# Emergency Speech Tips

What to Do When Someone’s Communication Abilities Are Temporarily Impaired

Communication difficulties can arise suddenly due to events like a stroke, traumatic brain injury, or a neurological condition. Knowing how to respond effectively can make a significant difference. This guide provides simple and actionable steps to support someone facing temporary communication challenges.

## 1. Stay Calm and Reassuring

Anxiety can worsen communication struggles for the individual. Maintain a calm demeanor, use a soothing tone, and offer reassurance. Avoid showing frustration or rushing the person.

## 2. Ensure Immediate Safety

Communication issues might indicate a medical emergency (e.g., stroke). Call emergency services immediately, look for other signs of a stroke, and ensure the person is comfortable while monitoring their breathing.

## 3. Simplify Your Communication

Simpler language can make it easier for them to understand and respond. Speak slowly and clearly, use short sentences, and pause to give them time to process.

## 4. Use Non-Verbal Communication

When verbal communication is difficult, non-verbal cues can bridge the gap. Use gestures, provide a pen and paper, or encourage them to nod, shake their head, or point.

## 5. Ask Yes/No Questions

These are easier to answer than open-ended questions. Examples: 'Are you in pain?' or 'Do you need water?'

## 6. Avoid Overloading Them

Too much input can overwhelm them. Focus on one topic at a time, limit distractions, and reduce background noise.

## 7. Be Patient

Communication may take longer. Rushing can increase frustration. Give them time to respond and offer gentle encouragement.

## 8. Offer Supportive Tools

Alternative methods can enhance communication. Use text-to-speech apps, picture cards, or charts for basic needs.

## 9. Involve a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

SLPs are experts in communication disorders. Encourage consultation with an SLP for tailored support.

## 10. Practice Active Listening

Feeling heard can boost their confidence. Maintain eye contact, nod to show understanding, and repeat back to confirm their message.

## Quick Reference Checklist

* ✔ Stay calm and reassuring.
* ✔ Call for emergency help if necessary.
* ✔ Simplify your speech.
* ✔ Use non-verbal communication tools.
* ✔ Ask yes/no questions.
* ✔ Reduce distractions.
* ✔ Be patient and supportive.
* ✔ Introduce alternative communication tools.
* ✔ Encourage follow-up with an SLP.
* ✔ Practice active listening.