

Suffering from aphasia – what does it imply?

Aphasia is an impairment caused by lesions to the language-relevant areas of the brain. This happens if the blood supply to the language-relevant areas is blocked by a cerebral thrombosis or if the brain tissue is damaged by a brain haemorrhage, an accident or other types of brain injuries.

Persons suffering from aphasia may find it difficult:

- to speak
- to understand what spoken language
- to read
- to write

It is difficult to live in a society like ours when you are no longer able to speak. We live in a technological society where more and more functions are handled by the individual citizen him/herself through the computer, the ticket machine, etc. If the words are missing, your ability to stand up for and assert yourself in the community is hindered.

How can you ease communication?

To communicate with an aphasia sufferer requires insight, understanding and time from the surroundings. However, remember that the sufferer has not lost his or her ability to communicate – it has just become much more difficult due to the aphasia. Therefore it is about finding alternative ways of communication.

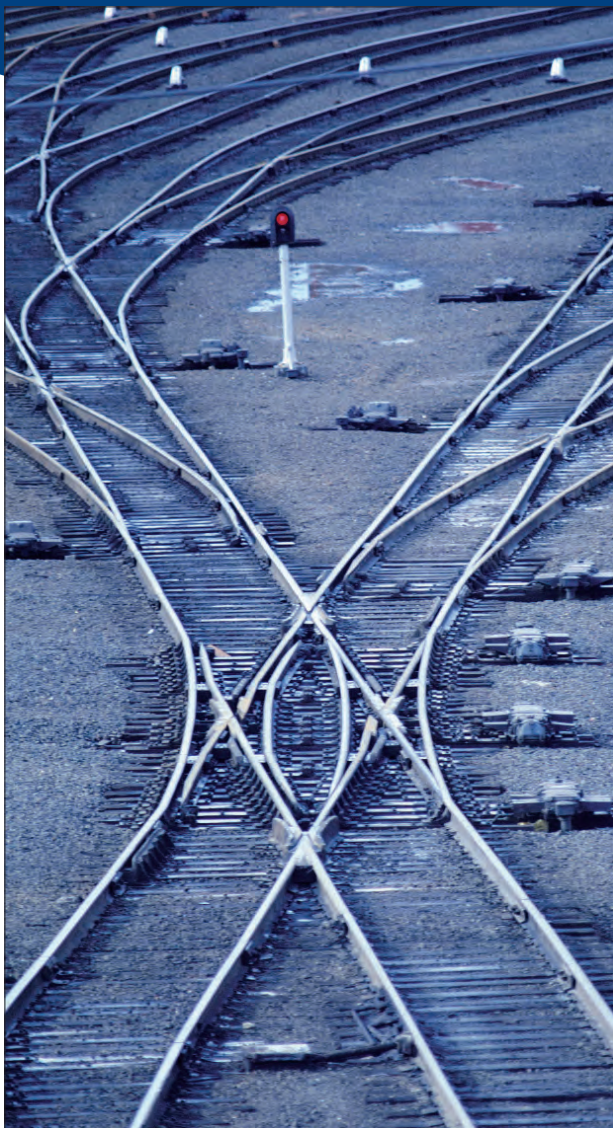
If a person has difficulty in speaking then:

- strive to have short conversations
- be patient and accept pauses
- be honest if you do not understand the message. It is an insult to the sufferer if you pretend to understand. It is much better to say: I realise that you want to say something to me but I am not quite sure what you want to say to me. Is it something like...?
- try alternative or additional types of communication use paper/pencil, body language and facial expressions
- make sure the sufferer has pictures, photos and other possibilities of pointing at hand
- don't give up – use your imagination.

If a person has difficulty in understanding then:

- use body language, facial gestures and natural signs
- wherever possible point at what you are talking about
- use short sentences – and talk only one at a time
- use common everyday words
- avoid irony – jokes can be hard to understand
- use a simple and natural but not childish language
- speak distinctly with small lulls – don't exaggerate
- write or draw important messages
- support your communication by way of calendars, maps, a number board, photos, etc.
- be patient during the conversation – give it time





The Nordic Aphasia Association – an association for the Nordic member organisations for persons suffering from aphasia or a stroke – has published this booklet in English realising that there is no booklet about aphasia on the market for citizens who speak English.

The booklet is primarily aimed at the relatives and other networks of the aphasia sufferer. We hope you will find the booklet useful.

APHASIA

- language disorders following acquired brain damage



Please find further information about the Nordic stroke and aphasia associations on their individual website in the following languages: Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Danish.

The Swedish aphasia association (Afasiförbundet i Sverige)

www.afasi.se

The Norwegian aphasia association (Afasiforbundet i Norge)

www.afasi.no

The Finnish stroke and dysphasia association (Stroke- och dysfasiförbundet i Finland)

www.stroke.fi

The Danish Stroke Association (Hjernesagen)

- a Danish association for people suffering from a cerebral thrombosis or brain haemorrhage.
www.hjernesagen.dk



**Not being able to say
anything is not the same as
having nothing to say**

