

Intensive Aphasia Therapy, What it is and what it isn't

“He thinks he’s going to be cured in 6 weeks”

I hear this sometimes from caregivers about their loved ones when they come to our intensive program. It’s a delicate balance between promoting hope and ensuring realistic expectations. This is especially true for younger families with aphasia who are within the first 6 months of recovery. **The hardest part of aphasia may not be the communication difficulties, it’s the realization that this isn’t temporary.**

Expectations are extremely important to address in intensive therapy, but also in other parts of our lives. Expectations are what our minds create based upon experiences and desires. You can have negative expectations, such as “that family gathering is going to be awful because everyone fights all the time”. Your expectations can also be positive, such as “I expect the service at this restaurant to be outstanding and affordable”.

But what happens when our expectations aren’t met? Clients with aphasia who are expecting to be cured from aphasia and to go back to their pre-aphasia lives can become severely depressed when that doesn’t happen. All of the progress they’ve made goes out the window. **They expected to be perfect, and they weren’t.** Coping with this is very hard for most people.

What our intensive aphasia therapy program is:

- **Practicing** certain skills over and over in a shorter period of time (4-8 weeks)
- **Learning** more about aphasia and your specific prognosis
- **Learning** how to communicate better with each other
- **Re-learning** some skills faster
- **Bonding** with and supporting other caregivers
- **Working** on psychological issues arising from aphasia
- **Working** with therapists who specialize in aphasia/apraxia/dysarthria from stroke, brain injury, or other causes.
- **Improving** skills by using your strengths with personalized treatment

What our intensive aphasia therapy program is not:

- **A miracle cure**—you will still have aphasia when you leave
- **A day program** for drop-off supervision—family involvement is important for skill carry-over
- **A time to have constant visitors**—this will have a negative effect in the end
- **A time to work 24/7** throughout the program—you need breaks from direct therapy to make it work
- **The same therapy activities** you've done in outpatient therapy—there are no worksheets or non-functional drills

The take away: there is no cure for aphasia at this time. However, research has proven for over 25 years that intensive aphasia therapy can help you regain functional skills faster with longer-lasting effects. It can also provide needed **social and emotional development** by:

- giving your loved one confidence
- introducing you to other families with aphasia
- adjusting your fears that your loved one is the only one who has this problem
- giving you judgment-free alone time for a few hours a day
- forming lasting relationships with fellow families and therapists, and
- helping you understand what's involved in each step of current and future progress

Remember that your loved one with aphasia **can get better and better**, but it takes hard work over time!

If you're ready to get more help for your family's aphasia, start with [our application process](#).