

Aphasia Insights!

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"It is always a matter of experience in action; of practice; in other words, of education. Every person is the author of his own skills, yet the physical constitution with which he starts is the same. It is the man himself who produces his own perfectionment. Pg 73" The Absorbent Mind, 1967.

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 work on scientific pedagogy.

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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Therapeutic Fun: When a Game is More Than Just Fun...

By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.

I wrote an article last month about a game (SkipBo) we did recently at our local Aphasia Conversation Group in St. Augustine, FL. In that article, I talked about the game itself and how it was that all of us (all in the group) experienced plasticity (learning) in such a way that we could see it happening right in front of us.

After the game, there were a few minutes to talk with the group about what we had seen. Some people in the group acknowledged that they never realized that these games *were* therapeutic and designed to help people with aphasia get better.

Of course, the game itself wasn't designed just for people with aphasia. It turns out that all games (unless they are just awful) are fun and likely therapeutic.

But part of being therapeutic means that the people in the game have to be (explicitly) *informed* that what they were doing *is* therapeutically helpful. When it

comes to aphasia recovery, it isn't enough to be told that the games are fun just for fun's sake.

One person mentioned that he never realized how helpful the lessons from the game were to him, sort of an "aha" moment. He had been attending various sessions for quite a while and thought it was always fun. He enjoyed the games but wasn't necessarily aware that it was *therapeutically* helpful. There were no "cause and effect" discussions regarding the game and the resultant plasticity.

“Experience is what you get, when you don't get what you want.”

It wasn't until after the SkipBo game when we realized that all the fun was more than just "fun". We realized that the game was just as

therapeutic as anything else we did with our therapists.

Understanding that the games are therapeutic requires education and awareness. It takes years for anyone, healthy or not, to fully understand how the brain works and use that understanding for their benefit.

When it comes to people with aphasia, awareness has its own modality, skills and its share of

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awareness deficits. Awareness comes by experience and reflection. As the saying goes, “Experience is what you get, when you don’t get what you want.”

We have to reflect on that experience and learn about the activities of the game that reveals the *cause* and the underlying structural *effect* of neural plasticity.

Speech therapists should tell people with aphasia that the games are fun *and* therapeutic, combining experience *and* reflection.

Games are one of the many tools leading to aphasia recovery...and they are more than just fun, they are *therapeutic* fun...with more plasticity ink!TM

Signed: *The Johnny Appleseed of Aphasia Awareness.*