

Case Example

The following case example describes treatment procedures used with one of the author's patients.

D. M., a 42-year-old female, presented with severe apraxia and mild aphasia secondary to a stroke. Before her injury, she was in excellent health and was an avid tennis player. She worked full-time in her own business, possessed a masters degree, and was the mother of two adult sons. D. M. was attractive, very intelligent and had always been a hard worker. Despite her injury she was alert, bright and had retained her business acumen.

D. M. received speech-language therapy as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation program at an outpatient facility. She also received occupational therapy, physical therapy and cognitive therapy. She ambulated independently, but had mild difficulty with balance and coordination, as well as right-sided weakness of her hand and arm. She also had a slight facial droop and mildly impaired strength and coordination of her tongue and lips. In addition to her communication goals, D. M. had a strong desire to work again and to play competitive tennis.

Initially, the prognosis appeared poor due to the severity of D. M.'s apraxia. However, the treatment team remained hopeful due to the recency of her injury, her age, prior good health, intelligence and unstoppable motivation. Her sense of humor helped as well.

When D. M. began therapy with me, her motivation was excellent, and she handled frustration well. Her family was also extremely supportive. She communicated using limited speech, gestures, an alphabet chart and writing single words. Therapy began by introducing VC and CV words that were easiest to produce and were most visible, such as "ma." We also worked on oral-motor exercises to improve the strength and coordination of her articulators.

Therapy progressed to words of increasing length and complexity, such as bilabials, polysyllabic words and then short phrases. We focused on words that were important to D. M., such as the names of family members and social words. At the same time, we practiced automatic speech, such as the days of the week and counting. Therapy also focused upon improving her language skills which were reduced as a result of aphasia.

After several months, D. M. progressed to more functional activities, such as role-playing and spontaneous speech. We also practiced contrastive stress exercises to make her speech sound more natural. D. M. was given exercises to practice at home and her family was given strategies to help cue her.

Throughout her rehabilitation, D. M. was encouraged to self-monitor her speech and correct her apraxic errors. She used a tape recorder to track her progress and provide audio feedback. D. M. was cued to listen to my production of the target and to watch my mouth. A mirror helped D. M. to watch herself as she tried to find the correct articulatory posture.

At approximately six months post-onset, D. M. began to work on advanced activities, such as alliterative phrases and oral reading. She practiced exercises to improve her prosody and make her speech sound more natural. By this time D. M. was a functional speaker. She continued to practice her speech in functional situations in the community. She used the telephone and ordered for herself in a restaurant. D. M. practiced these advanced exercises and communicated in functional situations until her discharge from therapy one year later.

Case Example

Now, five years later, D. M. is quite fluent to my ear, yet she reports being very conscious of her speech. She feels that her rate is slightly reduced from what it was before her injury and that her speech does not always sound as “natural” as it should. However, I would consider D. M. to be a success story, as she began therapy speaking in single words and left a functional communicator.

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Words of Increasing Length and Complexity

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|---|--|
| 1. power powerful The plow is powerful. | 6. type typing Typing is annoying. |
| 2. cloud cloudier It is getting cloudier. | 7. hour hourly Weigh the mail hourly. |
| 3. boil boiling Joyce is boiling the oil. | 8. noise noisy The toy is noisy. |
| 4. soil soiled The foyer is soiled. | 9. fry frying Frying the oysters. |
| 5. open opening opening your eyes | 10. allow allowing Roy is allowing it. |

LEVEL 3 EXERCISES

Longer Sentences

1. The crowd thought the movie was thoroughly lousy.
2. Lloyd proposed a royal toast.
3. They play the banjo for hours in Oklahoma.
4. The cow and doe made noise at the zoo.
5. Goya painted bold, bright portraits.
6. Doyle appointed an envoy to take the voyage.
7. The guy told Mike that the pie was left off the invoice.
8. Ivan said, "I'm afraid you can't fight fate."
9. Our library will buy a book about dinosaurs.
10. The bride declined to wear the ivory gown.