

Introduction

Aphasia is a language impairment caused by a neurological insult. The insult usually results from either a cerebrovascular accident (a *stroke*) or from a traumatic brain injury. We think of aphasia as an acquired impairment caused by neurological damage, rather than a congenital disorder.

Aphasia is often extremely frustrating for the client and his family/caregivers. The client suffers because he has a decreased functional system of communication. And because of this language breakdown, many family members feel their loved ones are now becoming mentally ill or senile. This could not be further from the truth. From my years of experience dealing with clients suffering from psychosis and dementia, I've learned that aphasia often does *not* mimic these other neurological impairments. Aphasia resulting from stroke in the absence of any previous neurological difficulties such as dementia, is usually free of any memory or cognitive impairment. Simply stated, aphasia is a *language* disorder.

As a language disorder, aphasia can affect different aspects of language. For example, a client might experience a receptive aphasia which impacts comprehension of spoken and written language, while an expressive aphasia affects a client's ability to produce spoken and written language. *The Source for Aphasia Therapy* covers receptive language skills, reading comprehension skills, and expressive language skills. The receptive and expressive sections deal heavily with spoken language, while the reading comprehension section, naturally, contains activities designed to increase reading single letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs.

I've written this book as a therapy guide with the most important remediation activities for easing receptive and expressive aphasia. As clinicians, we must often prioritize our treatment programs for aphasic clients. In other words, we need to identify and remediate the most important and functional areas first, then move to higher level treatments such as writing. I believe that a client who undergoes the kind of aphasia therapy offered in this book is not "relearning" language. Rather he is *reminding* the brain of language that is still there in the neurological center. The language just needs nudging and cueing to resurface.

The Source for Aphasia Therapy is packed with functional tasks and simple compensatory techniques. The activities are easy and inexpensive enough to teach

them to the client's family members, caregivers, and even friends. These strategies are vital for successful aphasia therapy and are meant to be used until independence is reached, or until the client/caregivers are effectively using functional strategies and cueing mechanisms.

Throughout the the book, the pronouns *he* and *him* are used to refer to the client merely for the sake of the book's consistency. Of course the book is for female as well as male clients.

A final note: As speech-language pathologists, we play a crucial role in educating family members and caregivers about aphasia. We are advocates for the client because we are often the professionals who best understand his plight and frustration. Treat aphasic clients with dignity and respect. Educate family members and caregivers about aphasia. I urge you to use your role wisely.