

Communication and TBI

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Goals

1. Understand the brain's role in communication
2. Understand how TBI impacts communication
3. Learn & practice communication repair strategies

About me



SPEECH-LANGUAGE
PATHOLOGIST



PHD STUDENT (UW)



HOSPITALS AND
OUTPATIENT CLINICS

About you



FAMILY/
CAREGIVER



TBI SURVIVOR



OTHER

Outline

1. What is communication?
2. Common communication breakdowns
3. Communication strategies
4. Resources

What is communication?

- Primary purpose is to transmit and receive a message.
- Requires at least two people.
- Each person has a responsibility to make it work.
- It requires the brain!

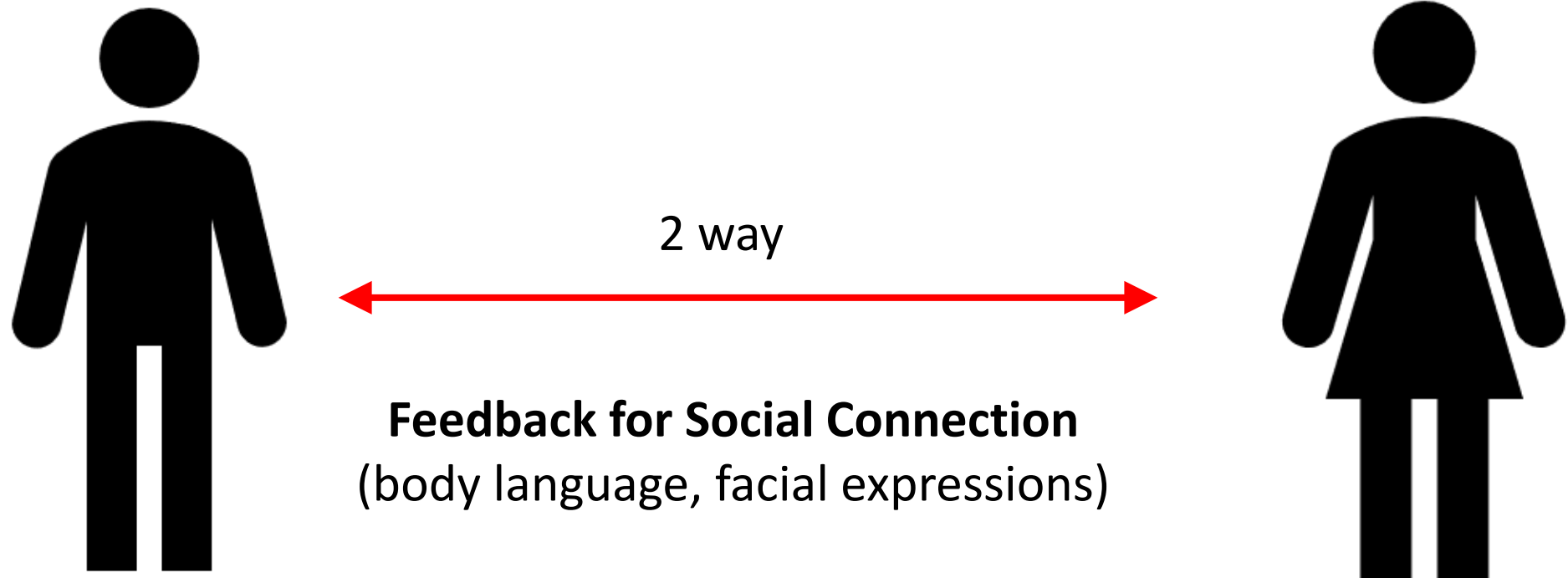
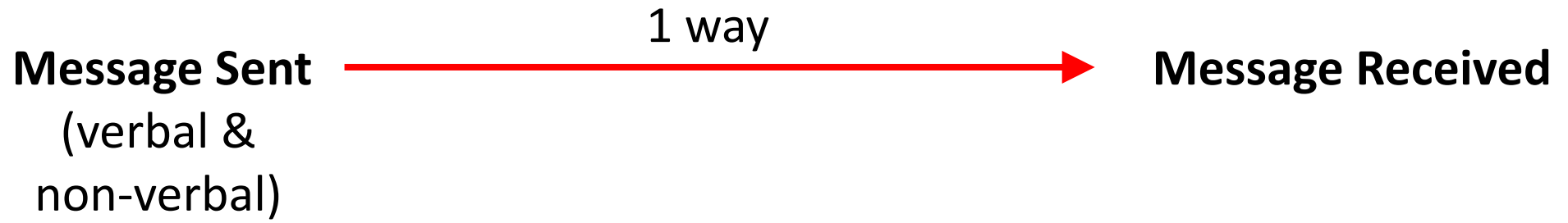
Activity

Get to know your neighbor.

-Name

-Something interesting about them

-Something you have in common (outside of the TBI community)



What is communication?



