

Practical Communication Strategies to Improve Patient Outcomes

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Special thank you to the Provincial Communication Access Committee

Learning objectives:

- Review **Communication Vulnerability** and the need for **Communication Access**
- Highlight the literature findings
- Share success stories
- Increase awareness of available resources to facilitate communication with patients
- Provide practical tools and therapeutic strategies to support communication access for both pediatric and adult clients

Imagine....



Communication Vulnerability

“the diminished capacity in a patient’s expressive and/or receptive communication abilities.”

- (Costello, Patak & Pritchard 2010)

Patients with communication
difficulties are

3x more likely

to experience a preventable
adverse event in acute care

Persons with **untreated hearing loss** experience:



inpatient stays & emergency visits



risk of hospital readmission within 30 days

The Research says:

- “Up to **60% of ICU patients** reported **high levels of frustration** associated with not having their communication needs met” (Modrykamien, 2019)
- “**40-80% of invasively ventilated ICU patients** find communication **moderately to extremely difficult**” (Leung et al, 2018).
- “Reduced or temporarily eliminated communication can lead to **frustration, isolation, miscommunication, hopelessness and PTSD** for a great number of cases” (Modrykamien, 2019).

What can YOU do?

- To support a patient's ability to communicate?
- To support a patient who has difficulty understanding?

Provide Communication Access!

What is **Communication Access**?

- Equal rights
- Inclusion
- Effective Communication
- Support
- As per the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

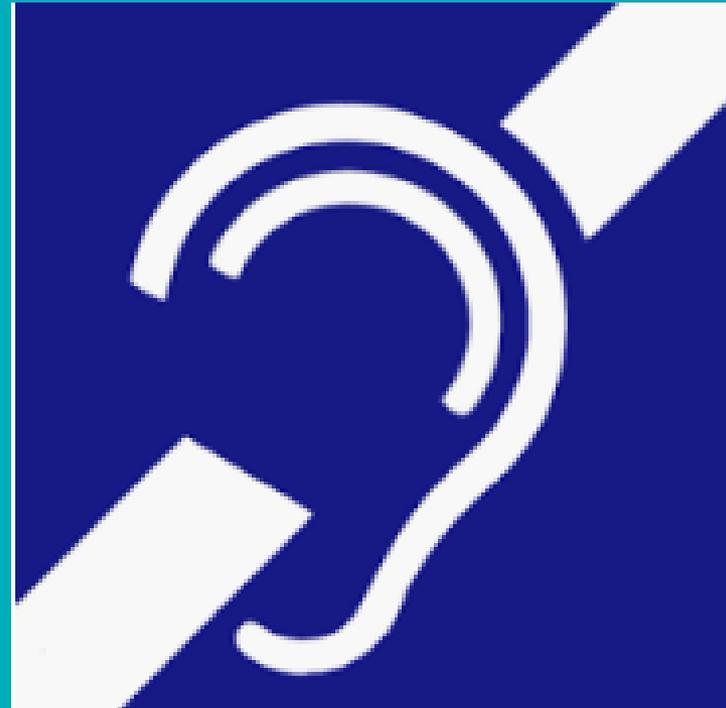
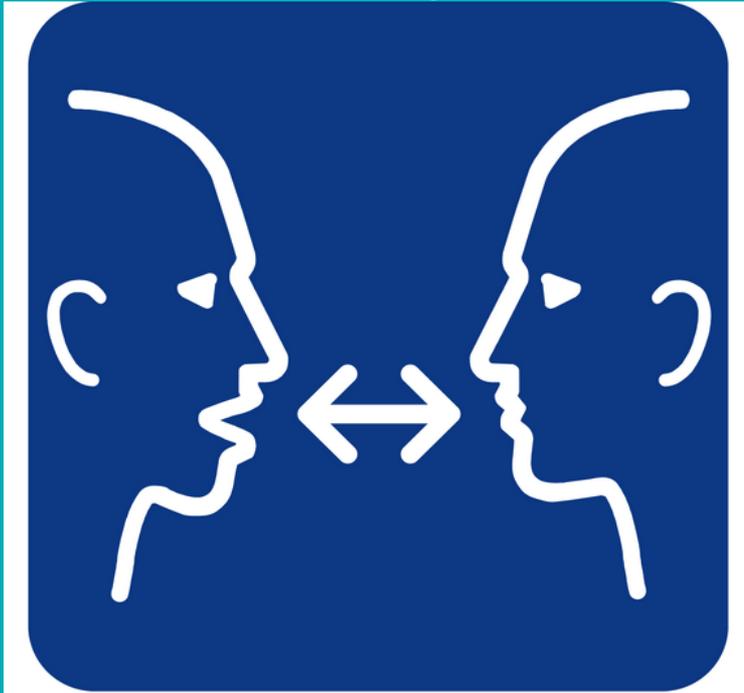
<http://www.communication-access.org>



