



Ask An Angel...

Our *Ask An Angel* correspondent is Arlene Petersen, Certified Senior Advisor and Life Care Navigation Specialist in the area of senior home care.

Q. My friend had a stroke and her communication is affected. I can tell she knows what she wants to say but she is unable to get it out. Our relationship is challenged right now, not because of the stroke because I care for her as much as I ever did, but the communication challenges are frustrating for both of us. I feel bad for her. Is there something I can do to help her along in this journey?

A. My heart goes out to you as you desire to reach out to help your friend. The most important thing is to keep your friendship fresh and alive through companionship. That can come in different forms, and doesn't always involve talking! The *Aphasia Now* support group has great ideas on how to interact with friends and loved ones. Introducing craft and art projects into your relationship is just one form of communication. Human touch is another powerful non-verbal way of communicating. Consider giving your friend a light hand massage with her favorite scented lotion. If that is not something that you can do together, their web site, (aphasianow.org) suggests some practical communication tips to use when interacting with those we love. First, and foremost, patience is the key. Remember, your friend is just as frustrated as you are, if not more. Speak slowly and clearly, communicating one idea at a time. Make sure you don't speak childishly to your friend. Try not to rush the conversation and use straightforward language. Use yes/no questions whenever possible and make sure that you affirm your friend throughout the process. Consider using a white board and dry erase marker, or a simple pad of paper and pen to write messages back and forth. It is important to learn new ways to communicate with each other. Your friend may feel a loss of self-esteem, and your friendship will most likely be very important to her now more than ever.

Have a question for our angel correspondent? You can send our angel an email to AskAnAngel@att.net or send your question via mail to Ask An Angel, 65 Woodbury St., South Elgin, IL 60177.