Communication Strategies
For a person living with ALS:

- When your speech is at its worst, slow down, speak louder, and use extra pauses between sentences.
- Over-enunciate each sound.
- Clearly identify the topic of conversation (state or write key words).
- When trying to convey very important info, use shorter, simpler phrases.
- If your hands and arms are not weak, use gestures or point as you speak.
- Watch your listener for signs that they are either understanding/misunderstanding you.
- Use turn-taking signals. Come up with a way to signal to your listener that you have something to say. Find a way to “get a word in.”
- Get your listener’s attention before trying to communicate.
- 3 strikes rule: If you’ve tried to say the same thing three times and you’re not being understood, rephrase your message or try to find another way to communicate.
- Find or create good communication environments: turn off the television or radio, reduce background noise, and maintain good lighting.
- Communicate face-to-face, and not at a distance.
Communication Strategies

For a person communicating with someone living with ALS:

- Listen carefully with full attention.
- Make sure you know the context/topic.
- Repeat back what you did hear, and then ask specific questions for clarification.
- Watch for turn-taking signals.
- Pay attention to other clues: facial expression, tone of voice, etc.
- Identify communication breakdowns, stop, and address them.
- 3 strikes rule: If she/he has tried to say the same thing three times and you’re not understanding, encourage them to rephrase the message or try to find another way to communicate.
- During communication breakdowns or when he/she needs to conserve energy: ask yes or no questions, one at a time.
- Find or change your environment (find a quiet space, avoid distractions: turn off TV or radio, avoid multitasking when communicating, etc.).
- Communicate face-to-face, and not at a distance.
- As you find strategies that work for you, write them down and try using them in the future.