

# How to Recover Speech If You Can't Talk After Stroke

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If you or your loved one can't talk after stroke, this article will teach you how to recover.

While your rehab team is the best source for information, sometimes you need to find answers on your own. And that's what you have us for. In this article, you'll learn:

- Why stroke can completely impair speech after stroke
- How to retrain the brain and improve speech after stroke
- Where to look for more answers

Let's get started.

## Left Brain Strokes and Speech Impairments

The language center of the brain is located in the left-hemisphere. So if you had a left-brain stroke, it's likely that stroke damaged your brain's language abilities.

## Types of Language Difficulties

There are 3 main types of speech impairments that can occur after stroke: dysarthria, apraxia of speech, and aphasia. There are many different types of *aphasia*, but overall it encompasses expression/comprehension difficulties.

*Dysarthria* is a motor problem and *apraxia of speech* is a cognitive/planning problem.

Here's a breakdown of each one:

- **Dysarthria** involves consistent weakness or impaired control the muscles used for speech – *it's a motor problem*
- **Apraxia of speech** involves inconsistent difficulty planning and coordinating your words – *it's a cognitive planning problem*
- **Aphasia** involves difficulty with language expression, language comprehension, writing, reading, and using numbers – *it's a cognitive expression/comprehension problem*

Examples:

- You might have dysarthria if you know perfectly well what you want to say, but you can't get your mouth to say it
- You might have apraxia of speech if you omit parts of your sentences
- You might have aphasia if you have trouble reading, understanding numbers, or comprehending speech

Those are just some examples, but it gives you an idea of the difference between these speech conditions.

## Which Speech Impairment Do You Have?

If you can't talk after stroke, it's likely that you have dysarthria or apraxia of speech. However, we really don't know since we can't see you or your medical history. Your therapist is the best person to ask about which speech impairment you have. If you can't get a hold of your **diagnosis**, we can work around it; because recovery from speech impairments after stroke always revolves around one thing: **Retraining the brain**. And next, we'll show you how.

## Rewiring the Brain to Improve Speech After Stroke

To relearn how to talk after stroke, you need to retrain your brain to control your speech. You will rely on **neuroplasticity** for this. Neuroplasticity allows your brain to form new neural pathways that will take over your speech function. **When the language center of the brain becomes damaged by stroke, neuroplasticity allows the healthy parts of the brain to take over.**

## Activating Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity is activated whenever you practice something. For example, when you practice writing cursive, your brain forms and strengthens new neural pathways for that skill. The more you practice your cursive, the stronger those pathways become, and the easier writing cursive gets. The same goes for your speech.

# Learning How to Talk Again

To relearn how to talk again after stroke, you need to practice **speech therapy exercises**. By practicing the skill of speech, you will rewire the brain and learn how to talk again. For example, if you have dysarthria, then you need to practice using your mouth and tongue muscles to improve your speech.

The more you practice using these muscles, the better you will get. Your brain will rewire itself based on what you repeatedly practice. Now, we know what you might be thinking: “Yes, that sounds great, but I can’t even say one word! How do I get started then?”

## What to Do When You Can’t Talk At All

When you cannot say a single word, there’s still hope for recovery. **Sometimes when a stroke survivor cannot speak their words, they can actually *sing* their words.** That’s because language is a left-brain task, but singing is a right-brain task. So if you cannot say something, try singing it. It just might work!

In fact, there’s an entire therapy dedicated to this. It’s called **singing therapy**, and it often works wonders for stroke survivors with extreme speech impairments after stroke. If speech therapy exercises are too difficult, then you might want to back up and try singing therapy first.

## When to Ask for Help

If you cannot talk at all after stroke, it’s likely that you have a severe speech impairment. With all severe impairments, it’s best to seek the help of an expert. Just like you work with a physical therapist to improve movement after stroke, you can work with a speech-language pathologist (SLP) to improve your speech.

SLP’s are highly trained in the different types of language difficulties after stroke, and they can tailor a regimen specific to your unique impairments. We highly recommend working with an SLP – at least in the very beginning – so that you can get an idea of how to continue your recovery at home.

## Continuing Speech Recovery at Home

The best way to improve your speech without the direct help from an SLP is to use a **speech therapy apps** like Constant Therapy. These apps can help you identify your “problem areas” and practice exercises that target those areas. For example, if you have aphasia and particularly struggle with number comprehension, a speech therapy app will likely assign you plenty of number games to improve your skills. Speech therapy apps are a great way to get targeted therapy without direct help from a clinician.

## Summary

Difficulty with speech after stroke often happens when a **left-side stroke** damages the language center of the brain. This can result in dysarthria, apraxia of speech, or aphasia.

The best way to recover from these conditions is to rewire your brain through **speech therapy exercises**.

If you cannot talk at all, then you might want to start with **singing therapy**. Singing engages a different part of the brain, which allows you to access some speech, and you can work from there. Another great option is to try speech therapy apps at home.

We hope this article will help you reclaim your voice after stroke!