



**Life After Stroke:**  
Communication, Identity & Everyday Wins

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**Hey There!**

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- she/her, lives in Philly, Go Birds!, wiz wit out
- Undergrad: Loyola University Maryland
- Grad School: Towson University
- 13 years as an SLP working with adult & seniors
- Experience: nursing home, outpatient, memory care unit, behavioral health unit, assisted living, teletherapy, and home health
- Daughter and former caregiver of a dad with Parkinson's & dementia
- Named an ASHA Innovator
- Featured in Lingraphica documentary - Witnessing Their Words

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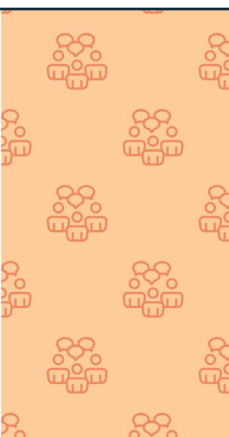
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**TODAY'S Agenda**

- Introductions (5 min)
- Understanding Life After Stroke (10 minutes)
- Communication & Cognitive Recovery (10 minutes)
- Mental Health, Identity, and Relationships (15 minutes)
- Navigating Systems of Care (10 minutes)
- Resources and Q&A (10 min)



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## Learning Objectives

**#1** Understand how stroke can affect communication, cognition, emotions, identity, and daily life.

**#2** Learn practical strategies to support communication and daily participation, strengthen social connection, and reduce isolation.

**#3** Build confidence in navigating the recovery journey, including managing emotional changes, advocating for your needs in healthcare, and accessing community resources for ongoing support.

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## Important Reminders



**#1**  
I am not your speech pathologist and cannot provide direct therapeutic or medical advice. We will discuss general information, practices, and tips.



**#2**  
Please feel free to take pictures of the slides and take notes!



**#3**  
This is a safe space to learn & connect. No question is silly. Ask in the chat or wait until Q&A at the end.

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## Understanding Life After Stroke

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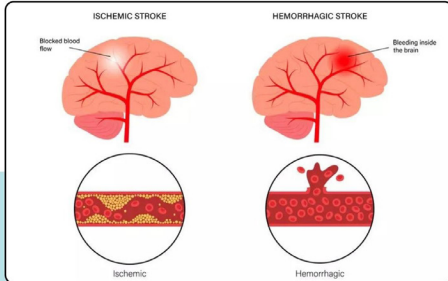
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## Two Main Stroke Categories



Ischemic & Hemorrhagic Stroke

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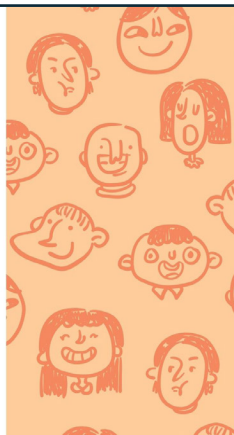
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## What about TIAs?

Often called a "mini-stroke," a TIA is a temporary blockage. It usually resolves within minutes or hours without lasting damage but is a major warning sign for future strokes.



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## Common Challenges After a Stroke



**Communication:**  
Trouble speaking, understanding, reading, or writing. Impaired intelligibility, rate, or vocal quality.



**Physical:**  
Weakness or paralysis on one side of the body. Trouble swallowing. Balance & coordination issues.

(Murphy & Werring, 2020)

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## Hidden Symptoms Are Common



(van Heugten & Wilson, 2021)

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## Recovery isn't a straight line

- Slowed progress ≠ failure
- Progress looks different person to person
- Brain continues adapting over time = neuroplasticity



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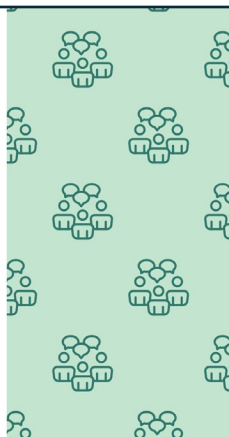
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## Quick Reflection

Let us know in the chat!

