



## Making reasonable adjustments

### Communicating with people with specific disabilities

- People with communication disabilities experience an **increased risk of adverse events and poorer health outcomes** than people without communication disabilities.<sup>1,2</sup>
- People who require assistance with speaking, hearing, seeing, understanding, reading, remembering, and writing are considered “**communication vulnerable**” in health care settings.<sup>3</sup>

The diversity of people with disability needs to be acknowledged, as illustrated below:<sup>3,4</sup>

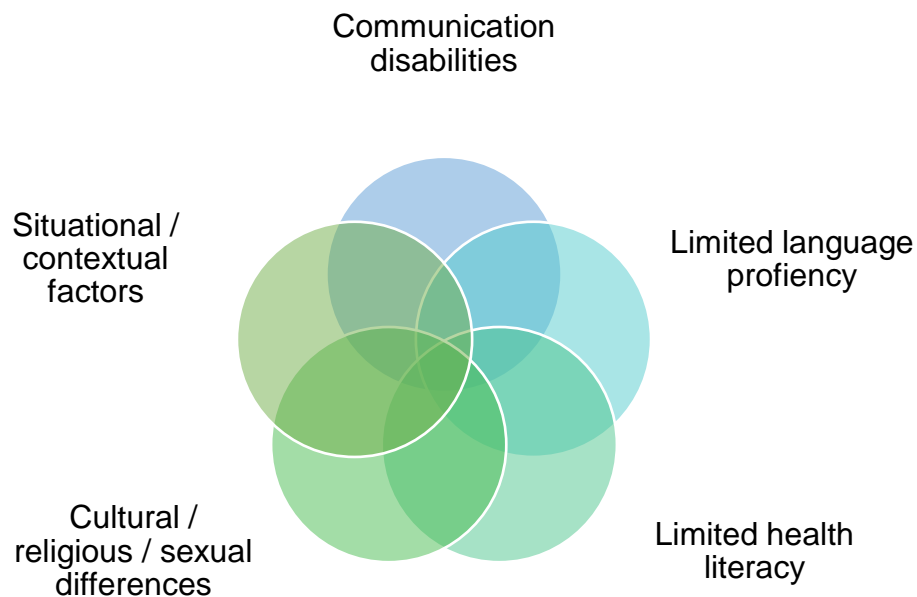


Figure 1: Patients with converging communication vulnerabilities<sup>3(p17)</sup>

Personalised communication supports **empower active patient participation**, and ultimately improve outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

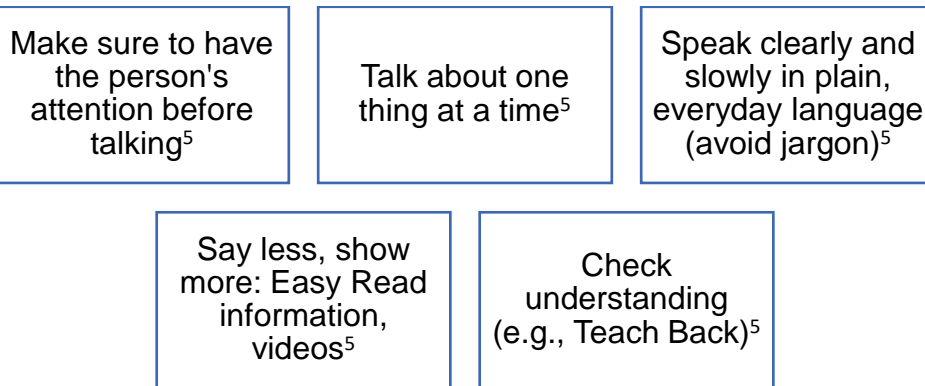
If you having trouble communicating with a specific patient:

- check if they have an **individualised communication plan**, or
- **refer to a speech pathologist** for further assessment and advice.

## Tips and resources

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### **1. Communicating with people with intellectual or developmental disabilities**



- [Resources for Health Professionals - Council for Intellectual Disability \(cid.org.au\)](http://cid.org.au)
  - Includes [resources on reasonable adjustments and communication](#), easy-read templates, and [links to clinical resources](#).
- The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care have produced several factsheets on providing safe and quality health care for people with intellectual disability including [comprehensive care](#) and [person-centred care](#).
- [Intellectual Disability Resources | Agency for Clinical Innovation \(nsw.gov.au\)](http://nsw.gov.au)
  - Includes links to [clinical guidelines](#), [toolkits](#), and [web resources](#).

