

Aphasia Insights!

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“Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier. Perpetual optimism, believing in yourself, believing in your purpose, believing you will prevail, and demonstrating passion and confidence is a force multiplier. If you believe and have prepared your followers, the followers will believe.”

Colin Powell’s 13 Rules

General Colin L. Powell,
USA (Ret)
Chairman, America’s
Promise, The Alliance for
Youth

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

Stroke Educator, Inc.
541 Domenico Circle
St. Augustine, FL 32086
207-798-1449
tbroussa@comcast.net
www.strokeeducator.com

Aphasia Recovery: *Optimism is a force multiplier in the COVID Age.*

By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.

I had been emailing with friends of mine about the various problems around the world and one mentioned “optimism is a force multiplier.” I have always liked that phrase but I haven’t seen it for a long time.

In my previous life, I had worked with General Colin L. Powell, USA

(Ret) for a couple of years. He was the Chairman, America’s Promise, The Alliance for Youth, and I was the Chairman, Maine’s Promise Network. I have always used his “Colin Powell’s 13 Rules of Leadership” (<https://fearlessmen.com/general-colin-powells-13-rules-of-leadership/>), and the final rule is “Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.”

Since my first stroke, I have met thousands of people with aphasia (PWAs) and hundreds of speech language pathologists (SLPs) while touring around the country, and

from my perspective, they were all optimists (even those who say they are pessimists!)

We have all shared our stories (and described it as best we could) about our language and communication problems. Sharing with others is an important part of the therapeutic process of healing and language improvement. I learn something new every day with people in the groups and can see with my own eyes that they are all learning as well. (See the two articles below about PWAs, games and learning.)



Photosynthesis converts light into green leaves. In much the same way, plasticity converts thoughts and cognitive activities into

brain matter. Talking and sharing (with many other communication activities) provides the needed “experience” of *experience-dependent* neural plasticity.

I enrolled at the Boston University Aphasia Resource Center (BU/ARC) in the “Conversations” class in January 2012. Up until then, I had never met another person with stroke or aphasia since my stroke five months earlier. It was quite an experience to meet so many people with very similar yet still quite different communication issues.

The common denominator for the group was optimism, even in the face of undeniable distress, illness and difficulties. No one was there to complain or deny their plights in life. Everyone was there to better understand what other people had experienced, faced or felt.

We were (and still are) incredibly lucky to have found groups like this (and many others around the country) who share the same optimism and zeal that many people with aphasia exhibit.

If there was anything else we could do for people with aphasia (other than a silver bullet for aphasia recovery!), it is to find other people with aphasia who unfortunately may live alone, isolated or cannot find any groups nearby.

As we get “older” (in the recovery world), maybe it is time to adopt a new (or maybe a refurbished) goal. At the beginning of recovery, we all wanted our language to get better.

Now, after years of working on our language, there are still issues to work on. But people with aphasia continue to “graduate” (180,000 yearly) into the COVID Age where we can’t find the assistance that we all have received in the past.

None of us can gather together anymore like we did with our groups before COVID appeared. We are constrained (now in a good way) to Zoom, SKYPE, talk, discuss, and share with other people with aphasia online. Given that the technology has allowed us to “talk, discuss, and share”

unlimitedly, it is now time to look for other people with aphasia who might not be even aware that conversations with aphasia peers can be highly therapeutic.

Optimistic people with aphasia still see what is possible in themselves and in others; a damaged brain still has the capability to repair its biological self.

The PWAs in groups need to find other PWAs who have never been in groups before and build more awareness about aphasia, recovery and plasticity, nationwide.

Optimism really *is* a force multiplier (especially in the COVID age) that begets more optimism into a beneficial, therapeutic, and almost universal tool to help others induce the creation of neural matter, language improvement and aphasia recovery.

Please join the ranks of the Stroke Educator class of 2020!

Sign up on my website, www.strokeeducator.com and see more information about my work, books and receive monthly newsletters about aphasia awareness, nationwide.

Signed: *The Johnny Appleseed of Aphasia Awareness.*

References:

[January 2020, Vol 2, Issue 01- Games, Plasticity and the magic of a neural polygraph \(Jan 30, 2020\)](#)

[February 2020, Vol 2, Issue 02, Therapeutic Fun, when a game is more than just fun \(Feb 27, 2020\)](#)