

**What is communication?**

- Communication is the act of giving, receiving, and sharing information.
  - There are different types of communication:
    - *Verbal Communication*- the use of words to share information with other people. This can include both spoken and written communication. In short, this is speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
    - *Nonverbal Communication*- how we communicate information without words. This includes things like body language, gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, body posture, and eye contact.
- What are common communication symptoms after mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) or concussion?
  - Communication can be challenging while the brain is recovering from concussion. Common symptoms of mTBI and concussion that affect communication include challenges like:
    - Coming up with the right words at the right time
    - Organizing what you want to say or write
    - Losing track of conversations, especially if there is more than one person
    - Listening to a conversation in a noisy or busy environment
    - Increased effort or time needed to process information that is heard or read
    - Speaking clearly
    - Interacting socially with other people
  - Other factors can affect your brain's ability to understand and speak.
  - These factors include things like distractions (like being in a busy environment), fatigue, pain, feeling worried or under stress, and changes in other thinking skills.

**How can I improve my communication?**

- Helpful strategies for dealing with communication challenges include:
  - *Listening and understanding information:*
    - Eliminate or reduce background noise
    - Repeat information out loud to help with understanding
    - Ask people to repeat, rather than rephrase information when you are having a hard time hearing
    - If you are certain you have heard the words, but you do not understand the meaning, then ask people to rephrase
    - Clarify what you hear by asking, "Did you say...."
    - Look at people's faces when they speak
    - Ask people to slow down if they are speaking too quickly
  - *Coming up with the right words and organizing thoughts when speaking:*
    - Eliminate the stress of communication – when talking, use strategies to help you stay calm by doing things like sitting down or having conversations in a quiet area
    - Plan and organize what you want to say prior to going to a meeting or appointment



- When you get stuck and can't get the word out, try to describe it, give the listener clues or hints, or try to think of another way to say the same thing
- *Reading and writing:*
  - Pick a place to read and write that has minimal distractions
  - Limit reading and writing time based on how you feel. Shorter, more frequent breaks can help manage symptoms.
  - Reduce screen time and eye strain by printing materials, listening to audiobooks, or manually writing instead of typing
  - Double and triple check your work. Read your writing aloud or ask a friend to review it. This includes things like important paperwork, emails, texts, and social media communication
- *Speaking clearly:*
  - Take a deep breath before speaking
  - Sit or stand upright with your shoulders back
  - Give yourself time to gather your thoughts and plan what you will say in stressful situations
- *Non-verbal communication:*
  - Look at people's faces and keep good eye contact
  - Finish a thought or idea before changing the topic
  - Take turns speaking and listening
  - Pay attention to how words are said, not just what words are said
  - Speak up for your needs in a respectful but clear way
  - Know when help is needed and be willing to ask for it and accept it

### What can others do to help?

- Speak respectfully, but slower if needed
- Try not to give a lot of information too quickly at one time
- Break up directions into smaller steps
- Make sure you have the person's attention before having a conversation
- Allow time for breaks if needed
- Provide support but be careful not to speak for the person
- Participate in treatment training sessions with medical providers to learn more specific tools you can use to help support the person with mTBI or concussion

### Additional Comments:

