

## Supplemental Material S4. RC-CPT Protocol.

### Research Investigator (RI):

- Prior to the session, review the **possible scenarios** and **counseling microskills** outlined at the end of this protocol. Utilization of these microskills during the session is vital to fulfilling the session's purpose.
- Thank couple for inviting us into their home or welcome them to the clinic.
- Build rapport with participants to create comfortable and inviting atmosphere.
- Set up video camera on tripod and microphone in front of the couple.
- Check the microphone to ensure the sound is working.

Then proceed with the following script:

RI: *"The purpose of our session today [Present Purpose visual] is to learn to and practice conversing together as partners in the context of roles and responsibilities in marriage.*

*Couples often share responsibilities and roles in various areas. After the onset of aphasia, these roles and responsibilities can change. These changes can cause both stress and loss of identity. Today we want to support meaningful communication about these changes.*

*We hope to fulfill this purpose by focusing on the following three objectives.*

[Present Objective 1 visual] *Have a collaborative discussion about roles and responsibilities.*

[Present Objective 2 visual] *Set goals and make plans for the week.*

[Present Objective 3 visual] *And practice communication strategies.*

*To meet our objectives, we will need to meet the following session expectations:*

[Present Expectation 1 visual] *This is a safe space for communication. Give each other time and respect to communicate as equal partners. Be open to what each other has to say.*

[Present Expectation 2 visual] *This session and your plans may not go smoothly and that's okay. We are trying to find strategies and goals that will help you move forward but if things don't work out or take time, that's okay.*

[Present Expectation 3 visual] *I am here to support your communication and adjustment to life with aphasia. Specific emotions or problems may come up that would be better addressed by a marriage and family therapist or a psychologist and that's okay. We will let you know when those things come up and help refer you to other resources at the end of the session.*

*Do you have any questions about the purpose, objectives, or expectations of this session?"*

[Answer any questions the couple may have.]

[Post the purpose, objectives, and expectations in a place where both participants can see them and where the clinician can refer the couple back to them throughout the session as needed.]

*“We will start by having each of you complete the Relationship Roles Questionnaire separately. [name of aphasic participant], you will complete the RRQ with me and [name of non-aphasic participant], you will complete the RRQ independently. [Research assistant] will accompany you to another room and answer any questions you have as you fill out the questionnaire.”*

[Give the non-aphasic participant the “RELATIONSHIP ROLES QUESTIONNAIRE (RRQ)- Partner/Spouse form” and have them complete the questionnaire in another room, so the participants will not be influenced by each other’s answers]

[Read the clinician script at the top of the “RELATIONSHIP ROLES QUESTIONNAIRE (RRQ)- Clinician Form” then proceed to ask the three questionnaire questions for each of the responsibility areas and record their responses on the form. Present the aphasic participant with both the question visual and responsibility area visual for each question. Once the participant has answered all three questions for each responsibility area, lay out all 6 of the responsibility area visuals and read the second clinician script on the “RELATIONSHIP ROLES QUESTIONNAIRE (RRQ)- Clinician Form”. Circle the two chosen areas on the clinician form. End the questionnaire by presenting the communication question visual and asking them the final question as it relates to both their experience before and after aphasia onset.]

[Once both participants have completed the RRQ, bring them together again to complete the “RELATIONSHIP ROLES QUESTIONNAIRE (RRQ) – WORKSHEET”]

*“Thank you for being vulnerable and sharing some of your experiences with adjusting to life with aphasia.”*

[Have a brief discussion about their experience with the RRQ. Validating any challenges or emotions they experienced during the process.]

*“We will now continue to the discussion and worksheet portion of our session. I will guide the discussion, between the two of you, with questions and tasks outlined on the worksheet. I will also write down the ideas, goals, and plans that you two discuss. Do either of you have any questions before we begin?”*

[Answer any questions the couple may have.]

*“We will start by reviewing your worksheet from the communication partner training that was completed in the last session.”*

[Briefly review the strategies that the couple identified as being helpful or the ones they’d like to work on. Ask them how they approached their communication strategy goal since the last session. Encourage them to use the strategies they identified throughout the session.]

[Then proceed to work through the worksheet, assisting the couple in completing each task.]

- Spend about 5 minutes on each section of the worksheet. If couples need to discuss one topic more or less, allow for flexibility, but try to prevent prolonged or insufficient discussion about any of the areas.
- Encourage use of CPT strategies (especially strategies focused on during session 1)

- Provide materials such as whiteboards, paper and pen, visuals, etc. to enhance communication
- As necessary, refer the couple back to the session purpose, objectives, and expectations to enhance session productivity.
- Some of the tasks have questions to prompt reflection and discussion. Ask these questions as necessary to foster rich communication for each of the tasks.
- Guide the couple to make goals and plans that are attainable, specific, measurable, time-bound, and relevant.
- Offer help and suggestions when appropriate but keep the focus of the session on supporting communication between the partners.

[For the first task of negotiating an area to focus on, assist the couple in referring to the responses of both the participant with aphasia and their spouse on the questionnaire, specifically the two areas that they each chose to circle.]

