

Making a Will.

HW is a 70-year-old man who suffered a left hemisphere stroke. This resulted in a moderate-severe receptive-expressive aphasia. HW was married for 20 years and has two adult children (boy and girl) from that marriage. He is separated and has been living with a new partner for the past 5 years.

As a result of his stroke, HW struggles to find the words he wants to say and his conversations are often marked by phrases such as, "I need to do the....I can't get the word... I can't say it... you know what I mean..." He is able to point to written words that he wants to say. His ability to understand what other people are saying is also impaired. He is able to interpret facial expressions and context and therefore he appears to understand more than he does. However, his comprehension difficulties become more evident when discussing complex issues and/or there is limited context and a great deal of abstract language, such as when discussing legal/financial issues.

HW wanted to make a will to ensure his partner can keep the condo in which the two of them live. When HW and his partner contacted a lawyer, the lawyer told them HW was not competent to make a will. HW engaged a Speech-Language Pathologist to assist him communicating with the lawyer.

The Speech-Language Pathologist provided the following supports:

- Explained HW's communication disability and need for communication supports.
- Comprehension supports included using simplified language structures, re-phrasing information, pausing between information, writing words to augment spoken language, showing pictures, photos, diagrams, gestures, calendars, and confirming understanding.
- Expressive supports included facilitating the accurate transmission of messages by encouraging HW to gesture, draw, write words or part of words. The Speech Language Pathologist also presented written words as choices that HW used to express his thoughts. In addition, the Speech Language Pathologist used techniques such as interpretation, reformulation, reflection, expansion, clarification and validation strategies.
- The lawyer drafted a will that reflected conversations with HW. The Speech-Language Pathologist read and explained the document to HW, in the presence of the lawyer.
- HW, the lawyer and Speech-Language Pathologist signed the will to indicate agreement, that HW understood and communicated his understanding and that the Speech Language Pathologist acted to accurately explain the information in the will.