Why is Communication Access Important

- Ensures individuals have the ability to communicate, and therefore, actively participate in their daily activities through use of accommodation materials, supports and strategies.
- Businesses, organizations, and essential services in Canada are required by law to make their services **fully accessible** for people who have communication disabilities.

Communication Access Symbol



International Symbol
of Access for Hearing
Loss

What are the benefits of Communication Access?



Message IN

Comprehension benefits

- Understanding treatment plans
- Recalling past events
- Improved conversation with family/friends



Message OUT

Expressive benefits

- Communicate medical needs
- Contribute to treatment plans
- Ask questions
- Talk to family/friends

Practical Communication Strategies to Improve Patient Outcomes

Communication Advocate Personal Story- Daralynn



Silence is Deafening

FREE Resources to Support Communication

- Patient Provider Communication SharePoint
 - Communication Access Provider Learning
 - Hospital Communication kit for Patients (peds & adults)
 - AHS Basic Hospital Communication Board
 - Supporting Communication in Acute care literature and infographic
-

Patient Provider Communication on the Covid -19 Share Point

https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/HPSP/AHPPE/Manage/covid-19/SitePages/Patient-Provider_Communication.aspx

Open to all disciplines

Patient-Provider Communication
Approximately 1 in 10 patients has a speech, language or hearing difficulty that in
These resources support conversations about COVID-19, pain, preferences, inform

Resources

+ new document or drag files here

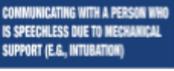
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▶	Category : Learning Resources - Speech, Language and Hearing Needs (6)	
▶	Category : Preparing for Communication Loss (2)	
▶	Category : Talking about COVID-19 with Patients (5)	

▶ Category : Communication Boards, Kits and Apps (10)

pdf	AHS Basic Hospital Communication Board	...
pdf	AHS Hospital Communication Kit for Patients	...
pdf	AHS Letterboards	...
pdf	AHS Yes, No, I Don't Know picture board	...
pdf	Basic Communication Book - photos	...
	Communication tools for patients with COVID-19	...
pdf	Explaining Medical Procedures Board	...
pdf	Free Text_to_Speech Apps for iPhone or iPad	...
pdf	ICU Communication Board - pictures and alphabet	...
pdf	Pediatric Male and Female Communication Boards	...

A Good Starting Point

COMMUNICATION ACCESS PROVIDER LEARNING

Resource	Description	
MyLearningLink- "Communication Access" Time: 30 mins Quick Tips: Communicating with Someone on a Ventilator	Learn what Communication Access is, why it's important, and practical strategies to support people with communication needs. Search "Communication Access" on AHS MyLearningLink See also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating with a person who is speechless due to mechanical ventilation 	
5-10 mins Communication Access- Insite	Tip sheets and strategies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients with hearing difficulties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for hearing challenges Changing hearing aid batteries Hearing aid trouble shooting Using a pocket talker Patients who have difficulty understanding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to support understanding Say it other ways Provide choices and ask yes/no questions Gesture and write as you talk Patients who have difficulty speaking/expressing themselves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch and listen Strategies to support expression Using communication boards/pictures And more....	  
5 mins per topic SharePoint: Patient Provider Communication	Includes various resources to support a patient's communication and hearing needs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication boards and apps (a selection of picture, letter, and alphabet boards, etc.) Learning resources- speech, language and hearing needs Preparing for Communication Loss Communication friendly tools for talking about COVID-19 A COVID-19 communication-friendly screening and discussion tool 	
20 mins		
Communication Needs Flag- Connect Care	A flag has been built into Connect Care to identify clients with hearing and communication needs. Learn where to find it, and how to create this flag to support patients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication needs flag Patient communication need tip sheet 	
10 mins		