[Upon completion of the worksheet, review the goals and plans with the couple to confirm understanding. Scan a copy of the worksheet for study records and then give the worksheet to the couple to refer to throughout the week.]

*“Thank you again for your participation. We look forward to meeting with you next week to discuss your experiences with the goal and plans you’ve created together. We also want to provide you with a list of resources that could be helpful for addressing some of the emotional impacts of aphasia on yourself or your marriage. [Give the list of resources to the couple.] We are more than happy to offer our assistance in connecting you with any of these services, including counseling services at BYU. Would you like help connecting to any of these services at this time?”*

[If the couple indicates that they would like help connecting to services, proceed to assist them.]

[Provide cash compensation for participation in session (\$20/participant). Have each participant sign the payment agreement form.]

**Possible Scenarios & Counseling Microskills** on following pages...

## Possible Scenarios

The emotional nature of the topics discussed during this session could elicit various responses. Below are some examples of possible scenarios that could occur and potential scripted responses. These responses can and should be individualized and accompanied by counseling microskills to address the specific needs and emotions of participants.

- Emotional breakdown
  - Example: Participant with aphasia begins to cry.
  - Voice observations: *"Bill, I'm noticing that you appear upset, can you please share with us some of the feelings you're having?"*
  - Confirm understanding: *"Let me make sure I understand, you are frustrated that you are no longer able to drive the children to school?"*
  - Validate emotion/pain: *"That is incredibly frustrating."*
  - Refer to expectation 1: *"Thank you for being vulnerable and communicating how you feel. Please continue to share your thoughts and feelings as they come up."*
- Speaking for behaviors
  - Example: Spouse of participant with aphasia dominates the discussion.
  - Voice observations: *"Nancy, I'm noticing that you are frequently speaking for Bill. Is this a role that you've taken on since his stroke? Please tell me more about what that experience has been like for you."*
  - Confirm understanding: *"Let me make sure I understand, you often talk for Bill because some people are impatient when it takes Bill a while to speak"*
  - Validate emotion/pain: *"I understand how that could be very difficult for you."*
  - Refer to objective 3: *"I appreciate your efforts to support Bill. We are in no rush, so you may both take as long as you need to practice your communication strategies and express your thoughts."*
- Argument between participants
  - Example: The couple's discussion becomes tense and unfriendly.
  - Voice observations: *"Nancy and Bill, I'm noticing that it appears to be difficult for you two to come to an agreement. Let's confirm understanding between the two of you. Bill, please tell us more... Nancy please tell us how you're feeling..."*
  - Confirm understanding between the participants
  - Validate emotion/pain: *"It is normal and can be upsetting to disagree and have trouble understanding each other."*
  - Refer to expectation 3: *"I am not able to address all the things that have come up in our discussion, but I am here to support you as much as I am able."*

If heightened emotions render the session unproductive or outside of the scope of practice at any point during the session, refer to expectation 3, validate the difficulty of the discussion topic and offer the couple the opportunity to terminate the session. Provide them with the list of resources and offer assistance in connecting them with mental health and/or relationship professionals. Allow couples to make the choice between rescheduling the session or terminating participation in the study.

## Counseling Microskills

- Active listening
  - Be fully present to the participants and their experience
  - Manage internal thoughts, dialogue, and distractions
  - Be observant of the following:
    - Nonverbal messages (*i.e., body language, crying, etc.*)
    - Affective messages (*i.e., “I feel frustrated,” “Sometimes I get upset,” etc.*)
    - Patterns of behavior (*i.e., withdrawal from participation, ‘speaking-for’ behaviors, etc.*)
- Nonverbal communication
  - “SOLER” mnemonic
    - S: Sit at a comfortable angle and distance.
    - O: Open posture. Arms and legs uncrossed.
    - L: Lean forward occasionally. Look genuinely interested.
    - E: Effective eye contact without staring.
    - R: Remain relatively relaxed.
- Silence
  - Take time to organize thoughts and identify appropriate responses.
  - Allow time for the participants to reflect and generate responses.
  - Use silence to honor emotional moments.
  - Be comfortable and fully present in the silence.
- Conveying empathy
  - Understand the participants’ experiences, feelings, and cognitive state (*refer to active listening*).
  - Communicate understanding of the participants’ point of view with accuracy and unconditional positive regard (*refer to verbal responding*).
- Verbal responding
  - Clarifying: confirm understanding
    - “Correct me if I’m wrong...”
    - “Let me make sure I understand...”
    - “Is that right?”
  - Paraphrasing/reflecting: demonstrate active listening
    - “What I’m understanding is...”
    - “What I’m hearing from you is...”
  - Summarizing: confirm understanding
    - Summarize concepts communicated before moving on to another topic to confirm understanding between the participants and yourself.
  - Validation: acknowledge pain and emotion
    - “I can see that is really difficult for you”
    - “That sounds very frustrating”
    - “How terrible”

Information from:

Beck K, Kulzer J. Teaching Counseling Microskills to Audiology Students: Recommendations from Professional Counseling Educators. *Semin Hear.* 2018 Feb;39(1):91-106. doi: 10.1055/s-0037-1613709. Epub 2018 Feb 7. PMID: 29422717; PMCID: PMC5802983.