SPEECH



LANGUAGE



COGNITION



HEARING

HEARING

Processing and Interpreting
Sounds

LANGUAGE

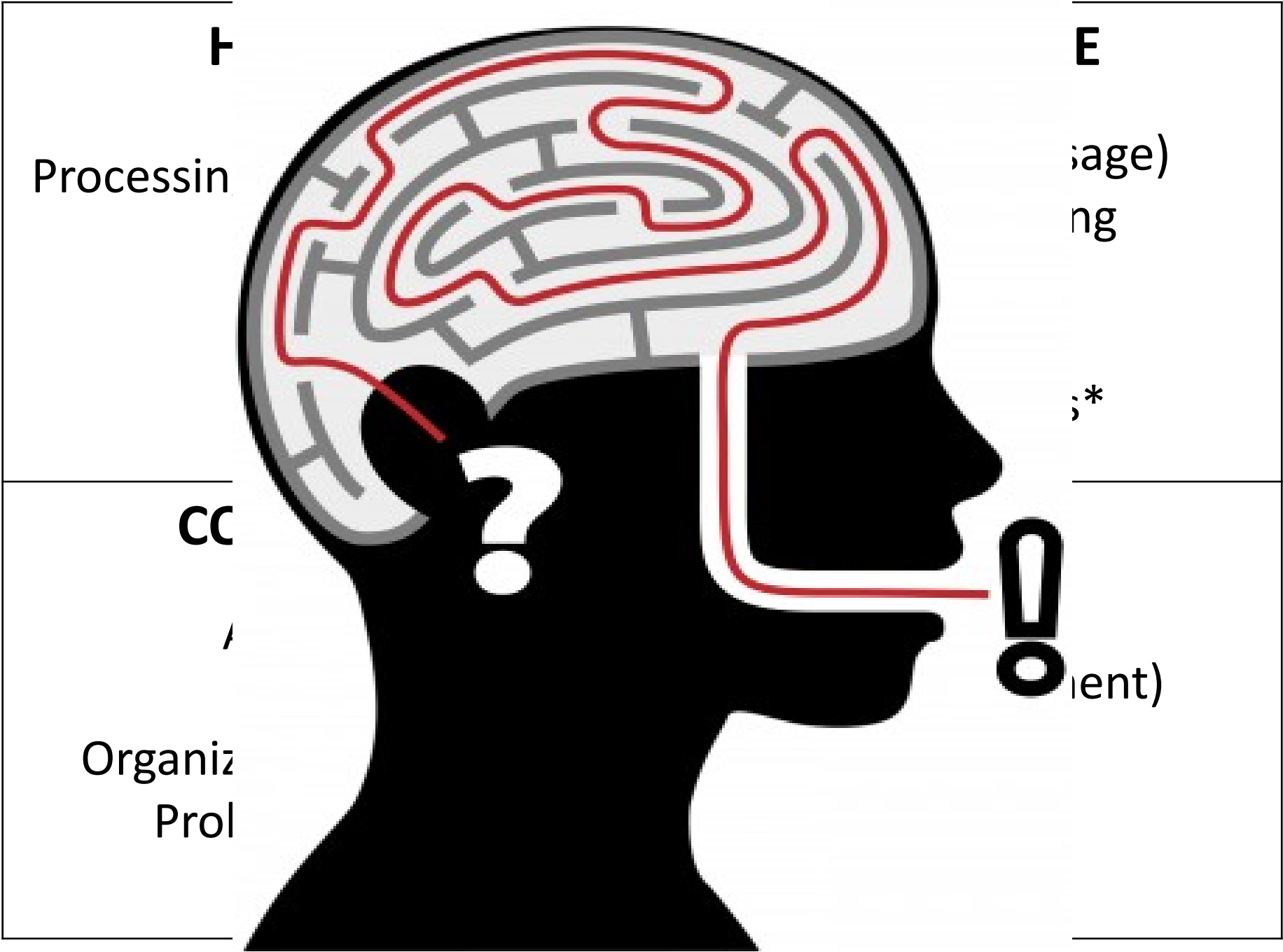
Speaking (message)
Understanding
Reading
Writing
Social Skills

COGNITION

Attention
Memory
Organization/ Planning
Problem solving

SPEECH

Speaking
(motor movement)