- What's one improvement you've noticed since your stroke?
  - Talking more
  - Participating more
  - Talking or thinking better
  - Understanding more
  - Starting to write



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## RECAP

- Stroke recovery is different for everyone and not always a straight line
- Many challenges are "invisible" (fatigue, focus, processing speed)
- Plateaus and slow progress are normal parts of recovery
- Small improvements add up over time
- Your brain is still capable of change and growth

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## Communication & Cognitive Recovery

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### Communication Changes After Stroke

- Aphasia affects:
  - speaking
  - understanding
  - reading
  - writing
- Does not affect intelligence
- Stroke is the most common cause of aphasia



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## Cognitive Changes After Stroke

- Memory
- Executive functions
  - Problem solving
  - Attention
  - Multitasking
- Speed of information processing
- Visuo-spatial abilities



(van Heugten & Wilson, 2021)

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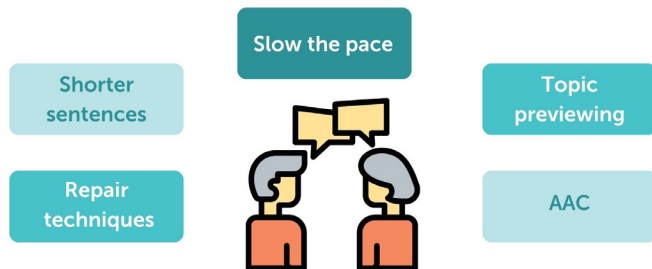
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## Strategies that Help



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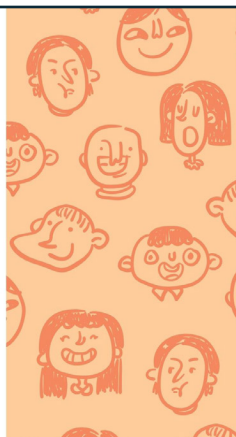
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## What is AAC?

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to tools, strategies, or technology that helps someone with a speech or language impairment to communicate.



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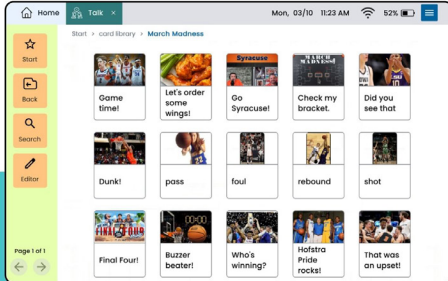
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## High-Tech AAC



Use to talk about your favorite things!

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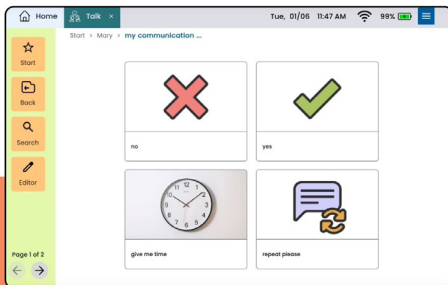
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## High tech example



Lingraphica Communication Device  
2x2 Grid, Basic Needs

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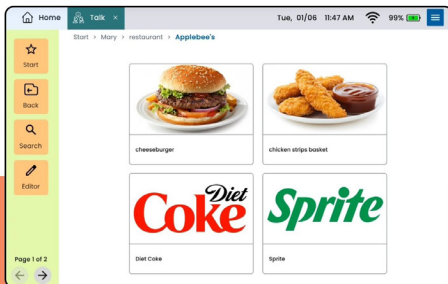
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## High tech example



Lingraphica Communication Device  
2x2 Grid, Food Choices

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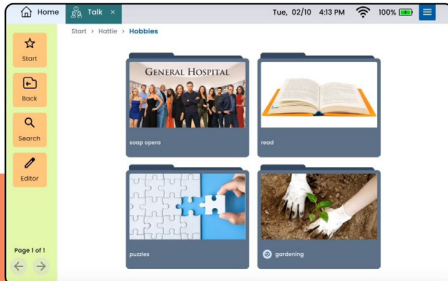
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## High tech example



