

A complicated language disorder.  
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# The Multiples of Aphasia



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resulted in aphasia (a language disorder) and apraxia of speech (a speech disorder). Ever since then, Silk Road Rising has made a commitment to generating awareness of these little known conditions and how they are treated. We're even in the early stages of developing the Aphasia Arts Forum, which will amplify the relationship between the arts and neurorecovery.

Last week's news that actor Bruce Willis has been diagnosed with aphasia has catapulted public interest in aphasia to unprecedented levels. Our prayers go out to Willis and his loved ones. May God bless him and grant him the compassion and care he so rightly deserves.

The announcement by the Willis family will hopefully generate the attention and sense of urgency so desperately needed to increase funding for aphasia research and care. The gratitude in the aphasia and aphasia care communities for Bruce Willis's honesty and courage is palpable. But while the heightened attention brings aphasia awareness into the mainstream, it has simultaneously caused confusion about the disorder and the two million Americans it affects.

The conversations about aphasia that are occurring in the media, in light of Willis's announcement, make broad, generalizing claims based on what is known about his particular condition. This reporting appears to focus on a certain type of aphasia known as Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA), although it is not named and Willis's family never officially released details of his specific diagnosis.

Primary Progressive Aphasia presents as a gradual onset, degenerative neurological condition akin to Alzheimers and dementia. Unlike most other aphasias, it is typically not induced by stroke, aneurysm, or traumatic brain injury. The prognosis for a person with PPA is a continued loss of language and expressive abilities. It may also involve memory loss and cognitive decline. Discourse around PPA is extremely important but only when it is correctly identified.



The type of aphasia that Malik has is known as Broca's aphasia, or non-fluent aphasia, and is significantly different from PPA. It has affected his speaking, reading, writing, and numeration, but through resolve and hard work, and with a great team of therapists and practitioners, Malik is slowly regaining those capacities. His memory and understanding of spoken language remain largely intact. In other words, Malik's recovery trajectory, and that of many people living with aphasia (including Gabby Giffords, Sharon Stone, and Randy Travis), is quite positive.

Aphasia is a complex language disorder that manifests in countless ways and for any number of reasons. At Silk Road Rising we understand that representation matters; it shapes perceptions and informs conversations. We have always challenged misrepresentation and misinformation in our work; it lies at the core of our mission. To discuss aphasia as a singular disorder fails to represent the aphasia community-at-large, and erases the experiences of individuals who can and do recover language. We believe that more stories about aphasia are what is needed, and we are committed to educating audiences and uplifting Malik in his journey to recovery.

To learn more about various types of aphasia, [click here](#). To read the National Aphasia Association's Bruce Willis statement, [click here](#).



**National  
Aphasia  
Association**

That day will come. Sending healing energy to Bruce Willis and to all people living with aphasia!

## Communicating through Art

The Block Museum considers the role of art in combating primary progressive aphasia



Throughout Winter 2022, Northwestern University's The Block Museum of Art partnered with Dr. Aaron Wilkins, assistant clinical professor, and his team at The Northwestern University Center for Audiology, Speech, Language, and Learning (NUCASLL) on an innovative clinical study. The project centered on art-based discussion in the treatment of primary progressive aphasia (PPA), a condition that involves progressive deterioration of language functioning. Working together, Block and NUCASLL developed the trial program "Conversations Through Art" as a clinical treatment case study. The nine-week program provided facilitated conversations on artworks in the museum collection, led by NUCASLL faculty and graduate students, as part of an overall treatment plan for patients with PPA.

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## Community Spotlight



**Friday, April 22 at 7:00pm CDT**  
**Saturday, April 23 at 7:00pm CDT**  
**Victory Gardens Theater**  
**2433 N Lincoln Ave**  
**Chicago, IL 60614**

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*ZAC EFRON* gives a glimpse into a world that is rarely seen on the American stage, two Asian Americans looking for love and the complexities that come with their adventures. This staged reading is directed by Steve Scott, features Richard Manera, Lisa Tejero, Wai Yim, and Gordon Chow, with stage management by Sammy Brown and stage directions by Theresa Ro.

All guests must wear a mask. The venue will also check vaccination status.

[Learn More and Purchase Tickets \(\\$10\) Here](#)

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