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Aphasia Insights!

Aphasia Boot Camp is a means to an end...

By Tom Broussard, PhD.

After my conventional therapy was done, I was very interested in joining an intensive program. I assumed that anything called “intensive” would, by definition, improve my language. I was beginning to understand that there was a “cause and effect” outcome from continued practice and sustained improvement. The more I practiced, the more I got better.

What I didn’t know was that the day-to-day individual activities themselves didn’t necessarily create noticeable day-to-day improvement that I could see. It wasn’t until after I had accumulated (and continued to accumulate) enough evidence (of reading, writing, recording, listening, seeing) that I could appreciate my improvement over time.

There is lag time between the improvements that others can see versus the awareness of those improvements that PWA might not be able to see. Visible improvements by others, and awareness of those improvements by PWA, take similar but not identical tracks. It is more like Plato’s shadows in the cave. Awareness shadows and lags the conscious appreciation of improvement but as a result of separate neurological paths.

If you read my diary, you can tell that I was getting better month-to-month. But I was unaware of the meaning of my

entries until I became more consciously aware of those improvements.

Interestingly, while my conventional therapy was progressing, my therapist thought that I *was* getting better based on the objective scores from the quizzes and tests. I too had been able to read the therapist’s reports and could see my grades going up. But I couldn’t *tell* that I was getting better that I could see. The grades were one thing. But I still couldn’t read a book (or magazine) that I could understand or write a page (or a paragraph) properly with my own hand.

The problem is that reconstruction of the brain occurs very slowly. The experience-dependent activities that

induce plasticity provide day-to-day neural construction. But it takes time to create the hundreds of miles of fibers that connect the critical mass of neurons that *then* allow the visible behavior to be seen by a person with aphasia.

It is one thing to be told by others on the outside that you are “getting better.” I was always happy to hear that I was getting better and it made me *feel* better. But it is a completely different sensation when you can tell that *you* are fully aware of a self-initiated set of activities that induce the improvements.

Aphasia Boot Camp is a means to an end, with no end in sight to enriched therapy & lifelong recovery, successful living by any other name.

“...he inherits the power of constructing a language by an unconscious activity of absorption.” Pg. 80.

The Absorbent Mind (1949)

Maria Montessori (August 31, 1870-May 6, 1952) was an Italian physician and educator best known for the philosophy of education that bears her name, and her writing on scientific pedagogy.

Stroke Educator, Inc. is committed to educating the wider public about stroke, aphasia, and the 50 state “*Aim High for Aphasia!*” Aphasia Awareness Campaign.

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