

Can I still improve after 6 months?

Many families with aphasia have stories about what they were told about recovery in the hospital. Some people are told 6 months, some are told one year. Every once in a while, someone is told that everything will be back to normal in 6 months.

“Time post onset” or TPO, is how long it’s been since your brain injury. By the 6-month marker, many clients have already been discharged from all therapies, often without any follow-up.

The **spontaneous recovery period** is the time between when your stroke occurs, and when your brain begins to heal and change. These changes happen **even if you don’t receive any therapy**. The dead neurons (brain cells) are cleaned out, scar tissue forms, and some neurons connect in different patterns to undamaged parts of the brain (**neuroplasticity**).

Research using neuroimaging has shown that the brain can continue to recover during spontaneous recovery for up to two years after a stroke. This means that this research saw brain changes up to two years after a stroke. Not all learning is going to visibly change your brain, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t happening.

Getting therapy during this time is a bonus, since this is the time in which you will earn the quickest gains. So the 6 month figure families are told means that the fastest recovery or re-wiring takes place within the first year after a stroke. **This does not mean, however, that recovery cannot happen after one year. It only means that neuroplasticity slows down. Neuroplasticity means learning, and everyone can always learn. With aphasia, that learning takes repeated practice of a skill over a period of time.**

We have seen significant improvement in persons who have been living with aphasia for 14 years, 5 years, 20 years, and so on. **Sometimes all it takes is the right approach practiced frequently to get a big change going.** So don’t let yourself get caught up in where you are “supposed to be” in your recovery by a certain time. There are a LOT of factors that affect your progress and how long that progress takes. But 6 months post-stroke is **definitely not** the end of your recovery.