

## What I have learned at Connect by Judith Felson Duchan

For **nine** years I have been visiting **Connect**. Mostly I work on **research**. I also visit **Connect's** groups. I sometimes help with **courses** and **conferences**. I hang out in the **café** and **talk** to people. It's **fun**—and I've **learned a lot**.

Here are **three** things I have **learned** from being at **Connect**:

1. **Communication** is like a **dance**, not like two **people** passing **messages** to one another

- One **person** invites the other **person** to **communicate**, starts a **message**, and the **partner** helps it along by following the **lead**.
- The **partner** can cause a **communication dance** to **break** down by:
  - talking too **fast**
  - being **dismissive**
  - being **impatient**
  - not **listening**
  - guessing **wrong**
- Connect trains **partners** to be **respectful** and **supportive**—to help the **communication dance** along
- Connect trains **partners not** to **step** on the **communication** of the **dancer** with **aphasia**!

2. Having **respect** and **responsibility** helps **communication**

- Being a **group leader** helps people with aphasia **communicate better**

- If there are **problems** with **communication**, the group **leader** is not as likely to be **blamed** as a **regular** group **member**!
- **Connect** provides **people** with **responsibilities**
- Some **responsibilities** of **Michael Hussey's** life at **Connect** are
  - **conducting** in a **music** group
  - **researching** for a local **museum**
  - **supporting** other **people** with **aphasia**
  - **supporting family** and **friends** of **people** with **aphasia**
  - **chatting** with potential **donors** at a **fund raising** event

3. **Aphasia** is worse for **people** who lack **opportunities**.

- If they can't get **around**
- If they **don't** have **people** to **talk** to
- If they **don't** have **much** to **do**

In summary, **Connect** has taught me that **supporting** someone's **aphasia** is not just about **fixing** their **speech** or **language problems**. It is also about

- learning to do a **communication dance** without stepping on toes
- providing the **person** with **aphasia** with new **responsibilities**
- and opening up new **opportunities** so people with **aphasia** can be in the **world**

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