Communication Strategies for a Person with Dysarthria

What is dysarthria?

Dysarthria is a speech disorder that changes the tone, strength, coordination, and speed of movement in the muscles we use to talk. These muscles include the lips, tongue, jaw, soft palate or vocal cords. A person with dysarthria may have trouble pronouncing words clearly or producing a clear, steady voice.

Getting the Message OUT

You can change the way you communicate to make sure your listener understands you.

- **Avoid** speaking in noisy situations, if possible.
- **Seat** yourself so that everyone can see your face.
- **Make** certain you have your listener's attention.
- **Introduce** your topic with a word or short phrase before beginning to speak in more complete sentences.
- **Speak slowly and loudly.**
- **Pause** often to take a breath, to ensure you are speaking loud enough.
- **Emphasize** or over-pronounce all sounds, especially the end sounds of words.
- **Open your mouth** wide when speaking and exaggerate movements.

- **Use a syllable-to-syllable attack** when saying long words.
  
  Say: “re-frig-er-a-tor”
  Say: “gro-cer-ies”

- **Rephrase** rather than repeat a message that is misunderstood.

- **Try to limit** conversations when you feel tired. Your speech may be harder to understand.

- **If you become frustrated,** try to use other methods, such as pointing or gesturing, to get your message across.