## 2. Communicating with people with autism

"Stimming" is short for self-stimulatory behaviour that many autistic people engage in to calm, comfort, soothe and regulate themselves when they are becoming overwhelmed or anxious.<sup>6</sup>

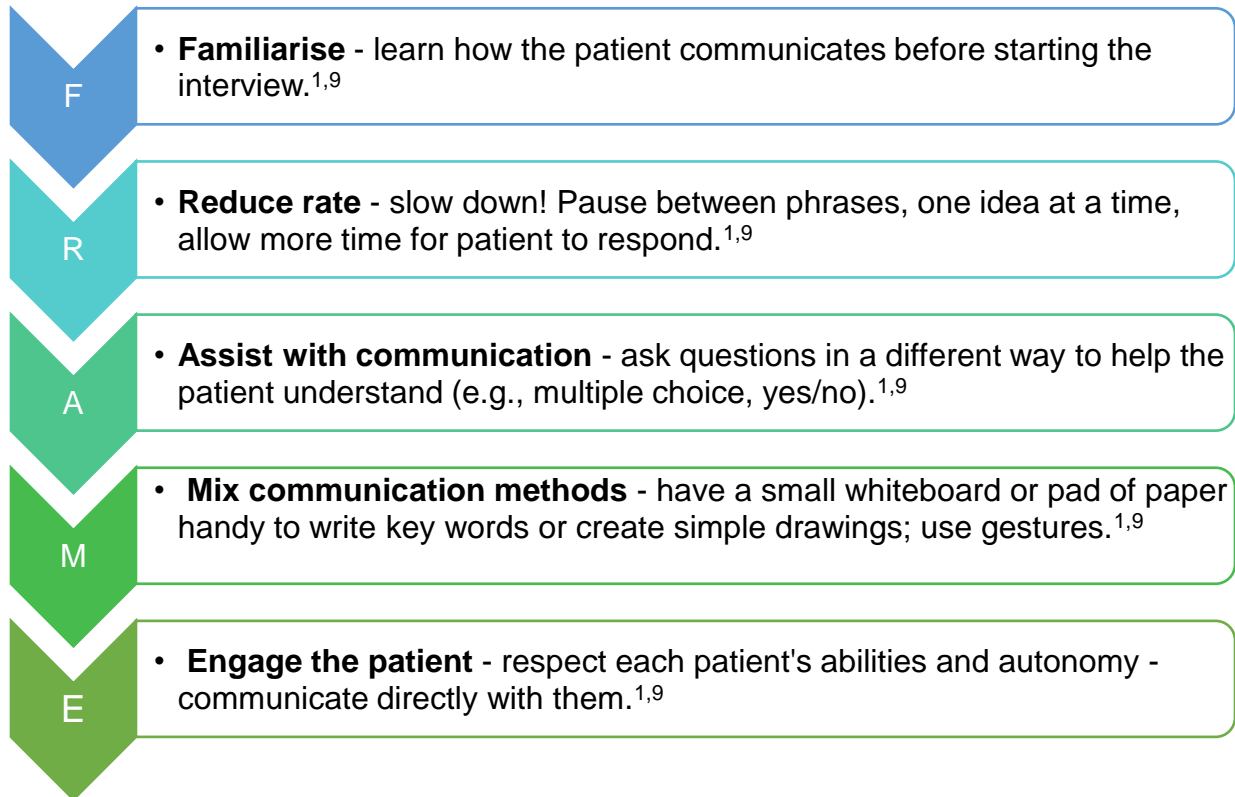
- E.g., rocking back and forth, twirling, twiddling & repeating phrases.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Accept that stimming is a way an autistic person calms themselves.<sup>6</sup>
- If the person's anxiety is increasing, try to find out if there is **an obvious sensory trigger**, and **remove, reduce or eliminate** it.<sup>6</sup>

Autistic people experience challenges in social communication & interaction<sup>6</sup>

- **State your message clearly** - avoid language that may imply meaning.<sup>8</sup>
- **Avoid sarcasm, metaphors, similes.**<sup>8</sup>
- Don't be offended if the person does not embrace social norms such as shaking hands, eye contact, small talk.<sup>6</sup>
  
- [Making a positive difference to the lives of people with Autism | Autism Association of Western Australia](#)
  - Includes resources to assist individuals to [access healthcare services](#) including hospitals, e.g., Health Visuals.
  
- [Amaze — Shaping the future for autism](#)
  - Links to several useful resources and webpages, including [Reframing Autism](#) and the [Do one thing for autism](#) campaign.

