

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

Most Common Etiologies:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Brain tumors
- Stroke
- Traumatic brain injury

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.

Behaviors 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:
 - o Difficulty responding to and/or saying name.
 - o Difficulty expressing basic needs to others using simple words and/or gestures (i.e., yes/no, head nod).
- Difficulty remembering spouse/caregiver's name.
- Difficulty counting to 10.
- Becomes agitated when needs are not met.

- Limited eye contact.
- Limited social behaviors (ie. Expressions of courtesy and facial expressions).
- Very limited communication:
 - o Difficulty paying attention while speaking (i.e., does not complete sentences or take turns speaking during conversation).
 - o Difficulty responding appropriately to message of other (i.e., delayed perseverative, or off-topic responses, including inappropriate words).
 - o Limited ability to provide biographical information.
 - o 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.
- 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:
 - o Difficulty selecting appropriate words and remembering names
 - o Limited memory and/or knowledge of current events and/or personal history.
 - o Responses in conversation may be verbose, redundant, or tangential.
 - o Elaborates on information provided from questions, but cannot appropriately change topic, initiate, or end a conversation.
 - o Misses or understands humor.
 - o Difficulty understanding nonverbal conversation (i.e. Facial expressions and/or body language).
 - o 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 initiation 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.