COMMUNICATION ACCESS PROVIDER LEARNING

Resource	Description	Interactive Learning Modules
SPEACS-2-Communication Training Program 60-75 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute care focused learning modules FREE until June 1, 2020 ICU focused communication strategies to help clients understand and express themselves. Communication tools/boards Video examples of strategy and tool use 	
Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC)- Communication Rights 5 mins	People in health care have communication rights. Health care facilities must meet communication and hearing needs at all times and obtain informed consent.	 

Resources Available on Request

Resource	Description	
AHS Hospital Communication Kit for Patients Complete an online request to receive an assembled kit.	Includes 1 copy of each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic needs, yes/no/I don't know, procedure and letter boards Stickers and info about the communication and hearing accessibility symbols "How I Communicate" poster and notice Clip board, marker and white board Electronic version available on Patient Provider Communication SharePoint	
Hearing Hospital Kit Only available in areas north of Red Deer Contact: Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA) 780-428-6624 OR, Cindy Gordon cindy@chha-ed.com	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> International symbol for Hearing Loss stickers & buttons, hearing loss ID card Bedside Posters, pen and notepad Tips for speaking with the hand of hearing Container for hearing aids with labels Hearing aid battery tester Description/picture available on Patient Provider Communication SharePoint	
Interpretation and Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Contact: Ellen.Bruseker@ahs.ca	Patients who speak English as a Second language, including American Sign Language, are entitled Interpretation & Translation services. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video Remote Interpretation Services (see "attached document" page 1 for VRI language options") 	Language Line: 1-800-874-9426
AHS Basic Hospital Communication Board Complete an online request to receive a pad of disposable boards.	Basic needs, pain scale and alphabet board available in tear pad format. Pads to order are intended for ICU and patients experiencing COVID-19 or Influenza Like Illness. One pad contains 25 boards. Also available electronically , which can be printed (colour, legal size)	

Hospital Communication Kit for Patients (Adult)

Procedure Board with Body

- Point to pictures on the board as you talk to help a person understand an upcoming medical procedure

ICU/ Hospital Needs and Alphabetical Letter Board

- Includes yes/no, body, numbers

Instructions for how to use a Communication or Letter Board

- If a patient cannot point, support them by using **row/column scanning** (see sheet for details)
- You must determine a **'yes'** signal first

Information on Communication Access and Accessibility Symbols

- Stickers of communication difficulty and hearing loss symbols
- Learn about the symbols
- Learn how to display the symbols (with consent)

Communication Notice and How I Communicate Poster

- Complete "How I Communicate" information sheet (instructions included) and post at bedside and in chart
- Once complete- post **Communication Notice** on patient's door (with consent) to inform others.

Plastic Clipboard with Makeshift Whiteboard and Marker

- Provides the person with writing utensils.
- Wipeable
- Marker attached via fishing line

Yes/No/ I Don't Know Visuals

- Encourage the person to point to their answer if verbal answers are absent, unclear or inconsistent.

Keyboard Letter and Pain Scale Boards

- Some clients prefer to use a keyboard layout- check in about this
- Pain descriptors included on scale

Pen and Paper

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Available online on the Patient Provider Communication SharePoint.

Order a kit for your site through online registration (link for same is within the electronic version)

LINK: <https://survey.albertahealthservices.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n4LM3oI2I>

Patient Story/Provider Feedback

- Multi discipline asks for kits
- Acute Care use

Highlight: How I Communicate & Communication Notice



How I Communicate



1. My name is _____
2. I have a a) _____ on my b) _____
3. I access /use my tool by: _____
4. I communicate:
 - "yes" by _____
 - "no" by _____
 - "I don't know" by _____
- o Hearing: _____
- o Vision: _____
5. Special instructions: _____

Place this poster in the patient's room/information board, and in their chart to help educate the team

COMMUNICATION NOTICE



You can help this person use **strategies** and **tools** to **communicate!**

See **additional instructions** ("How I Communicate" Poster) for specific details

Place on **patient's door** and/or **information board**

Patient /Provider Feedback

- Acute care staff found a benefit in having a client identified – could go to chart to learn more!
- Centralizing patient yes/no responses for all team members to be aware of and consistent with!

