

Aphasia Insights!

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“There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world, and that is an idea whose time has come.”

Victor Marie Hugo (January 30, 1826-May 22, 1885) was a poet, novelist and campaigner for social causes. His most famous works include *Les Miserable* and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*.

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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Awareness: The Fourth Horse in the Race for Aphasia Recovery.

By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.

I received progress reports weekly from my therapist. Each report stated that the patient (meaning, me) was “aware of his deficits.”

After a couple of weeks, I asked my therapist what the phrase “awareness of my deficits” meant to me. She was sure that I was aware of my deficits and in many ways, I was quite aware of the big picture, that I had lost my language. But I still couldn’t grasp the idea of being aware of each of the deficits in their own way.

I knew that I was having problems with my language...but (apparently) I was not fully conscious of the details of my deficits of one modality or another. I got “grades” each week regarding my improvements in reading, writing and speaking. Most of the “grades” improved in one skill or another; from 50% to 60%, or 70% to 80%.

But the problem was (at least in my mind at the time) that the grades still didn’t tell me how *functionally* (again, for *me* to see or be aware of) my language skills and deficits

really were. The numbered grades was one measure of progress. Writing a sentence, by hand, that made sense, was another.

In either case, I couldn’t explain this conundrum to my therapist. I had been writing my diary almost every day but my therapist never knew. She didn’t ask and I didn’t offer. Throughout that time, I

thought that my writing looked fine to me. It wasn’t until 11 months later when I felt a “click,” in my mind. With that, something felt different. I looked

back at my first diary entry, pointed at it and said, “*Who wrote that?*” It was my handwriting but it looked awful.

It appeared that I had become fully aware at that moment in time. It was the first time I was able to know the difference between what was good and what was bad. I didn’t know that “awareness” was a skill all its own. It appeared that the race horses of reading, writing, speaking, and awareness, were all leading or lagging on any given day.

But as long as awareness was always lagging, there would be no final recognition of seeing what couldn’t be seen (or perceived) until crossing the finish line.

The Race of Aphasia Recovery

