Aphasia and Relationships

Think about the people you knew before aphasia. How have your relationships (partners, family, or friends) changed?

Most relationships are better after aphasia

Most relationships are the same after the aphasia

Most relationships are worse after aphasia

Are you still close to the same people?

Yes, I am still close with the same family and/or friends

Somewhat, a few people have drifted away due to aphasia

No, my relationships changed a lot after aphasia
Would you describe yourself as a social person? Do you enjoy spending time with friends and family?

- **Yes, I would describe myself as a social person — both before and after aphasia — with a LARGE circle of friends and family**
- **Yes, I would describe myself as a social person — both before and after aphasia — with a SMALL circle of friends and family**
- **Somewhat, I am okay being with people and okay being alone**
- **No, I was social before aphasia, but I’m NOT anymore**
- **No, I would never describe myself as a social person — either before or after aphasia**

Aphasia changes relationships and can be isolating. Reach out to people with aphasia.

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Aphasia and Relationships

Do you spend more or less time with people since aphasia?

- I spend more time with other people
- I spend more time alone
- I spend the same amount of time (with people or alone) as I did before aphasia

Does aphasia have a positive or negative impact on your relationships?

- Positive — it has brought us closer
- Neutral — aphasia does not play a big role in my relationships
- Negative — communication issues have moved us apart
Aphasia and Relationships

How has aphasia impacted your relationships?

It has made me less confident and harder to connect with my friends the way I used to. I am more drained after seeing my friends because talking takes much more effort.

Divorce.

Head of family / leader changed. Rely on my spouse more for navigation in society.

People are annoyed I don’t stay in touch more.

Without having to explain my aphasia or someone else explaining for me in advance, people are less patient with me having to take multiple breaks with conversations on a timely basis.

It allows us to realize that life can be hard at times, but we have each other and that has been great for the last 18 years.

You don’t want to know. My roommate kicked me out because she didn’t want to be my nurse.

It has created distance.

My divorce was caused by aphasia.

I want positive people in my life and those that are willing to work to find help for negative issues. I can listen, but I am not as willing to take on other people’s burdens.

People don’t take time to visit. When they do, they are uncomfortable because of my aphasia.

It feels like my relationship went from a spouse and partner to more of a parent/child relationship.

Most friends and family have drifted away.
Have you made many new friends since aphasia?

- Yes, especially others with aphasia: 18.6%
- A few — not more than usual: 20.9%
- No, it has been harder to make new friends: 60.5%

Where have you made new friends? (Check all that apply)

- At my clinic or support group
- Through the NAA chats
- Through another aphasia organization
- Outside of the aphasia community
- I have not made any new friends
Tell us about a relationship that has gotten better since aphasia. Or tell us about a relationship that has ended after aphasia.

My best friend and some family do not know how to engage with me anymore so they stay away.

It has frustrated the people closest to me, but they are supportive. The ones not in the medical field do not understand.

Old buddies stopped inviting me to events.

I had to end it with a friend who is always super needy. I don’t have time/patience to take care of people who aren’t helping themselves get better or who aren’t motivated. I’m too tired. I have to focus on myself now.

My relationships ended with all my former work friends. I have had my relationships better with my mother. We understand each other well, and she never gets frustrated.

Two best friends: disappeared!

My relationship with my wife has been better although it was good before aphasia.

Relationships have ended because I can’t do the things I used to do — ski, golf, or bike. Can’t work anymore due to ringer dexterity & problems getting left/right confused.

Lost my job due to aphasia and thus I’ve lost a ton of relations with work friends.

I have a few friends who are SLPs. She was my therapist, and now we’re friends — really good friends.

Zoom has helped. New friends have been formed.

I have realized how wonderful our close friends are.

I think that my adult child is too uncomfortable and inconvenienced with my speech and disabilities to freely share time with me. I live and manage alone.

One ended directly after I was told, "You aren’t disabled. Nothing is wrong with you. You look fine."
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What do friends and family need to know about aphasia to be a good support system?

Talk to me even though I have a hard time answering.

I’m still the same person.

Even if you’re frustrated with how the person with aphasia is talking and you wish they could just “spit out” what they mean to say, please don’t let your irritation be visible. It hurts to see the person you’re talking to being impatient, and it makes me less likely to talk.

Give me time to enter into the conversation. Bring me in by directing a question to me.

They always need to be patient with me to be able to voice what I want to say. Never complete my sentences because it throws me off track of what I want to say.

That you are changing, but they will love the new me!

I’m trying. It takes me longer. I get tired from trying.

Slowing down speech, need for quiet, need to understand how much I appreciate them.

Even though my speaking is different, I am still the same person.

I would say and do more if I could.

I am still me. I am still alive. Please accept me.

Try to be REAL about it. Don’t ignore it or over-focus it. Help people relax about the problems and not be the center of the aphasia. The combination of both being frustrated and/or uncomfortable makes avoid the relationship.

Just because we want to be left alone doesn’t mean that I don’t care for them/love them.

Cultivate patience.