baseball game. At the top, it says "MID-ATLANTIC APHASIA CONFERENCE" with stars on either side. Below that, "BASEBALL Advocacy" is written in large, stylized letters. A central graphic shows a baseball with the MAAC logo (Mid-Atlantic Aphasia Conference) on it. To the left of the baseball is a "HAPPY HOUR 4:30PM" sign with a drink icon. To the right is a "FIRST 200 FANS GET ADVOCACY DUCKS!" sign with a duck icon. Below the baseball is a "POSTGAME FIREWORKS" sign. A red starburst on the left says "TICKET ONLY \$15". A red starburst on the right says "SATURDAY 6 JUNE 6:00PM". At the bottom, it features the logos for the "WILLIAMSPORT CROSSPITCHERS" and "TRENTON THUNDER" teams, separated by a "VS" sign. Below the team logos is "TRENTON THUNDER BALLPARK" and the address "1 THUNDER ROAD, TRENTON, NJ 08611". At the very bottom, it says "JOIN US FOR AN EXCITING STAR WARS THEME NIGHT - REVENGE OF THE SIXTH! PRESENTED BY HORIZON BCBSNJ WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCES FROM FAN COSTUME CHARACTERS." There are two QR codes at the bottom, one on the left and one on the right. The text "MAAC IS PROUD TO BE A SPONSOR OF THE THUNDER GAME!" is above the QR codes. Below the QR codes, it says "PLEASE STOP BY AND VISIT US AT OUR TABLE. WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE YOU THERE! MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!" and "msharder.macc@gmail.com - 215-852-0730". A "venmo" logo is in the bottom right corner.

Do Your Research!

Early in your **diagnosis of aphasia** (from a stroke, brain injury, or other conditions), you probably looked up Aphasia and wanted to know, "How long it would take to recover?"

Well, that's a good question.

Unfortunately, no one knows, even people with aphasia are different and our recoveries are very different!

The best advice is to find resources. Ask your family for help with reading if needed.

Here are a few VERY useful websites:

- [National Aphasia Association](#)
- [The Aphasia Library - The Aphasia Library](#)
- [Aphasia Recovery Connection | Home](#)
- [Aphasia - Symptoms & causes - Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Aphasia | NIDCD](#)

As you are healing, you might want to further your research through volunteering for practices and information that can assist future stroke survivors. Researchers may ask you a battery of questions or repetition of words. Sometimes you may receive stimulation to your brain by either magnet or electric waves. Most of the side effects are due to tiredness but the researchers will take you through the process, so you understand. You may be paid for the time. Research is not therapy, but as you work on your speech, it could help you too!

- 1) [Research Labs - Program Landing Page | Penn State College of Health and Human Development](#)
- 2) [Welcome | Laboratory for Cognition and Neural Stimulation | Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania](#)
- 3) [Research | Communication Sciences & Disorders | University of Delaware](#)
- 4) [Research | HESP | Hearing and Speech Sciences Department | University of Maryland](#)
- 5) [Speech, Language and Hearing BS Research Opportunities | Temple University](#)
- 6) National Aphasia Association [Latest Research Results](#)



Beware or Be Aware?

Tie: What's the big deal about seeing the signs? Be aware here, be aware there.

Me: Tie, seeing the signs are a big deal. You can save yourself or someone's life by being aware.

Tie: Well, if you stay away from the signs - then you will be safe.

Me: That is not the way it works. You have to know the signs:

B - BALANCE (Sudden loss of balance, coordination, or dizziness.)

E - EYE (Sudden vision changes, such as blurring, double vision, or loss of vision in one or both eyes.)

F - FACE (One side of the face droops or is numb; check if the smile is uneven.)

A - ARMS (Weakness or numbness in one arm or leg; check if one arm drifts downward when raised.)

S - SPEECH (Slurred speech, difficulty speaking, or confusion.)

T - TIME (Time to call 911 immediately. Every second counts.)

Tie - You have to do all this stuff at the fence?

Me: What fence?

Tie: You know, with the pictures of dogs on the fence! Be Aware of Dog.

Me: Tie, these signs say, "Beware of Dog!" Not, "Be Aware."

Tie: Well, I think if you aren't aware, then beware!



3rd Annual MAAC Mini-Conference at Bristol, Pennsylvania on March 21st

We had three incredible keynote speakers:

1. **Jonathan Hiron** shared his powerful film *Tip of My Tongue: A Story of Aphasia and Resilience*. After the screening, he joined us all the way from England to share his personal journey and engage in a meaningful Q&A.
2. **Alexandra Phister, MD**, presented on "Launching the Philly NeuroArts Network." As a Neurohospitalist at the University of Pennsylvania, she works with individuals with a wide range of neurological experiences and highlighted the important connection between art and disability.
3. **Ayana Webb, M.A., CCC-SLP**, spoke about her work supporting adults with aphasia after stroke or brain injury. She also introduced **WORDStim®**, a therapy tool designed to help people communicate.

We also had wonderful resource tables, including:

- MAAC
- National Aphasia Association Ambassador Program
- More Than Aphasia Inc.
- WORDStim®
- Salus at Drexel University
- Temple University
- Capital Hospital

It was a full and meaningful day, and I am so grateful for everyone who attended. Including people with aphasia, families, friends, and supporters. Your presence, connection, and advocacy made this event so special.



Frank's Story

I was packing for a trip and couldn't walk. Went to the hospital and they treated me for vertigo. That wasn't working, so they admitted me because I couldn't walk.

I had a stroke that night. Ten days later, I had a second stroke where I needed lifesaving surgery. I spent two months at Bryn Mawr.