Lingraphica Communication Device  
Hobbies

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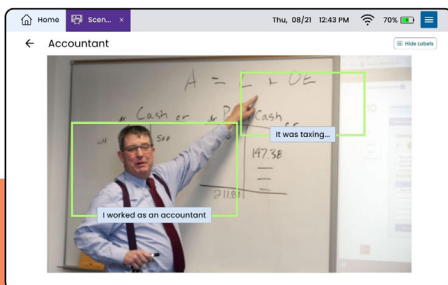
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## High tech example



Lingraphica Communication Device  
Scenes App

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## How Neuroplasticity Helps Recovery

- The brain can “rewire” itself to improve skills
- Healthy parts of the brain can take over new jobs
- With practice, these new pathways can become stronger and faster
- This is how people can regain speech, movement, and thinking skills

(Kiran B. Johnson, 2019)



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## Daily Practice Supports Neuroplasticity

- Repetition
  - Doing something many times helps the brain learn it again
- Practice that matters to you
  - Practicing real-life tasks works better than random exercises
- Consistency
  - A little practice every day is better than once in a while
- Attention and effort
  - The brain learns better when you are focused and trying



(Kiran et al., 2019)

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## RECAP

- Communication changes after stroke are common and varied
- Aphasia and cognitive challenges do not reflect intelligence
- Simple strategies (slowing down, visuals, repetition) can improve communication
- AAC tools can support independence and confidence
- Consistent, meaningful practice helps build skills over time

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## Mental Health, Identity, and Relationships

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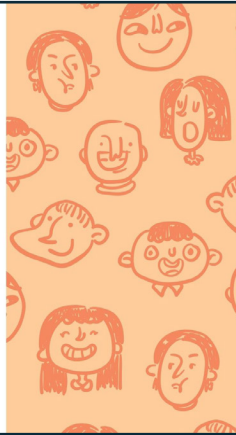
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## Emotional Impact of Stroke

It is completely normal for stroke survivors to experience changes in mood, emotions, personality, and identity.



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## Emotional Changes



Anxiety



Frustration,  
Irritability, Anger



Fear



Grief,  
Depression



Impulsivity,  
Poor Judgment



Apathy

\*This is not an all-inclusive list  
(Crowder et al., 2015)

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## Caregiver Wellbeing

- Caregivers often face
  - Physical strain
  - Emotional + psychological load
  - Social isolation
  - Financial pressure
- Burnout ≠ failure
- Community + support = better outcomes



(Cao et al., 2026)

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## Relationships & Identity After Stroke

Character Traits	Job	Family & Friends	Hobby or Interests	Life Milestones	Culture, Race, Religion, Age, Gender
Motivated	Teacher	Wife/Husband	Sports	Graduation	Black
Outgoing	Salesman	Grandparent	Movies	Married	White
Funny	Engineer	Son/ Daughter	Travel	Divorce	Latinx
Spiritual	Student	Large family	Church	Stroke	Young adult
Curious	Mechanic	Alone	Singing	New home	Senior
of.....	of.....	of.....	of.....	of.....	of.....

Communication, energy levels & social changes can impact relationships & identity.

Who were you before? Who are you now?  
What connections are important?

(Shadden & Agan, 2004)

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## Managing Emotional Changes

- Breathing
- Relaxation
- Reflection
- Communication
- Movement
- Socialization & staying connected
- Rest
- Creativity
- Therapeutic approaches, individual or group sessions



(Crozier et al., 2020)

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## RECAP

- Emotional changes after stroke are real, valid, and common
- Identity may shift, it's okay to redefine yourself over time
- Relationships can change, but communication and understanding help maintain connection
- Caregivers also need support and are part of the recovery journey
- Staying socially connected supports both emotional health and recovery

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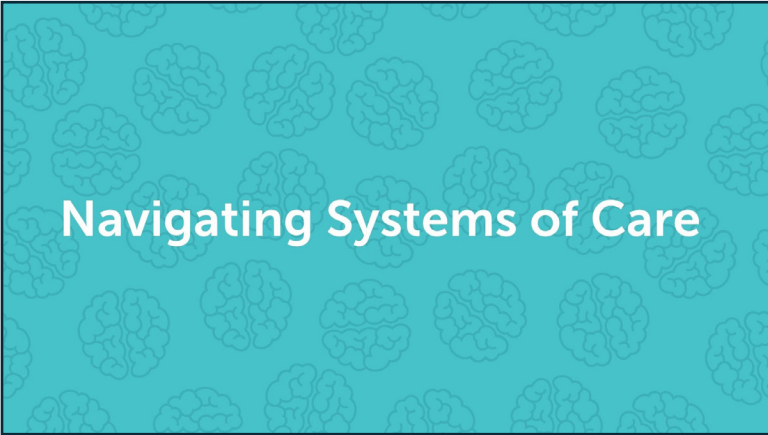
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### Common Healthcare Barriers & Disparities