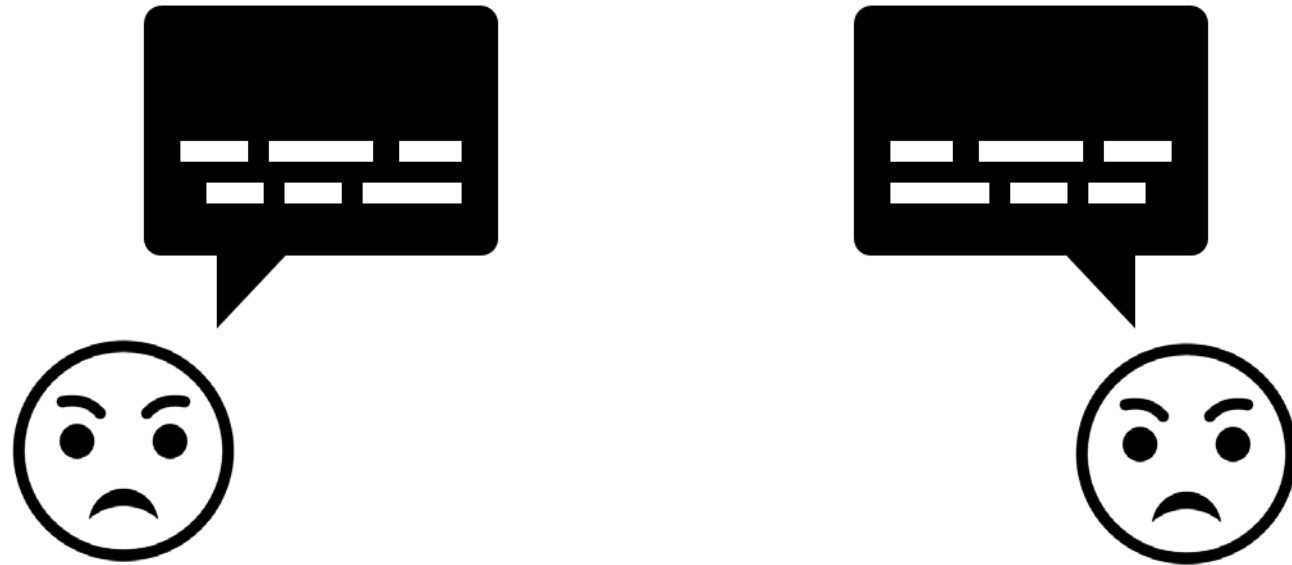
Activity

Think about the conversation you had with your neighbor.

- What parts of communication did you notice?
- Was one aspect more important than the other?
- Did you understand everything your neighbor told you?

Communication does not need to be
perfect!

Common communication breakdowns



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7r3yFKYdb4s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gT8NyyGNITg> (24 sec to 2 min)

Examples

- You're not listening to me.
Cognition, hearing, language
- Stop talking over me.
Cognition, hearing, language, speech
- You're missing the big picture.
Cognition, hearing

Examples

- You keep repeating the same stories.
Cognition, language
- You're not making any sense.
Cognition, language, speech
- Why can't you take care of your own stuff? You can drive yourself to the store and make phone calls.
Cognition, language, speech
- Others...

Communication strategies

- Take responsibility. Own your part.
- Openness and curiosity will bring more communication success.
- Identify what is “brain stuff” versus “relationship stuff.”
- Be action oriented.
- Take breaks.

(Rome wasn't built in a day. 😊)

Communication strategies

Understanding and remembering conversations

Before

- Send out main points in advance.

During

- Talk when everyone is alert and feeling calm.
- Use clear, concrete examples.
- Check for comprehension (repeat back).
- Write down main points.
- Set action-items on a calendar.


Communication strategies

Supporting verbal communication

Word finding difficulties & slow processing

- Don't talk over someone.
- Pause. Allow for extra time.
- Ask if help is wanted.
- Prepare key phrases in advance.

Disorganized & scattered

- Gentle redirection.
 - Ask for the big picture/ main idea.
 - Paraphrase what you understand.
 - Prepare an outline in advance.
- 

Communication strategies

Social withdrawal

Psychological/ Mood

- Talk to a doctor and psychotherapist

Avoiding phone calls

- Prep talking points, questions,
- Have paper to write down information.
- Restate the main points.
- Write down appointments & enter into calendar.
- Request an email with the key information.

Communication strategies

Social withdrawal

Not shopping

- Plan the route in advance,
- Bring a list
- Write down questions
- Set expectations. It's okay to forget something.

Avoiding gatherings

- Find quiet spaces.
- Take breaks.
- Sit or stand on the periphery.
- Practice listening. 😊
- Give permission to leave early.

Communication strategies

Interpersonal challenges

Concrete/ inflexible thinking

- Avoid hypotheticals.
- Use direct language.
- Write down different options together.
Use pictures or objects, as able.
- Use a pro/ con list.

Misinterpretation of non-verbal cues

- Directly communicate needs.
- Subtle facial expressions/ body language may be difficult to decipher.
- Get things in writing.

Communication strategies

Interpersonal challenges

Inappropriate comments/ touching

- Communicate about boundaries in advance.
- Model and practice socially appropriate language/ behavior.
- Monitor for overstimulation.
- Small groups over large groups.

Activity

Role play

- Select a scenario with your partner.
- Practice using suggested strategies or others that work for you.
- Debrief. What did you learn?

Resources

40 million caregivers are in the United States¹

85% of caregivers do not receive respite care¹

5.3 million Americans live with disability due to TBI²

25% marital breakdown rate following TBI³

15% divorced or separated following TBI³

Don't burn out. You're not alone!

Resources

BIAWA: www.biawa.org, (877) 982-4292

UW Model TBI Systems: tbi.washington.edu, (800) 246-6968

Community providers (psychotherapists, SLPs, OTs, vocational rehab)

Social support (friends, family, community)

References

1. Caregiver Burnout (October 2019). Retrieved from <https://www.aginginplace.org/caregiver-burnout/>
2. Traumatic Brain Injury (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.caregiver.org/traumatic-brain-injury>
3. The Truth About Divorce After Traumatic Brain Injury (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.brainline.org/article/truth-about-divorce-after-traumatic-brain-injury>

Thank you!