From the stroke I have double vision, loss of hearing on my right side and need a walker to walk. I have done speech therapy. I still do PT, many support groups and research studies. I enjoy many groups at Moss Rehab, Join In Aphasia, Lingraphica, Drexel U., Arcadia U. and University of Delaware. I really enjoy my sessions at UD with Kristen Palmer, Julie McCauley and Kimberly Van Buren. I also enjoy chair yoga and meditating.



NeuroArts Day by the Philly NeuroArts Network

On Saturday, May 2nd- the first NeuroArts Day took place at Penn Medicine (Perelman Center). Under the leadership of Dr. Alexa Pfitzer, the program encouraged us to **Explore, Experience, and Enjoy** the arts. What a great program we enjoyed! We started with a wonderful performance by the Parkinsingers, a choir for people with Parkinson's Disease, care-partners, and friends. After enjoying the mini-concert, we participated in a vocal activity that practiced breathing and sustaining sounds.

Then participants were divided in 3 smaller groups where we rotated through the Movement and Dance Workshop, Poetry Workshop (led by MAAC's Mark Harder), and the Visual Art Workshop. We danced and moved – we wrote and shared original poems and created unique collages of faces.

We all enjoyed a delicious lunch and had time to discuss the experience of the day and visit program tables with information about other accessible dance, singing, writing, and art groups: *Anyone Can Move, ARTZPhilly, MS Dance Movement, Parkinsingers, PACT (Phila. Aphasia Community at Temple), Poems in Speech, Spirit Rising, and Tango Therapy Project*. This was a truly effective, informative, and FUN program. I'm sorry you missed it, but to connect with these groups, visit www.phillyneuroartsnetwork.com.

Beneficial Effects of the ARTS to People Impacted by Stroke and/or Aphasia

We know that a stroke can change how a person communicates.
We know that many people acquire aphasia after a stroke, and which affects speaking, understanding, reading, and writing.

However, communication is more than **words**.
Art offers another way to **express and connect**.

Art supports recovery after stroke.

What do we mean by art?

Art is not just painting in a gallery.
It includes many forms:

- Drawing
- Painting
- Photography
- Music
- Movement or dance
- Crafts

You do not need training or experience.

Art is about expression and meaning, not perfection.

Art can help us learn a different way to communicate

When words are difficult, art can help express thoughts and emotions.

A person can:

- Use color to show mood
- Create images that represent ideas
- Tell a story without speaking

Art becomes a valid and powerful form of communication.

Art can be an Emotional Support

Stroke and aphasia can bring stress, grief, and frustration.

Art provides a quiet space to process these feelings.

It can be calming and grounding.

This supports emotional well-being.

Art can Rebuild Confidence

Aphasia can affect independence and self-esteem.

Creating something meaningful can restore a sense of ability.

Completing an artwork—no matter how simple—can build confidence over time.



Art Supports Brain Recovery.

The brain has the ability to adapt and reorganize.

This is called **neuroplasticity**.

Art engages multiple parts of the brain, including:

- Visual processing
- Motor skills
- Creativity

This can support recovery and strengthen new pathways.

Art can increase Social Connections.

Art can be shared.

Group art programs, classes, or community projects provide opportunities to connect with others.

These spaces can reduce isolation and build a sense of belonging.

Getting started

Start in a way that feels comfortable.

- Sketch or doodle
- Use a coloring book
- Try painting with simple materials
- Listen to music and respond through art

There is no right or wrong approach.

Take your time.

Focus on the experience, not the outcome!

Final thoughts...

Aphasia changes how a person communicates, but **it does not take away their thoughts, feelings, or identity**.

Art can help bridge a gap between thoughts, feelings, and the new "NORMAL."

Art offers a meaningful way to **express, reflect, and connect**.

Your voice is still there—art can help others see it.

WE ARE READY TO CONNECT WITH YOU!!!

New To MAAC?

Welcome to the Mid-Atlantic
Aphasia Conference!
Join us!

Support Group Sessions

Every 2nd Monday at 7pm ET

Conversation Group Sessions

Every 4th Monday at 7pm ET

Quarterly - MAAC Abroad!

We visit (virtually) with our international
friends in the aphasia community!
Next session: **May 7th at 2pm**

Scan the QR code and
subscribe to get our
emails and to see our
website with other
events, resources,
and photos!



2026

MAAC QUARTERLY SCHEDULE/CALENDAR April, May, June

Date	Session	Topic/Guest
Monday, April 13th 7pm ET	MAAC Support Group For people with aphasia and caregivers/care partners On Zoom	Special Guest: Alison Boyle, CCC-SLP "Cognitive Therapy"
Monday, April 27th 7pm ET	MAAC Aphasia Conversation Group/ "ASK THE EXPERT!" Featuring Yasmeen Faroqi-Shah, PhD, CCC-SLP	
Thursday, May 7 th 2 pm ET	MAAC Abroad! Special Guest: Carolina Ulloa and Afasia Vital	
Monday, May 11 th 7pm ET	MAAC Support Group For people with aphasia and caregivers/care partners On Zoom	Special Guest: Rick Ables: Stroke Survivor, Artist, Musician
Saturday, May 23 rd 7pm ET	Aphasia Connection Luncheon and Fundraiser: Hosted by MORE THAN APHASIA, INC. Join Us! At the historical William Penn Inn, Gwynedd, PA	
Monday, June 8 th 7pm ET	5th Annual MAAC Virtual Conference (session 1 of 2) On Zoom	
Wednesday, June 10th All day long!	TALK SLOW DAY! TALK SLOW DAY! TALK SLOW DAY! TALK SLOW DAY!	
Monday, June 22 nd 7pm ET	5th Annual MAAC Virtual Conference (session 2 of 2) On Zoom	
Sunday, June 28 th	Bristol Borough's "Sunday Stroll" This is a family fun day and a great time to get the WORD OUT! APHASIA!!	