

How Speech Changes After Stroke or Brain Injury

Why does speech change?

A stroke or brain injury can affect the areas of the brain that control speech, language, and thinking skills. This can cause changes in how clearly you speak, how easily you find words, and how well you communicate with others.

Common Speech and Communication Changes

Slurred speech (*This is called dysarthria.*)

You may sound slurred or unclear if the muscles used for speaking are weak or hard to control.

Word-finding problems (*This is called aphasia.*)

You may know what you want to say but have trouble finding the words.

Speaking in broken or incomplete sentences

You may leave out words or speak in shorter phrases.

Trouble understanding others

You may have difficulty following conversations, especially in noisy places.

Speaking too fast or too softly

Changes in speech rate or loudness are common.



How to Be an Active Listener

Communication is a two-way street.

Speaking clearly is important —
but so is listening well and
engaging with others.



Be an Active Listener

- ✓ **Focus fully on the speaker**

Put away distractions and give your full attention.

- ✓ **Use nonverbal cues**

Nod, maintain eye contact, and show you're engaged.

- ✓ **Don't interrupt**

Let the other person finish before responding.

- ✓ **Clarify when needed**

If you're unsure what was said, ask politely:
“Could you explain that again?”

- ✓ **Use tone and expression**

Show warmth and interest through your voice and face.

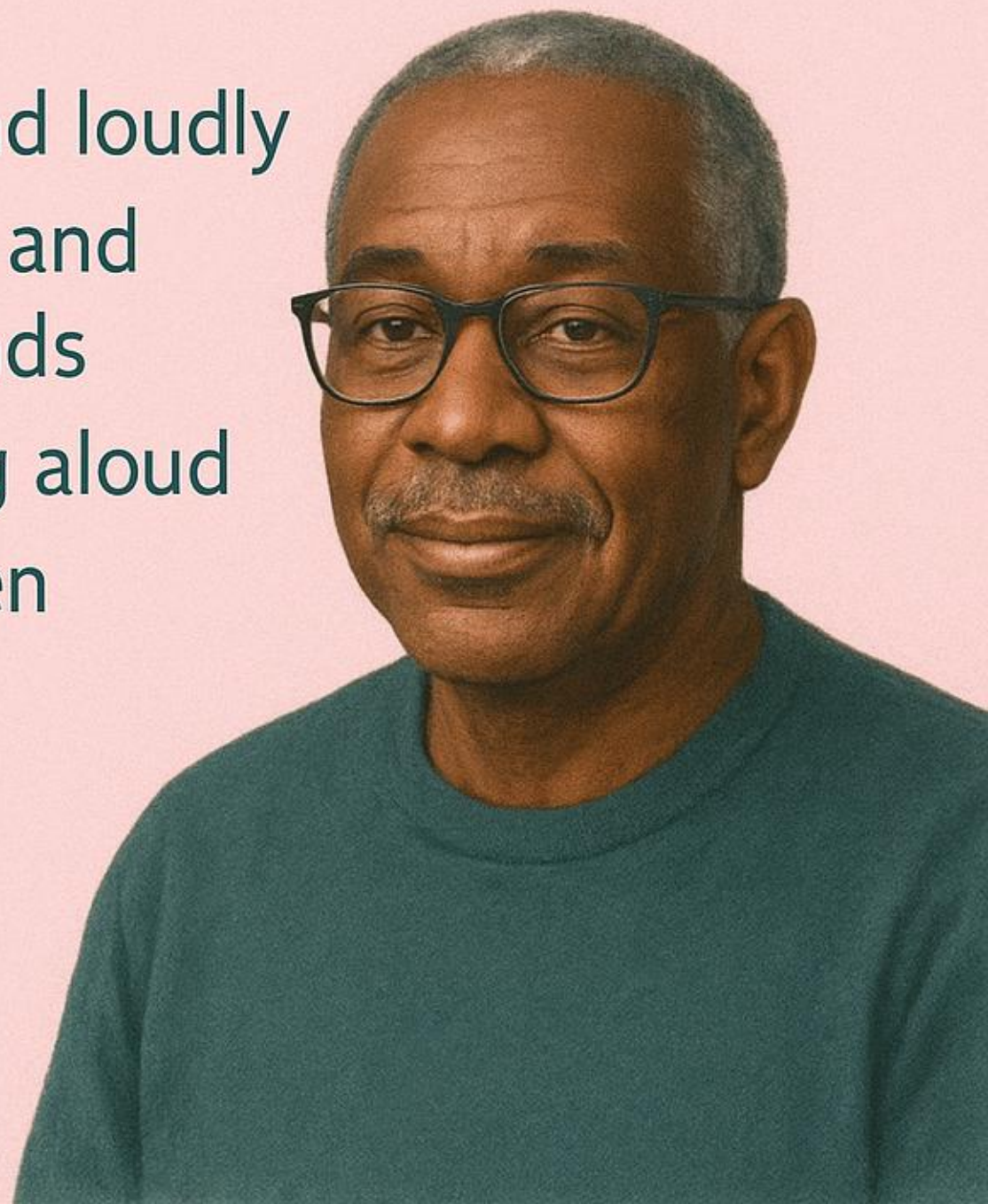
Remember:

