

National Aphasia
Awareness Month!

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“Those actions which appear the most insignificant, if only they are constantly repeated, will form for us in the course of weeks or months or years an enormous total which is inscribed in organic memory in the form of ineradicable habits.”

The Education of the Will; The Theory and Practice of Self-Culture, (1914) pg. 209.

Jules Payot, a friend of Santiago Ramon y Cajal (1898), Pioneer of modern Neuroscience.

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

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Aphasia Insights!

AAC devices provide the logic of thoughts, organized in images ...

By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.

There are new understandings of how AAC (augmentative & alternative communication) devices provide a crucial communication link between people with aphasia (PWA) who can “see” but can’t “say.”

It appears that AAC devices can assist with the “saying” part of people with significant and complex communication disorders by virtue of “seeing” a series of images that provide much more information about the needs that can’t be expressed.

When I was “young” with my new aphasia world, and wanted a meal at a restaurant, I couldn’t say what I wanted to order. But usually I was with a friend or a family member, and they could order for me. But there were times when I was alone and had trouble trying to tell the server what I wanted. But typically, between the two of us, I could point at pictures on the wall, or in

the menu and the server would indicate agreement.

I also had my first version of “AAC devices” (not really AAC but thinking along that line), a Leap Frog toy that provided the upper and lower case of the alphabet with lights that helped

you draw a letter. If you did it correctly, the screen would light up with a big “Hooray!” and a visual award.

I didn’t realize until now that the high-tech AAC devices of today

provide very similar functions (not really, just considering the act of assisting in one way or another) that low-tech “devices” of body language (pointing, nodding, thumbs up, and smiling—if nothing else works!), that provide the additional communication function in the absence of expressing them.

AAC devices provide the logic of thoughts, organized in images of “this or that” sets of needs, which drill down to the ultimate need: I want a burger (instead of fish); soda (instead of milk); and fries (instead of dreaded vegetables!).

PS—that really is my own Leap Frog low-tech device bought by my daughter!

