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SPEECH PATHOLOGIST: \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **HANDOUT-ABLE: Articulation Strategies for improving Dysarthria**

There are many benefits that can be obtained if compensatory strategies are utilized when dysarthria/slurred speech is present. The outcome of using such strategies provides you the best chance to improve intelligibility (the ability to be understood by others), increases confidence in speaking situations and allows for a better chance to achieve prior level of function speaking skills.

Listed are some such strategies for dysarthria/slurred speech:

• **Over-articulation** — If consonants of words are over-emphasized at a greater intensity than vowels, intelligibility and accuracy of speech production can improve. Consonants are the non-vowel sounds that should be over-emphasized and produced at a louder sound level; some examples are: /b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, s, t, v, x, z/. Vowels or vowel-like sounds should be produced at a level as traditionally produced and include: /ah, ee, oh, ow, eh, a, oo, oi/. Sounds like /w, l, r/ should be treated as consonant sounds, and over-articulated.

An example of how to over-articulate consonants can be demonstrated with the word “Nice.” If the compensatory strategy of over-articulation could involve a louder, cleared, crisper production of /n/ and /s/. The vowel /i/ sound would be produced at a natural volume. As dysarthria of speech articulation tends to impact consonants -- as it is difficult to slur a vowel for the most part -- focusing on consonant productions will aid in improving the ability to communicate the words of interest. This will improve the ability to be understood during first-attempt productions. Follow the direction of your speech pathologist closely for practicing this strategy to meet your individual needs/speech deficits.

• **Rate Changes in Speech** — Slowing down the rate in a general way, or at least with multi-syllabic words (more than one syllable, such as “trans-continental” or “Minnesota”) are strategies that can assist in improving speech articulation for patients with dysarthria. Slowing down the words themselves, and/or performing a half-second pause between words is another way to perform a speech articulation rate change. It is recommended to first practice this strategy in reading tasks, as this will be a strategy that requires some repetition before it can be applied in real-world conversational settings. In reading tasks, patients should try short sentences first, then practice with longer-worded sentences. Conversationally, two or three-word phrases can be good starting points for practicing this strategy, Eventually, functional-length sentences or complex sentences can be utilized for practicing this strategy.

Patients were naturally fast speakers prior to the medical event, in particular -- will benefit from slowing down their rate of speech. Follow the direction of your speech pathologist closely for practicing this strategy to meet your individual needs/speech deficits.

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• **Stress/emphasis on key words of a phrase or sentence** — To improve intelligibility when speaking, patients who experience dysarthria or slurred speech may find speech more accurate if key words of the phrase or sentence are produced with more stress. In many cases, which words speakers emphasize on a total-word level can completely change the meaning of the communication.

For example, “I went to the Nicespeechlady.com website” could have several different meanings, depending upon which word is emphasized.

- “**I** went to the Nicespeechlady.com website.” — If the word “I” in this sentence is emphasized over other words, it can be a communication about the speaker performing the act vs. another person.
- “I **went** to the Nicespeechlady.com website.” — If the word “went:” in this sentence is emphasized over other words, the message is differentiating not going to the website vs. performing the act in the past.
- “I went to **the** Nicespeechlady.com website.” — If the word “the” is emphasized over other words, the message is communicating that there is only one website of that name.
- “I went to the **Nicespeechlady.com** website.” — If the word “Nicespeechlady.com” is emphasized over other words, the specific website by name is communicated as the important part of the message (vs. other websites).
- “I went to the Nicespeechlady.com **website**.” — If the word “website” is emphasized over other words, the importance of the concept of “website” vs. other media is communicated (books, etc.)

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- **Other** — There may be other strategies that can assist in improving speech intelligibility, such as:
  - Tilting head/face toward listener — if the patient takes care to direct their voice/mouth toward the listener’s face, there is a chance hearing acuity of the listener will be improved, which will improve intelligibility.

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