Good communication is about connection — not perfection,
Practice these skills and you'll build stronger,
more meaningful conversations.

Tips to Improve Slurred Speech After Neurological Injury

Dysarthria is a condition where muscle weakness leads to slow or slurred speech. Here are some ways to enhance speech clarity:

- Take a breath before speaking
- Speak slowly and loudly
- Separate words and emphasize sounds
- Practice reading aloud
- Record and listen to your speech





Sounding Confident at Work: Awareness of Upspeak

Your Voice Sends a Message

The way you speak can shape how others see you. Even if your words are strong, your tone and delivery play a big role in how your message is received.

What is Upspeak?

Upspeak is when your voice rises at the end of a sentence, making statements sound like questions

“I worked on that report yesterday?”

- Can sound unsure or hesitant in professional settings
- May weaken statements that are meant to be confident

Build Awareness + Flexibility

- Record yourself speaking and listen for upspeak
- Speak on a staircase start in your natural tone, take a step up on the second or third word and then travel down the staircase as you speak. Don't take steps up at the end of sentences.

Tools to Improve Your Clarity and Confidence at Work

Clear, confident communication is one of the most valuable skills for career success.

Whether you're leading a meeting, presenting to clients, or contributing to a team, the way you speak can shape how others see you.

Speak Clearly and with Impact

- Slow your rate of speech filler words like *um*, *like*, *you knew*.
- Maintain eye contact with audience.

Project Confidence

- Speak with purpose – avoid filler words like *um*, *like*, *you know*.
- Breathe deeply to steady your voice

Use Everyday Tools

- Organize your thoughts before speaking
- Practice key points before meetings or presentations
- Record yourself and listen back to adjust tone and clarity



Where to Find a Speech-Language Pathologist

If you or a loved one is recovering from a stroke or brain injury, a speech-language pathologist (SLP) can help improve speech, language, thinking, and swallowing skills.

You can find SLP services in several types of settings. Each offers different benefits depending on your needs.

Outpatient Therapy Centers

- Standalone clinics or hospital-based centers.
- You travel to the center for therapy appointments.

Hospital Outpatient Programs

- Therapy provided by the hospital's outpatient rehabilitation department.
- Often used after discharge from inpatient rehab or hospital stay.
- Provides coordinated care with your medical team.

Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs)

- Also called nursing homes or rehabilitation centers
- Patients receive speech therapy while living temporarily or permanently at the facility
- Often used after hospital stays when more medical support or 24-hour care is needed.

Choosing the Right Setting

Your doctor and rehabilitation team can help you decide which setting is best for you based on your medical needs, mobility, and therapy goals.