Hospital Communication Kit (Pediatrics)

- Created by ACETS from Alberta Children's Hospital.
- Additional contents for choice making, single message
- Available electronically on SharePoint



Single message switches/ Big mac



Plastic choice board



Picture and symbol activity choices

Patient Story/Provider Feedback

- PICU patient given ability to call out to parent in room

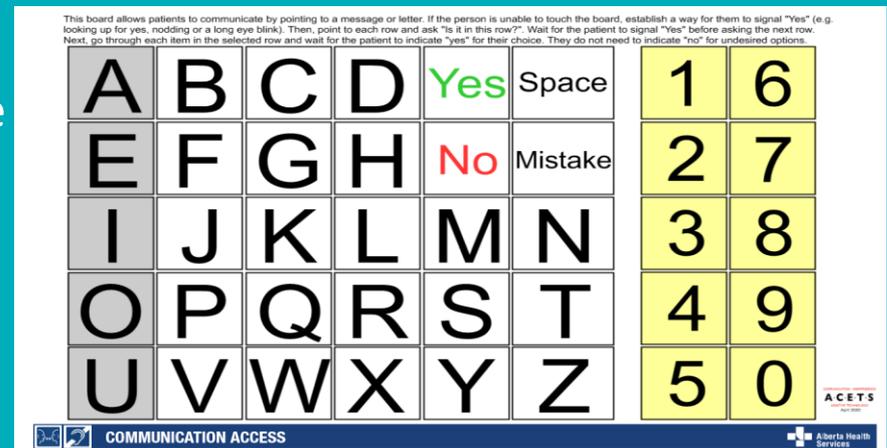
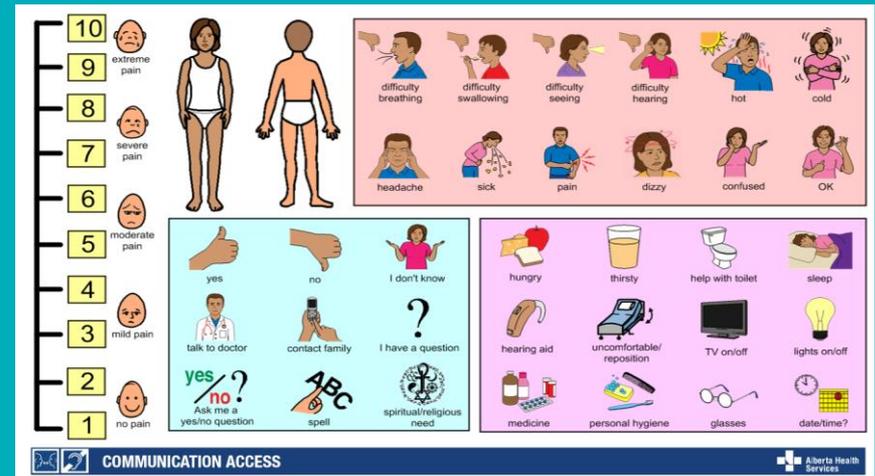
AHS Basic Hospital Communication Board

Acute care ask:

- Simple
 - Easy to use
 - Disposable
 - Durable
- 1 pad= 25 double sided boards.
 - Business card thickness paper
 - Order a pad for your site through the same online registration:

LINK:

<https://survey.albertahealthservices.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n4LM3ol2l>



Patient Story/Provider Feedback

- ICU patient able to be more specific and generative in her communication
- Designed to use directly and/or with partner assisted scanning.

Literature Summary & Infographic

Communication Access and Health Outcomes

Supporting Communication in Acute Care Infographic



COMMUNICATION ACCESS

What is Communication Access?

