

Editor's Note:

When I had my stroke in October 2010, it caused my speech and writing to be severely impaired and my memory to be foggy. The first thing that Bill Connors asked when we started working together was, "Sharon, what are your goals for your recovery?" Surprisingly, my previous SLP never asked me that question.

His question gave me pause; because I was a researcher and writer before my stroke, I knew that I wanted my words back.

My response to Bill was that my goals were to reconnect my words, my speech, my memory and be able to read and write again - better than I did before! When I gave Bill my reply, he never batted an eyelash. We got to work using my starting goals as a guide.

What is a goal?

A goal is something that you want to achieve over the long run. For example, one of my long-term goal was to be able to read and write again.

What are objectives? Objectives are specific targets within the general goal. Objectives are time-related to achieve a certain task. This is where collaboration with an SLP, caregiver and the person with aphasia becomes important. My short term goals, in collaboration with my SLP, initially was to read a short article and create a headline for the article. Later on, when I was able to read longer articles, I working on creating a synopsis or summary of the article – using my own words.

What does it take for you to succeed with your stated goals and objectives? Psychologists and researchers have identified ten key elements of goal setting that help with the successful attainment of objectives and ambitions. These include:

(1) motivation, (2) specificity, (3) challenge, (4) strategies, (5) direction, (6) commitment, (7) effort, (8) persistence, (9) significance, and (10) feedback.

SOURCE: ["Ten Key Essentials for Achieving Your Goals"](#), By Linda Richter

1. MOTIVATION:

Motivation is defined as the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. In everyday usage, the term motivation is frequently used to describe why a person does something.

2. GOAL SPECIFICITY:

Goal specificity is the degree to which the goal is defined, specific and measurable. It should

answer the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the expectations of the goal.

3. CHALLENGES:

Psychologists believe that for goal-setting initiatives to be effective, they should have some level of difficulty or challenge. Challenges can motivate you to reach new goals, develop healthy habits and have fun along the way!

4. STRATEGIES:

Strategies or techniques are tools that you will always need as the means for attaining goals. Strategies are formulated by first analyzing your strengths and weaknesses.

5. DIRECTION:

Direction is about taking risks that are relevant to the attainment of your goal, which you are prepared to tackle. Direction is about getting out of your comfort zone.

6. COMMITMENT:

Individuals who have a strong resolve to be steadfast often manage to stay on top through good and bad times. The element of commitment is heightened once you become battle tested and weary from all the risks, defeat, and the tests you encountered and faced along the way.

7. EFFORT:

Part of being committed is the willingness to exert effort---mentally or physically.

8. PERSISTENCE:

Persistence means the willingness to push through, but this does not mean stubbornness in employing a strategy that has already been proved to fail.

9. SIGNIFICANCE:

It is important that the goal you will set for yourself is significant not only as a personal matter but to the people around you, starting from your family, associates, your community.

10. FEEDBACK:

Feedback is necessary in order for goals to remain effective and retain commitment. Without feedback people are unaware of their progression or regression and it becomes difficult to gauge the level of effort required to pursue the goal effectively.

What are your goals for your aphasia?