

Talking with Ty



THE MEANING OF THINGS

by Tyrone Bell

Believe me, it is extremely scary to be completely mute. You are confronted by all sorts of thoughts and uncertainties regarding your speech limitations. Of course the biggest one is whether or not you will be able to speak in the future. (Some brain injury survivors lose, and never regain their ability speak). I was completely mute for the first three months of my brain injury; I wasn't even able to make any vocal sounds. Fortunately for me, my speech impairment was not cognitive. It was purely physical. Luck was further on my side because I turned out to be speechless only temporarily. At the time, I understood speech but the muscles in my body, that are responsible for producing speech, were just not firing.

The inability to speak is known as **aphasia** (uh fay' zhia) n. A typical definition is **an impairment of one's ability to use (and sometimes understand) words, often inflicted as a result of a brain tumor, brain injury or a stroke.** Aphasia is a loss of words but not of intelligence. People who are affected may have minds that work soundly, but have a snag in coming up with, or understanding words.

People with total aphasia sometimes use talking computers. A booklet of pictures also helps for a survivor to point out his or her needs. I used a



picture booklet. When I started talking, I used an **alphabet board.** This is simply a sheet of laminated paper with the alphabet printed on it. When there is unclear speech, the survivor is able to point to the intended letters to spell out the words. Fortunately I could spell. The other person in the conversation may help by allowing enough time to communicate. Questions should also be simplified to give yes or no answers.

A speech therapist once told me that 20 per cent of one's speech is lost on the phone. I believe that because on many occasions, people, thinking my call isn't genuine, have hung up on me. One man thought my call was a crank call so he threatened to call the police. One mall security guard hung up because he thought that I was a child playing with the phone. He apologized when I called back a second time. It was funny when one lady thought that I was her husband disguising his voice to play a trick on her.

Dysphasia (dis fay' zhia) n is a condition that is very similar to aphasia. The single difference is in the degree of the problem. In other words, there is some speech but it isn't totally clear. The next time you hear a funny voice on the other end of the phone, the person may not be doing it on purpose, and be certain that you know who is talking before spilling secrets.

Charitable Giving Just Got Easier

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Did you know that, on April 19, 2007, the Government of Alberta announced a tax credit enhancement for charitable donations?

The tax credit enhancement (from 12.75% to 21%) means that Albertans will receive \$500 back in total federal and provincial tax credits per \$1,000 in donations over the \$200 threshold. The first \$200 in annual donations will continue to be eligible for the existing 10% Alberta tax credit. The enhanced charitable tax credit is limited to donations made after January 1, 2007, which means you won't be able to

carry forward past year's donations to benefit from the enhancement.

As a charitable organization that depends on donations as a source of revenue for our programs and initiatives, the Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society is pleased to see a change that encourages charitable giving.