- Communication Access means health care providers use accommodations and supports to facilitate two-way communication with patients who have communication needs. Communication Access strategies are essential to safety, patient centered care and the informed consent process (Communication Disabilities Access Canada (CDAC), 2019). Communication Access improves patient safety, engagement and health outcomes.

Why is Communication Access Important?

- The Accessible Canada Act (Bill C-81) adopted in June 2019, indicates we must help create "a barrier-free Canada through identification, removal and prevention of barriers to accessibility" (Parliament of Canada, 2019)
- When patients have speech, language or hearing challenges, their messages about symptoms, preferences, needs and concerns are frequently misinterpreted; they have difficulty understanding treatment options and providing informed consent; their communication abilities are often misinterpreted (Accessible Canada Act, 2019; Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005).
- In the United States, The Joint Commission released a "road map" of standards for patient-centered communication to improve engagement, safety and quality of care for all individuals (The Joint Commission, 2010).
- It is estimated that between 39% and 63% of patients in acute stroke units have difficulty communicating about their health care needs. (O'Halloran, Worrall & Hickson, 2012)
- 53.9% of mechanically ventilated ICU patients met criteria for needing assistance with communication during an observational study across six ICUs at two hospitals in the US (Happ, Seaman, Nilsen et al., 2015)
- Many healthcare providers struggle to identify and use communication accommodations that best fit individual patient needs (Hurtig, Alber & Berkowitz, 2018)
- Providing clinicians the right supports and tools to effectively communicate with patients has the potential to significantly improve the quality of care provided to this vulnerable population (Stransky, Jensen & Morris, 2018).



Supporting Communication in Acute Care

Patients with communication challenges are 3X more likely to experience a preventable adverse event in acute care.

(Gardner et al., 2008)

Without communication:	With communication:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frustration• Isolation• Helplessness• Confusion• PTSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarity• Participation• Potential reduced stay• Potential fewer health risks

Everyone has the potential to communicate. Everyone has the right to communicate.

Communication strategies to try

- Establish a reliable yes/no signal
- Provide multiple ways to communicate
- Ensure call bell access

Resources Summary

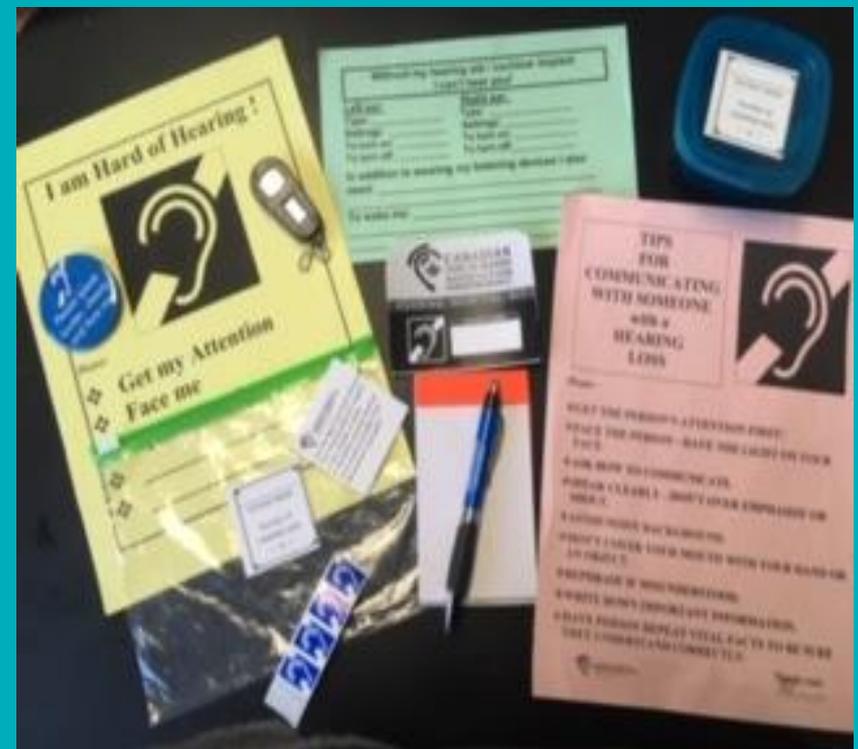
Hospital Communication Kits for Patients	AHS Basic Hospital Communication Board Pads
78	62

- Free & premade= more accessible
 - Electronic version= replenish kit, print what is needed.
 - **Coming soon:** qualitative evaluation of resources
-

The Hearing Hospital Kit

- Created by the **Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (Not AHS)**
- Available by Request for areas North of Red Deer
- Red Deer South – Contact the ACETS team

See SharePoint for more details.