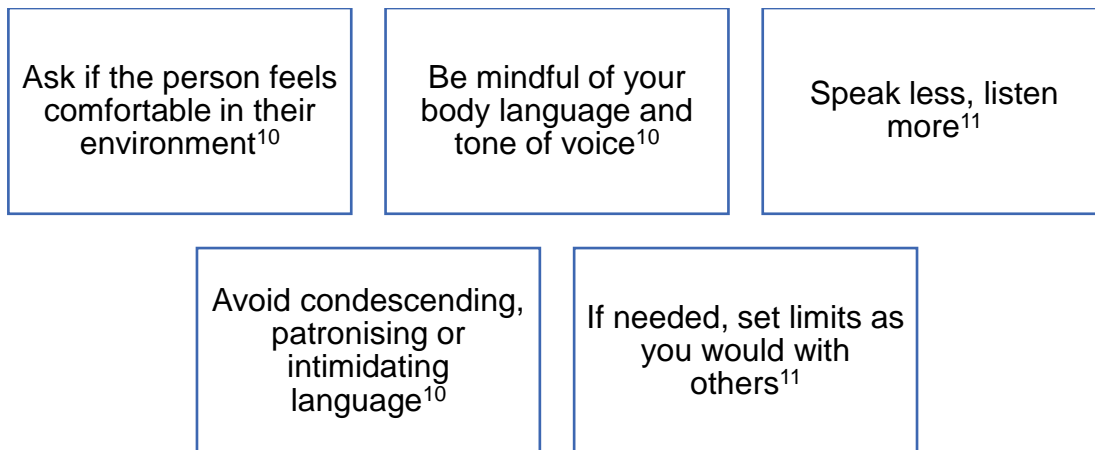
### 3. Communicating with people with neurological impairments

The “FRAME” mnemonic outlines some helpful strategies when communicating with people with aphasia, dysarthria, cognitive-communication disorders, and hearing loss.<sup>9</sup>



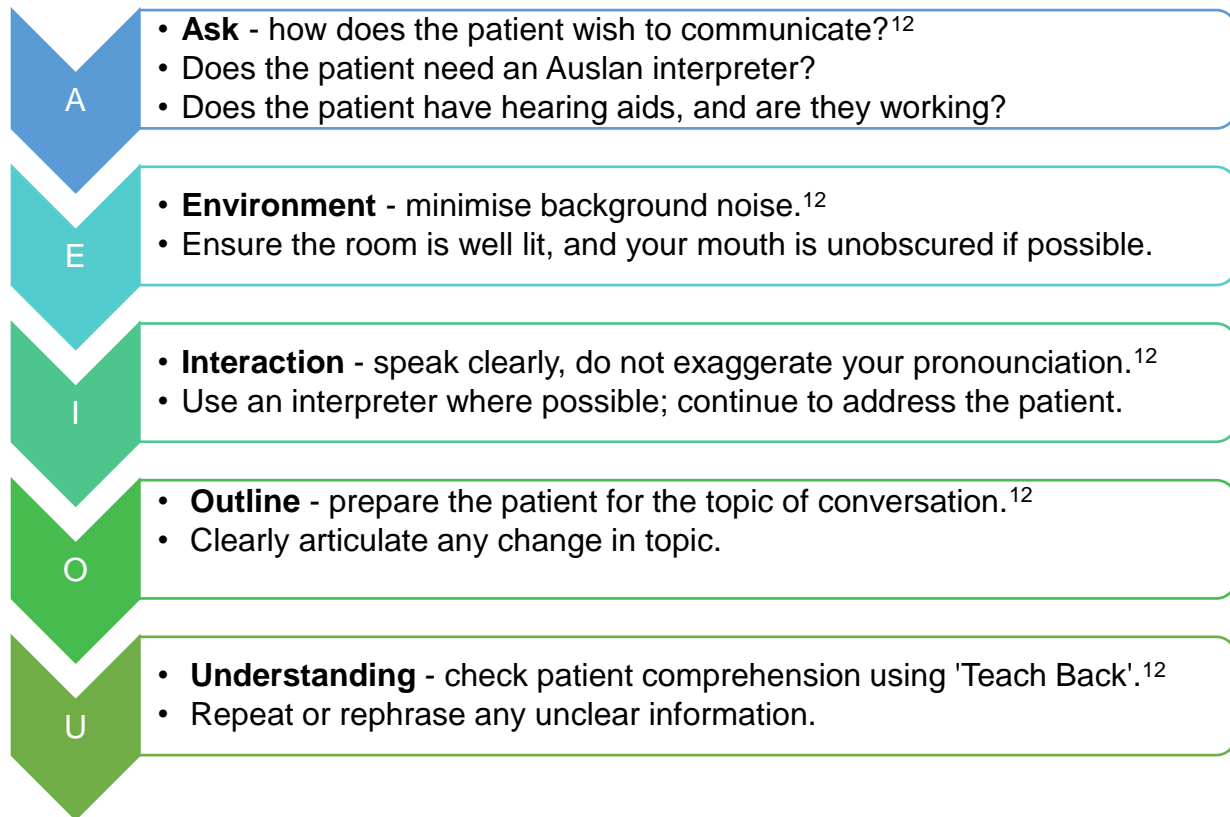
- [Fact Sheets \(speechpathologyaustralia.org.au\)](http://speechpathologyaustralia.org.au)
  - Topics include communication & swallowing difficulties following stroke; and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).
- [Stroke Foundation - Australia](#)
  - Links to relevant fact sheets such as [communication after stroke](#).
  - [InformMe](#) provides up-to-date research, guidelines, blogs, and videos.

