

# Aphasia

Category: Connections

written by Julie A. Dickson | December 1, 2022

Your words topped mid-sentence again. Will I speak to fill the awkward silence as you search for the words, or hope you complete the thought? Your quiet blank look hangs like milk fog, white, colorless as music at rest when I can still hear it playing. I search your face as finally you finish speaking, apologizing to me again.

The diagnosis was FND. I had never heard of Functional Neurologic Disorder. When you first described symptoms to medical staff, they first thought you had MS, especially after many falls.

The final blow sent you to the ER and eventually to a Boston hospital, where they thought you'd had a stroke. Then came the FND diagnosis, something no one was familiar with.

During the next several weeks, the worst of it settled in, robbing you of speech, motor control. Finally in rehab, with weeks of Physical Therapy, the long road ahead of you began – learning to speak again, using a walker first and later a cane.

Work was impossible. Visiting nurses evaluated the bathroom and bedroom in the house. Luckily, living on one level made things easier, but there were still those three steps to get inside. A ramp was discussed, but after working hard every day, those steps were mastered.

The dog seemed to sense your new frailty and, for a younger dog, exhibited patience. I went home after each visit, wondering when your next fall would occur. I saw your resistance, the inability to accept these limitations. No more would you be kayaking, fishing or hiking.

The days were difficult when you realized only a few good hours and in late afternoon dealt with the shaking and unsteady legs, increased aphasia. I ordered dinners to be delivered, for times when I couldn't provide them. Sometimes, just walking to the kitchen to make a sandwich was too much for you.

I look down; see your hand shake as you sign your name, now looking more like a child's handwriting. The brother I knew is gone now, replaced with this remnant that, at times, can barely get out a full sentence.

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