Apraxia is a motor planning disorder in which the brain and nervous system are unable to communicate. This causes a loss of the ability to carry out movements or use objects correctly when there are no sensory or motor control problems. For example, a person with apraxia may not be able to brush his teeth because he does not remember the steps to do the task, even though he has use of his arms. For communication, the person has trouble saying what he or she wants.

Types of apraxia

There are different types of apraxia, such as:

- **Apraxia of speech**: The person may be unable or having difficulty speaking.
- **Oral apraxia**: The person may be unable to move the muscles of their face and mouth or follow commands.

With all types, the person understands and wants to complete the task, but is unable to on command. This causes distorted speech sounds and nonsense words. In severe cases, the person may be unable to use their vocal cords to produce sound. However, the person may be able to say a familiar or automatic word such as “Hi”, “Fine”, and “Okay” when he or she is not thinking about what to say.

The person may also be able to use the muscles in their face and mouth for other automatic tasks, such as eating, yawning, and licking their lips when not thinking about it.

Ways to help someone with apraxia

- Blow bubbles, noisemakers, or pinwheels.
- Practice different mouth movements, such as opening and closing mouth, puckering, smiling, and moving the tongue around.
- Sing familiar songs, such as “Happy Birthday” and the “Alphabet Song.”
- Practice familiar sequences, such as counting days of the week and months of the year.
- Practice fill in the blank opposite pairs, such as “up and ____” and “yes and ____.”
- Practice fill in the blank phrases, such as “say please and thank ____” and “don’t cry over spilled ____.”

Your loved one’s speech language pathologist (SLP) will help the person with other strategies to improve communication and with activities to do outside of therapy.