

9. **Watch your volume.** Use your normal voice when speaking with a person with dysarthria. Typically, a person with dysarthria is not hard of hearing. Be aware, however, that a person with dysarthria may use a louder speaking volume as a speaking strategy when they talk.
10. **Be open to new methods of communication.** Encourage a person with dysarthria to use alternative methods of communication (alphabet board, writing on a note pad, an electronic device, etc.) to express their thoughts and ideas.
11. **Encourage a person with dysarthria's efforts.** Engage a person with dysarthria in conversations and encourage them to use the speech strategies that they find helpful when talking.



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Speech-Language Pathology



Central
Health

Strategies for Conversational Partners of a Person with Dysarthria



What is dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a speech disorder characterized by weakness or paralysis of the speech mechanism: the lips, tongue, soft palate, and larynx (voice box).

What are possible symptoms of *dysarthria*?

- Facial weakness (facial droop)
- Slurred speech
- Voice volume too loud or too soft, weak or breathy voice
- Changed pitch
- Harsh or hoarse sounding voice
- Nasal sounding voice
- Monotonous voice

As a **COMMUNICATION PARTNER** your role is to:

- keep the flow of the conversation as natural as possible
- offer feedback on the communication process or conversation.

Suggestions for a Conversational Partner:

1. **Focus your attention on the speaker.** Making eye contact with a person with dysarthria will help you “read” their nonverbal communication messages.
2. **Limit the amount of background noise.** Turning the radio or television down or off and reducing other background noises can help you better understand what a person with dysarthria is trying to say.

3. **Give a person with dysarthria time to speak.** Extra time to communicate is helpful to a person with dysarthria as they may have weakness in their speech muscles making speech more difficult .
4. **Limit talking when a person with dysarthria is tired.** A person with dysarthria will have trouble speaking clearly when they are tired.
5. **Encourage use of speech improvement strategies.** Remind a person with dysarthria to use their speaking strategies (e.g., open their mouth more, use exaggerated speech movements, etc.) to help make their speech easier to understand.
6. **Be honest if you do not understand a person with dysarthria.** Say when you do not understand what is being said. This will help prevent both you and a person with dysarthria from feeling frustrated or upset. For example, a gentle head shake can indicate to a person with dysarthria that their message was not clear enough to be understood.
7. **Know the topic of a conversation.** Clarifying the topic of a conversation will help you understand the message a person with dysarthria is trying to communicate.
8. **Observe the body language of a person with dysarthria.** Hand signals or eye contact from a person with dysarthria can signal they are still talking or that they want to say something.