

ADULTS: Cognitive-Communication Guidelines for Referral to Speech-Language Pathologists

Most Common Etiologies:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Brain tumors
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)

Related Terms:

Abstract information, anosognosia, attention, cognitive rehabilitation, concrete information, community reentry, emotional lability, executive functioning, external stimuli, eye contact, impulsivity, memory, perseveration, pragmatics, redundant responses, tangential responses, verbose responses.

Potential Consequences:

- Reduced awareness and ability to initiate and effectively communicate needs.
- Reduced awareness of impairment and its degree (i.e., loss of ability to assess one's own communication effectiveness).
- Reduced memory, judgment, and ability to initiate and effectively exchange routine information.
- Difficulty performing personal lifestyle management activities effectively (i.e., pay bills).
- Reduced ability to anticipate potential consequences, with reasonable judgment and problem solving.
- Reduced social communication skills and/or ability to manage emotions, often causing loss of relationships.
- Disruption of ability to fulfill educational or vocational roles, including potential loss of employment.
- At risk for injury due to inability to communicate in an emergency and/or anticipate the consequences of own actions.

Behaviors¹ That Should Trigger an SLP Referral

Difficulty functioning independently due to:

- unresponsiveness to all external stimuli.
- may open eyes, suck, and/or yawn.
- does not attend to others.
- no purposeful speech.
- extremely impaired attention and memory with impulsivity.
- Extremely limited communication:
 - difficulty responding to and/or saying name.
 - difficulty expressing basic needs to others using simple words and/or gestures (i.e., yes/no, head nod).
 - difficulty saying greetings (i.e., "hi" and "bye") on own.
- difficulty remembering spouse/caregiver's name.
- difficulty counting to 10.
- becomes agitated when needs are not met.

- Limited eye contact.
- limited social behaviors (i.e., expressions of courtesy and facial expressions).
- very limited communication:
 - difficulty paying attention while speaking (i.e., does not complete sentences or take turns speaking during conversation).
 - difficulty responding appropriately to message of other individual (i.e., delayed, perservative, or off-topic responses, including inappropriate words).
 - limited ability to provide biographical information.
 - difficulty understanding abstract information; very concrete responses.

Difficulty functioning independently due to:

- difficulty anticipating consequences of own actions.
- poor organization, with limited problem solving and judgment.

¹ Behaviors are clustered to indicated different levels of function and/or patterns commonly associated with different medical conditions or etiologies.

- limited awareness of extent of difficulties; exhibits socially inappropriate behavior.
- difficulty with concepts of time and money.
- difficulty self-disciplining and self-monitoring to follow rules.
- difficulty changing routine or schedule; difficulty learning new rules.
- limited communication:
 - difficulty selecting appropriate words and remembering names.
 - limited memory and/or knowledge of current events and/or personal history.
 - responses in conversation may be verbose, redundant, or tangential.
 - elaborates on information provided from questions, but cannot appropriately change topic, initiate, or end a conversation.
 - misses or misunderstands humor.
 - difficulty understanding nonverbal conversation (i.e., facial expressions and/or body language).
 - difficulty understanding abstract information.

Difficulty managing home or maintaining a job or business due to:

- Difficulty planning and completing necessary daily activities
- difficulty following directions.

- difficulty comprehending or applying abstract written information.
- difficulty analyzing personal and/or business problems, identifying and applying solutions.
- difficulty assessing own strengths and weaknesses, developing effective plans to improve weaknesses.
- difficulty managing multiple responsibilities simultaneously.
- difficulty managing emotions (especially anxiety, frustration, or anger) related to performance difficulties.
- difficulty making, following, and modifying plans as needed.
- difficulty understanding and managing personal legal or financial matters (i.e., taxes, buying or refinancing a home, etc.).
- difficulty effectively communicating with colleagues and/or customers, especially initiating effective responses, interpreting combined verbal and nonverbal responses during conversations to determine strategic communication action; modifying response when feedback indicates it has not been successful.