

Counseling Communication

Department: Counseling and Leisure Skills

Priority: Elective for individuals with aphasia or other severe language dysfunction

Overall purpose of class:

To provide a safe and extremely supportive environment for individuals with aphasia and other forms of severe language disorders to express and deal with emotions and feelings while experimenting with and practicing alternative communication forms.

Number of classes held per week:

One per week

Optimum class time:

Mornings are preferred because this class requires considerable effort that would be difficult to expend if students are fatigued.

Instructor requirements:

One skilled counselor with assistance and ongoing consultation of speech therapist

Number of students:

10-15, but less is better because of the amount of time required for individual communication processing

Student ability range and limitations:

All students in this class demonstrate severe language problems. All have extreme difficulty making their needs known by conventional speaking. However, all have a willingness and a desire to express themselves in order to confront emotional issues that are usually dealt with in conventional support groups.

Space and Equipment requirements:

- Room that will accommodate 15-16 people.
- A minimum of 10 very comfortable chairs and space for 5 wheelchairs
- Television with DVD player
- Video capability to capture discussions of topics that will help other students.

Student Needs to be met from the perspective of the instructor:

Students who are obviously frustrated and willing to take a risk to be in a class with others who have expressed needs to process feelings and emotions regarding their disability.

Typical Student Goals that lead to placement in the class:

Students who want to learn alternative forms of expression and who are frustrated with their inability to process the challenges of their disability.

Methods:

Each class is different but common forms of communication have emerged. Students each express a challenge in whatever way they can find to be effective. Peer support and encouragement are key. Humor, gestures, mime, writing, guessing, assisting each other all work. Students develop an incredible bond and friendships. They learn each others preferred communication style and assist in every possible way in the communication process. Humor and flowing endorphins characterize the typical class. This is unequivocally a student-driven class.