- Providers talk too fast
- Medical jargon
- Being rushed
- Speaking only to care partners
- Phone-only communication
- Assumptions about comprehension
- Social, economic, or geographic barrier
  - impacts wait times to treatment & outcomes



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### Advocacy DOES NOT Mean

- Long, complex explanations
- Confrontation
- Being "perfect"



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## Advocacy CAN Mean

- Ask for clear language
- Bring written questions
- Request repetition
- Take a support person
- Ask for visuals
- Recognize that disparities affect care, advocating matters.



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## The Importance of Knowing the Signs

# B.E.F.A.S.T.

Balance	Eyes	Face	Arms	Speech	Time
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(American Stroke Association, American Heart Association, 2020)



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## Time Matters

- Faster care → better outcomes in general
- Do not wait to see “if it gets better”
- Seeking help early remains one of the most important factors in recovery



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## Life After the Hospital

Typical care team can include:

- Neurologist
- Primary Care Physician (PCP)
- Rehabilitation Team
  - SLP, OT, PT
- Cardiologist
- Social Worker

**Follow-ups support long-term safety + progress.**

\*This is not an all-inclusive list.



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## Take Care of Your Heart & Brain

- Cardiac health is linked to future stroke risk.
- High blood pressure is a leading risk factor for stroke.
- Managing blood pressure, heart rate, glucose, and overall wellness is important.
- Work with your providers to understand your personal risks.

(Murphy & Welling, 2020)



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## Questions to Ask the Care Team

- "What are my biggest risk factors now?"
- "What follow-ups should I prioritize?"
- "What lifestyle habits matter most for me?"
- "What signs should I report right away?"



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## RECAP

- Recognizing stroke signs and acting quickly is critical
- Recovery continues after discharge. Follow-up care matters
- A strong care team supports long-term progress
- Managing overall health (heart + brain) is important for the future
- Speaking up and asking questions helps you get the care you need

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## Resources

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### Download Brain Health & Communication Infographic



Download our infographic that shares an overview of how different parts of the brain contribute to communication.

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD



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## Watch the Brain Health & Communication webinar recording



We'll discuss how different parts of the brain support communication.

Attendees will gain insights into brain function, tips for stimulating mental activity, and strategies to enhance communication abilities.

SCAN TO WATCH



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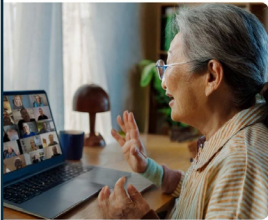
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joinina  
a Lingraphica community



A place for individuals with various communication challenges and their care partners to connect, share, and offer support. The Lingraphica Community consists of multiple, diagnosis-specific online communities.

Each individual community has a separate membership base, live online meetup sessions, and engagement opportunities.

SCAN TO JOIN



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## Let's Talk!

Schedule time to speak with a Lingraphica team member to discuss communication goals and identify the best resources for your communication journey.

Whether you're interested in our AAC devices, free apps, or our free online community, we'll help answer any questions you may have.

SCAN TO SCHEDULE



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**THANK YOU!**

- Recovery is not linear
- Communication grows with practice
- Identity + relationships matter in recovery
- Emotional health is part of rehab
- Self-advocacy supports better outcomes. You have the right to interpreters, accessible communication, and clear explanations
- You are not alone



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Questions? Contact us: [lingraphica.com/contact-us/](https://lingraphica.com/contact-us/)

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We're here for you.

Contact us at 888-274-2742 or [lingraphica.com/contact-us/](https://lingraphica.com/contact-us/).