Strategies to Support Communication in Hospital



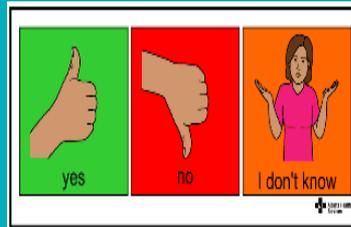
General Strategies

- Set the scene (reduce noise and distractions)
- “Presume competence” (Aphasia Institute)
- Face the person
- Address the person directly
- Listen- actively!
- Include them in conversations
- Acknowledge non-verbals
- Give extra time



Materials...

Think about what might be helpful to use...



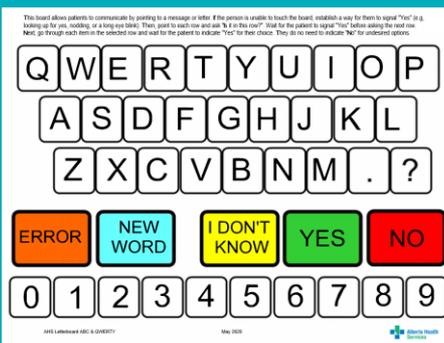
Alberta Health Services

How I Communicate

Add photo of communication tool

1. My name is _____
2. I have a a) _____ on my b) _____
3. I access /use my tool by: _____
4. I communicate:
 - "yes" by _____
 - "no" by _____
 - "I don't know" by _____
- o Hearing: _____
- o Vision: _____
5. Special instructions: _____

Place this poster in the patient's room/information board, and in their chart to help educate the team



Be Aware- Sensory Needs

Be aware of perceptual impairments or neglect

- Glasses
- Hearing Aid/s (check battery)
- Pocket Talker

Set the environment up for success!



Strategies for Communicating with the **Hearing Impaired**



- In groups, **avoid having more than one speaker** at a time
- Use a pocket talker, or other **personal listening devices**
- **Rephrase** rather than repeat the message if not heard/understood
- Speak **slowly and clearly** (shouting often distorts the information)
- **Introduce the topic** of conversation to provide context

Masks and Lip Reading

- GRH still waiting to try masks with clear window
- If unavailable, and the patient is masked, you can try:
 - Plexiglas barrier
 - Consult your Audiologists!

“I am feeling more and more isolated”

“People are refusing to take their mask down”



Strategies in Hospital: The Basics

Establish clear & reliable YES/NO signal

- Ensure whole team is informed of YES/NO signal
- Ask YES/NO questions

Provide patients with basic communication tools

- Materials for writing
- Communication/alphabet boards
- Pain rating scales
- Gestures

Ensure consistent & accessible signal for help

- Call bells should be within reach of patients at all times
- Establish a consistent signal for help

(Grossbach et al., 2011; Hurtig, Alper & Berkowitz, 2018; Marshall & Hurtig, 2019a)

Strategies for Complex Access:

- Complex access = Difficulty or inability to touch a communication tool directly.
 - Partner Assisted Scanning
 - Eye Gaze
- **Consult an OT for Support**



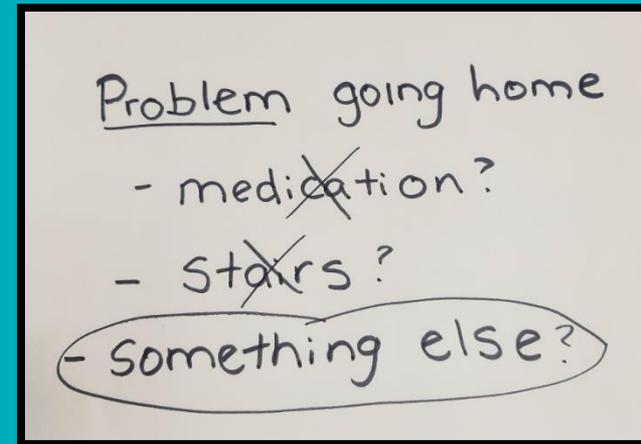
More strategies to support UNDERSTANDING:

