

The Acceptability of Relationship-Centered Communication Partner Training for Couples Impacted by Aphasia: A Mixed-Methods Pilot Investigation

Kathryn-Anne Pertab, Tyson G. Harmon, Jonathan Sandberg, Jon L.

Pertab, and William S. Evans



Life **changes** for couples when one partner has aphasia.

The person with aphasia faces challenges.

The spouse of the person with aphasia faces challenges.

Couples may need help **practicing** communication.

Couples need support adjusting to life with aphasia.

Challenging skills for couples with aphasia

- **Communicating emotions** is challenging
- **Feeling close** to each other is challenging
- Talking about **responsibilities** is challenging
- Understanding changing **roles** is challenging
- Finding **clinician support** is challenging

The **goal** of the study was to help couples with aphasia communicate.

We used a **new training** to help couples with aphasia communicate.

The training is **Relationship-Centered Communication Partner Training**.

We wanted to know how aphasia **impacts** relationships.



How we did the study:

We met with three couples.

We studied the spouse **with** aphasia.

We studied the spouse **without** aphasia.

We had three sessions with each couple.

We asked how the couples communicate.

We asked how the couples felt about communication.



Each couple came to a **first session**.

The couple reported communication **difficulties**.

The couple learned new communication **strategies**.

The couple practiced new communication strategies.

The couple practiced the strategies at home.

The couple came to a **second session**.

The couple discussed changing roles and responsibilities.

The couple chose a **responsibility area** to work on.

The couple made a goal to improve the responsibility area.

The couple created a **communication plan** to help with the goal.

The couple worked to achieve the goal.

The couple came to a **third session**.

The couple talked about what they learned.

The couple shared how the new training **helped** them.

All couples achieved personal goals.

What we found

Couples **improved** in three areas:

1. Awareness of communication
2. Relationship
3. Emotional Well-Being



1. Awareness of Communication

Couples had more **desire** to communicate.

Couples wanted to share **communication tools** with others.

Couples **supported** each other more in communication.

Couples communicated more **intentionally**.

Couples reported **increased awareness** in communication.

2. Relationship

Couples worked **together better**.

Couples **listened better**.

Couples felt more **connected**.

Couples felt more **understood**.

Couples had more **balanced** relationship roles.

3. Emotional Well-Being

Couples **achieved** goals.

Couples felt more **confident**.

Couples felt confident in connection.

Couples felt clinician **support**.

Conclusion

Couples reported **better** communication.

The new training needs to be tested on **more** couples.

Improvements need to be made.

The new training is a **good start**.

The new training supports **both** people in a relationship.

The training supports **teamwork** in a relationship.

You and your spouse can learn to talk about emotions.

You and your spouse can learn to adjust roles.

You and your spouse can **work together**.

You and your spouse can feel **closer**.

