"There is hope": Lydia's journey with aphasia.



Lydia - Aphasia Institute Member

Lydia lives with aphasia. But aphasia is only one part of her story…

After Lydia's stroke, she couldn't say a single word in English. Before her stroke, Lydia could speak 10 languages. While she was in the hospital and later in rehabilitation, she could speak only a little Twi, the first language she learned as a child in West Africa.

She was incredibly grateful to have her daughter by her side during the first few early days, weeks and months. Her daughter also spoke Twi and was able to help her mother communicate.

Being unable to communicate in English added to the anxiety she was already experiencing—and it was a big reason why her daughter encouraged her to attend the Aphasia Institute after learning about our services through her stroke rehabilitation program.

"Before Aphasia Institute, I was thinking that life was *over*," Lydia says.

She resisted coming to the Aphasia Institute at first. But her daughter wouldn't give up on her. She reminded Lydia that the mom she knew never gives up.

Lydia has been attending the Aphasia Institute twice a week for nearly four years. She began with the New Beginnings Program and Toastmasters, and now takes part in several programs, including the Conversation Group, iPad Group and meditation sessions.

"I learned from Aphasia groups," Lydia says. "They taught us how to give yourself time to speak and to not rush. I learned how to be patient with my speech and I stopped feeling panic."

Today, Lydia is a peer mentor, welcoming and supporting new members as they begin their own journeys with aphasia. She also gives speeches at her local church to help educate others about the condition. In recognition of her work supporting others and raising awareness, she received an Ambassador Award from the Aphasia Institute.

"I tell everybody I meet who has aphasia and doesn't have hope, there is hope. *There is hope*."—Lydia, Aphasia Institute member



“I was a nurse, but I didn’t even know about aphasia until I got aphasia,” Lydia explains.

Her experience highlights how little many people know about aphasia. That’s one reason Lydia is passionate about sharing her story.

When we asked Lydia what the Aphasia Institute means to her, she had a simple but heartfelt answer: *“It means a lot.”*

She spoke about the friendships she’s made and her desire to help others with aphasia feel understood.

One of Lydia’s closest friends was recently diagnosed with aphasia, so Lydia introduced her to the Aphasia Institute and showed her around. Now, she’s helping her friend find the same support and connection that have meant so much in her own journey.

“She has one daughter and I have one daughter, so we talk about that and we call them our *managers*,” Lydia jokes. “Don’t tell her, “she adds, laughing.

Since joining the Aphasia Institute, Lydia has relearned how to speak and write in English. Today, she’s able to go to her appointments and attend swimming lessons on her own. And swimming has given her another way to stay connected to something that was once part of her life—some of her friends there speak Italian, one of the languages Lydia used to know, and they practice it together.

Lydia knows firsthand how much a caring community can change someone’s life. And she wants donors like you to know just how much your support means to her.

“I would say thank you, very, very much because they have done so much for me,” she says. “I know that without them, I couldn’t speak English now. They have helped me achieve what I want to do, and I really appreciate everything they’ve done for us. I would say thank you, very, very much—and I hope they can continue doing even more for people like us.”

None of us knows if or when someone we know and love might experience aphasia. And when that happens, knowing the Aphasia Institute will be there to help you and your family find a way forward can mean so much.

Your gift this holiday season can help ensure no one has to navigate life with aphasia alone. You can help people find meaningful ways to communicate, build confidence, form friendships and reconnect with the people and activities they love.

APHASIA INSTITUTE

Life’s a Conversation