- Pair key words with gestures
- Write key words
- Speak slowly and clearly (pause between thoughts)
- Present information/questions one at a time
- Ask yes/no questions
- Use everyday language (not “baby talk”, not jargon)
- Show pictures/visuals on communication tools
- Draw



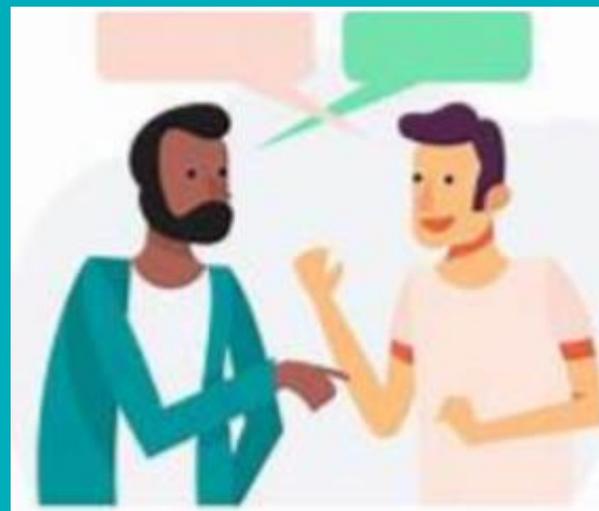
Write key words as you talk & write choices

- Write **key words** as you **say** them
- **highlight key words** **INSTEAD** of narrating everything
- Use a **notepad** or paper vs white board (keeps track!)
- When writing choices, also include a “**something else**” or “**neither**” option



More Strategies to Support **Expression**:

- Encourage them to show/point
- Encourage them to draw/show pictures, use their communication tools (AAC)
- **Clarify by asking a yes/no questions**
- Offer and/or write choices
- Show pictures/draw



Establishing Yes/No

- Ask the patient how they would like to communicate yes/No
- Establish a signal to gain attention
- Establish an “ I Don’t know” signal



Letter, Picture or Symbol Boards

Communication boards/books are a form of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Most AAC users carry instructions for how to use their tools.
- Ask permission to look at/practice tools

Types of AAC:

- **No Tech** – no equipment necessary (e.g. facial expressions, gestures, presenting choices auditorily)
- **Low tech** – paper based
- **Mid Tech** – simple devices, requires batteries, usually recorded speech
- **High tech** – Tablet/computer based system. Dynamic/changing screen. Digital voices

Communication Boards/Books to Support to support Understanding

Point to the pictures/symbols on the board as you talk.

E.g. “Mr. Smith, do you have your health card?” while pointing to the health card pic/symbol.

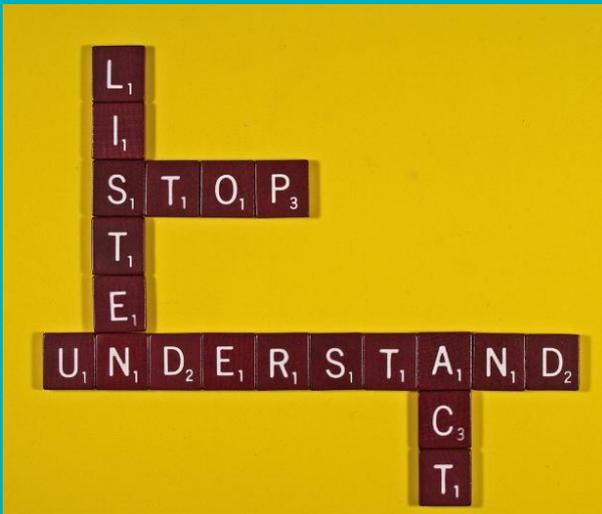


Communication Boards/Books to Support Expression

Help the person use a communication board/book!

