

## ADULTS: Cognitive-Communication Guidelines for Referral to Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)

### Most Common Etiologies:

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

### Related Terms:

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

### Potential Consequences:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced awareness and ability to initiate and effectively communicate needs</li> <li>• Reduced awareness of impairment and its degree (i.e., loss of ability to assess one’s own communication effectiveness)</li> <li>• Reduced memory, judgment, and ability to initiate and effectively exchange routine information</li> <li>• Difficulty performing personal lifestyle management activities effectively (e.g., pay bills)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced ability to anticipate potential consequences, with reasonable judgment and problem solving</li> <li>• Reduced social communication skills and/or ability to manage emotions, often causing loss of relationships</li> <li>• Disruption of ability to fulfill educational or vocational roles, including potential loss of employment</li> <li>• Risk for injury because of inability to communicate in an emergency and/or anticipate the consequences of own actions</li> </ul> |
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### Behaviors<sup>1</sup> That Should Trigger an SLP Referral

#### Difficulty functioning independently due to

- lack of or atypical responsiveness to all external stimuli
  - may open eyes, suck, and/or yawn
- inability to attend to others
- extremely impaired attention and memory with impulsivity
- severely limited communication
  - lack of purposeful speech
  - difficulty responding to and/or saying name
  - difficulty expressing basic needs to others using simple words and/or gestures (such as yes or no, or head nod)
  - difficulty saying greetings (such as “hi” and “bye”)
- difficulty remembering spouse/caregiver’s name
- difficulty counting to 10
- agitation when needs are not met

- limited eye contact
- limited social behaviors (such as expressions of courtesy and common facial expressions)
- moderately limited communication
  - difficulty paying attention while speaking (i.e., does not complete sentences or loses train of thought)
  - difficulty responding appropriately to message of other individual (i.e., delayed, perseverative, or off-topic responses, including inappropriate words)
  - limited ability to provide biographical information
  - difficulty understanding abstract information; very concrete responses
- problems anticipating consequences of own actions
- poor organization, with limited problem solving and judgment

<sup>1</sup>Behaviors are clustered to indicate 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
- mildly limited communication
  - difficulty selecting appropriate words and remembering names
  - limited memory and/or knowledge of current events and/or personal history
  - tendency to be verbose, redundant, or tangential when responding
  - inability to appropriately change topic, initiate, or end a conversation
  - inability to understand humor
  - difficulty understanding nonverbal conversation (i.e., facial expressions and/or body language)
  - difficulty understanding abstract information

**Difficulty managing home or maintaining job or business due to problems**

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

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