

How to Improve Speech After Stroke in 7 Steps

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Learning how to improve speech after stroke can be complicated... But it doesn't have to be.

To help simplify things, we're going to share 7 steps that you can take to start improving your speech today.

1. Understand Which Speech Problem You Have

Difficulty with speech after stroke can include two conditions: *aphasia* and *dysarthria*.

Aphasia involves the inability to understand or express speech after neurological injury like stroke. **Dysarthria** involves difficulty using the muscles in your mouth that produce speech. **If you have no difficulty forming words in your mind, but you cannot seem to get your mouth to say them, then you probably have dysarthria.**

If you have difficulty forming words in your mind (with or without difficulty saying them), then you probably have aphasia.

The following steps will help you address both of these issues.

2. Don't Rely on Spontaneous Recovery

Before we dig into the treatments for aphasia and dysarthria after stroke, we'd like to talk a bit about spontaneous recovery. Sometimes aphasia and dysarthria goes away on its own – a pleasant phenomenon known as spontaneous recovery.

This is great when it happens! However, it's impossible to tell if you will have spontaneous recovery or not, so it's important to be proactive instead of passive. Also, the brain is in a “heightened state of plasticity” 3 months after stroke. This means that whatever therapy you do during those first 3 months will have greater impact. So instead of crossing your fingers and hoping for spontaneous recovery, it's best to put all your effort into speech therapy, so that you can have the best chance of recovery.

3. Work with a Speech-Language Pathologist

The best way to improve your speech is to work with a speech-language pathologist. (S)he is trained *specifically* in how to improve speech after stroke. For those with dysarthria, your speech-language pathologist will likely focus on exercises with your lips and tongue.

For those with aphasia, you will do a wider range of exercises like reading comprehension, word matching, and many other exercises.

Usually, insurance will cover some of these sessions, so take advantage of them.

4. Use Speech Therapy Apps at Home

However, it's likely that you won't be able to see your speech-language pathologist more than once or twice a week. And if you want to improve your speech the fastest way possible, then you need a *lot* more practice than that.

And that's where **speech therapy apps** come in to play. By using speech therapy apps, like Constant Therapy, you can continue your therapy on your own. This will give you **the repetition and consistency** you need to rewire your brain and see faster results...

5. Focus on High Repetition of Language Exercises

To elaborate on that last part, it's extremely important to focus on high repetition. When the language center in your brain becomes damaged by stroke, you need to train the healthy areas of the brain to pick up the slack. You can do this by using repetition to activate **neuroplasticity** (the mechanism that your brain uses to rewire itself).

Whatever you repeatedly do is what your brain gets better at because your brain likes to be efficient. If you practice your language exercises daily, then you will reinforce the neural pathways in your brain responsible for speech and your language skills will get stronger.

6. Try Singing Therapy If You Can't Talk At All

Sometimes it can be hard to start language exercises when you can't talk at all. In these cases, you might be a great fit for **singing therapy**.

Singing therapy works by getting stroke survivors to *sing* their words instead of speak them. Although it might seem impossible, it really can work. Speaking is a left-brain task, which can be hard if you had a left-brain stroke. But singing is a right-brain task; and if your left-brain was damaged, then you might still be able to sing. Singing therapy has brought hope to many stroke survivors who thought there was no hope to recover their speech.

If you are really struggling with your language exercises and can't seem to say anything at all, then give singing therapy a try.

7. Get Friends and Family on the Same Page

Unfortunately, most people are unaware of aphasia and dysarthria, which can cause miscommunication and misunderstanding.

From what we've heard, some stroke survivors who struggle with speech are treated unfavorably. If this happens to you, try not to take it personally – it's merely a sign of ignorance. And ignorance can be remedied with *awareness*. So it's important to explain your situation to friends and family members so that they know how to communicate with you. For example, you can explain that they don't need to shout because you have no trouble hearing, you just need extra time to find the right words. Try your best to communicate your situation to others so that you can all be on the same page.

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And there you have it! Those are our top 7 steps that you can take to start improving your speech after stroke. The best step is to work with a speech-language pathologist or use language therapy apps at home.

Make sure that you get your exercises in consistently because your brain needs steady stimulation in order to heal. So do your therapy and get you reps in — and your speech will improve!