#### 4. Communicating with people with psychosocial disabilities



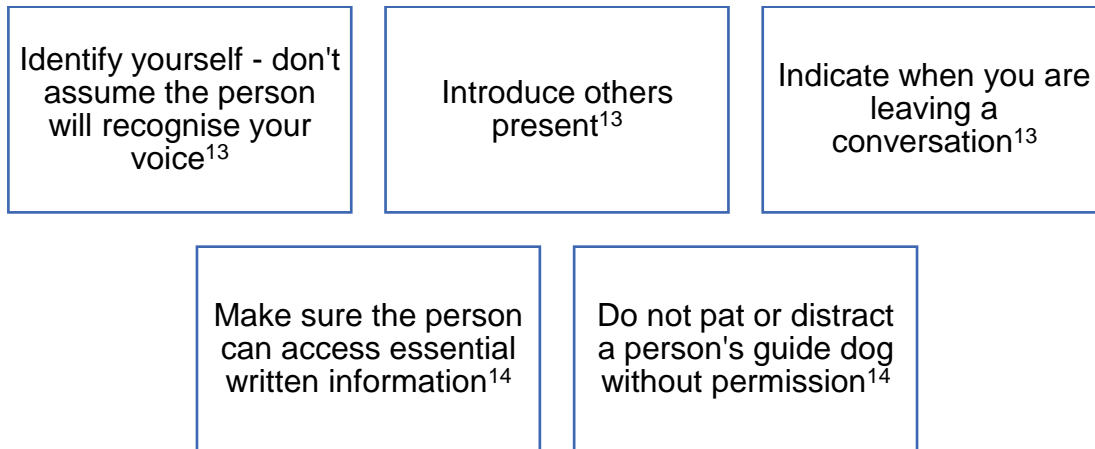
- [Recovery Oriented Language Guide Mental Health Coordinating Council 2022 \(mhcc.org.au\)](https://mhcc.org.au)
  - This guide outlines the “do’s and don’ts” of recovery oriented language.
- [TSP for all](#)
  - The Transition Support Project provides [resources and training modules](#) on psychosocial disability, recovery, and NDIS access for clinicians.

## 5. Communicating with people with a hearing impairment



- Additional information on both [Deafness](#) and [hearing loss](#) by Healthdirect:
  - Links to the [National Relay Service](#), a 24/7 service whereby Relay Officers change text to voice and Auslan, or vice versa .
- [Resources - Deaf Children Australia](#)
  - Series of fact sheets available on [Auslan](#), [tips for working with interpreters](#), and [types of hearing aids](#).

## 6. Communicating with people with a visual impairment



- [Resources to support people in hospital who are blind or have low vision | Agency for Clinical Innovation \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
  - Includes strategies to support care and communication.
- [Vision Australia. Blindness and low vision services](#)
  - Includes [tips for assisting](#) or [guiding a person who is blind or has low vision](#) and [communicating effectively](#).



## 7. Professional Development opportunities

- [Supporting effective communication | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)
  - Free, online, 60–90-minute eLearning module
  - Demonstrates what effective communication looks like from the perspective of NDIS participants.
- [Introduction to Disability Awareness](#)
  - Free, online, 90-minute eLearning training
  - Promotes an awareness of disability and the impact that societal attitudes, stigma, and discrimination have on the lives of people with disability.
- [MOOC - The ABLEx Series - Queensland Centre for Intellectual and Developmental Disability](#)
  - Free limited-time access, self-paced modules.
  - Explores barriers and enablers to healthcare for people with intellectual disability, including communication difficulties.
- [ID Health Education by 3DN – e-Learning for carers, health professionals and disability professionals](#)
  - Range of free and low-cost online courses for health and mental health professionals on intellectual disability mental health.
- [Enhancing communicative success | InformMe - Stroke Foundation](#)
  - Free, online learning modules, designed for health care workers.
  - Aimed at improving communication with people who have post-stroke communication impairments.
- [Health & Dental Autism Training Program](#)
  - Free, online self-paced learning modules for health professionals.
  - Aimed at improving health care experiences of people with autism.
- [Build Your Confidence in Disability Management | cpd4physios \(apacpdguide.com.au\)](#)
  - Free, online, self-paced course – 5 CPD hours.
  - Created by Australian Physiotherapy Association, however this course may also be relevant to a range of allied health professionals.
- [Online Education Modules | myalliedhealthspace](#)
  - Free, online, self-paced modules, and links to further resources.
  - Aimed to build the capability of allied health professionals to work with people with disability and complex support needs.

*Fact sheet 3 of 3: This is part of a series of fact sheets on person-centred communication for hospital staff. Full reference list is available.*

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