- **Ask** to explore vocab- know what's there
- **Help direct them to appropriate vocabulary**
 - E.g. “I hear your family visited last night *flip to people page of communication book*, who came to see you?”
- **Gather context** by going through vocabulary
 - E.g. “Is your message about pain? Comfort? Bathroom?”

Confirm Understanding



- **Be Gentle and Genuine** if breakdown occurs
- **Reflect-** repeat message back
- **Expand-** add what you think they are trying to say
- **Summarize-** occasionally review what they are saying

“Check in” concept from Aphasia Institute- Supportive Conversation for Adults with Aphasia™

Main Takeaways

**Establish
reliable
Yes/No
Signals**

**Be Patient
and
Responsive**

**Try
a
Strategy!**

**Refer to
SLP
&/or
Audiology**

Consult SLP &/or Audiology if you have any questions, concerns, or would like support at any point.

Communication Access is everyone's responsibility!

Thank you!

Questions?

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- Communication Disabilities Access Canada. Supporting Patients with Vulnerable Communication in Health Care Settings. <https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/access-to-healthcare/education/webinar-supporting-patients-with-vulnerable-communication-in-healthcare-settings/>
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 - Modrykamien, Ariel M. "Strategies for communicating with conscious mechanically ventilated critically ill patients." *Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings*. Vol. 32. No. 4. Taylor & Francis, 2019.
 - Reed NS, Altan A, Deal JA, et al. Trends in Health Care Costs and Utilization Associated With Untreated Hearing Loss Over 10 Years. *JAMA Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg*. 2019;145(1):27–34. doi:10.1001/jamaoto.2018.2875
-

Visuals/ Videos Used

- Communication Access Symbol: <https://www.cdacanada.com/resources/accessible-businesses-and-services/resources/communication-access-symbol/>
 - Hearing Loss Symbol: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hearing_loss
 - Barrier: https://bi.forbesimg.com/johnhall/files/2013/04/shutterstock_131606678-22.jpg
 - Boogie board: <https://www.amazon.com/Boogie-Board-Writing-Drawing-eWriter/dp/B010HWCEFY>
 - Assistive listening device (pocket talker): <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Williams-Sound-PKTD1N01-Pocket-Talker-Ultra-w-Neckloop/39883523>
 - Hearing aid battery tester: <https://earinc.com/product/hearing-aid-battery-tester/>
 - White board with marker: <https://www.amazon.com/Erase-Marker-Eraser-8-5x11-Whiteboard/dp/B008EDD38Q>
 - Clipboard: <https://pixabay.com/photos/clipboard-blank-empty-show-3150730/>
 - E-tran: <https://www.bridges-canada.com/products/9594-1>
 - See through face mask: <https://scrubsmag.com/wp-content/uploads/FaceViewMask.jpg>
 - Group discussion: <http://education.cu-portland.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Student-Discussion-Group.jpg>
 - **Writing key words video:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EVtsxapigE&list=PL973A0B204DC16C6E&index=15>
 - Empathy/compassion: <https://beingraluca.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/empathy-and-compassion.jpg>
-

Visuals/Videos Used Cont...

- Understand brains <https://news.lafayette.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files/2017/09/brainchild-1024x539.jpg>:
- man in hospital bed: <https://www.thehealthy.com/healthcare/doctors/hospital-safety-secrets/>
- eye gaze board: https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/I/51Mssefv-nL_SX300_QL70_.jpg
- woman with eye gaze board: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/EYYY4aibGBk/maxresdefault.jpg>
- expression: <https://static.vecteezy.com/system/resources/previews/000/223/308/original/people-talking-illustration-vector.jpg>
- yes/no scale: [https://fthmb.tqn.com/pZyG5Bu5BM-QvqT_bv8V_5XQqRw=/4176x2386/filters:fill\(auto,1\)/Getty_yes_and_no-184275539-56af9f4c3df78cf772c6c695.jpg](https://fthmb.tqn.com/pZyG5Bu5BM-QvqT_bv8V_5XQqRw=/4176x2386/filters:fill(auto,1)/Getty_yes_and_no-184275539-56af9f4c3df78cf772c6c695.jpg)
- hospital sign: https://cdn.nashvillepost.com/files/base/scomm/nvp/image/2013/09/640w/hospital_sign_2.jpg