

Adults who are living with aphasia every day wrote these words.

They are clients of the Tuesday communication program of the York-Durham Aphasia Center in Newmarket, Ontario.

LIVING with Aphasia

When they said I had aphasia I didn't know what it meant, I only knew I couldn't talk properly.

What does aphasia mean to you?

Josie: After my second stroke I lost my voice. I used to teach English, and losing my voice was worse than being paralyzed.

Maryanne: Reading, writing, spelling — I used to take them for granted. After my three strokes that is all very difficult now.

Jim: Aphasia is like a parking lot. We all get a different car!

Other people need to realize that after a stroke we are not broken people, but we are badly bent. We can get very emotional.

How did you react?

Josie: I got mad. I said no, I am not going to die.

Jim: I said, "What is this? ASSPHASIA?" It helps to find humor and be funny instead of being upset and depressed.

Wayne: I wanted to be better *now*. That doesn't happen. It takes time.

Janice: You need to be patient, but that is hard. I don't like slurring my words. I used to line dance, now I can't remember any of the steps.

Aphasia takes many forms. We may have trouble speaking, reading or writing. We may not understand numbers. We forget things. Sometimes we feel as if our brain is scrambled.

What helps?

Jim: I used a tape recorder. My wife could play it later and listen to things that I thought about but forgot. My grandchildren help me read.

Wayne: I point and use gestures. I pull out my information card to let other people know about my aphasia. I help other people feel good.

Janice: In the beginning I used an alphabet board. Now I can write and help other people.

Maryanne: I use a computer. I tell people who speak too fast "STOP, say again."

Josie: Other people need to talk directly to me. I miss what others are saying if they all talk at once.

Why do we come to the communications program?

Maryanne: I love music. I can sing. I remember the words to songs.

Janice: Everyone understands and is patient even when I slur my words.

Josie: I can tell stories. This group is interested in my life.

Jim: I feel alive again! I can say or ask anything.

We get strength from others in the group.

We have respect for each other.

We are not afraid to speak. We know others will let us have our turn and try to understand.

We remind each other never to stop trying!



The Tuesday Aphasia Group at York-Durham Aphasia Center