

Locating Space and Time

I was instructed to begin our conversations by locating us in space and time. I was to do this by asking leading questions, gradually providing more clues until she could give the correct answer.

Where are we?

What is the date today?

I've hung a meter-wide calendar in front of her so that she can return to recognizing time as a series of days grouped into months and years. The linearity of the calendar doesn't seem to make sense to her now. She understands that days are counted, and so are years, but the way one day flows into the next, or a month flows into another, seems utterly bizarre.

LA
Madrid
Nafplio
Patras

All locations she's traveled to within the last 34 minutes.

The speech therapist pulls me aside and explains that the way each question is asked is crucial. You must start with: Where are we right now?

If the answer doesn't match the correct place, add more context. Clarifying questions should offer two options: a correct one and one you made up.

Are we in Athens or LA?

Sometimes, the two options don't help, so you should give a hint of context and try again to locate her in space. Locating her in time comes after.

Across from us is the Hilton, where are we?

If you still don't get the right answer, narrow the scope of the question. Again, two options are needed.

We're in Athens, but are we in a hotel or a hospital?

At this point, if the answer doesn't align with the context, you must answer emphatically yourself, ideally pointing to how you come to that conclusion.

We're in the hospital, didn't you see all these nurses coming to help?

Then proceed with locating her in time.

What is the date?

I've taken the initiative to mark the calendar each day to highlight where we are.

What is the date?

Reading the calendar is like reading an unfamiliar birth chart. She reads all the numbers correctly, but they're just a series of digits, not a tool to identify time.

If she doesn't get the correct answer, you must give her the full date.

The speech therapist mentioned that this process is to be repeated as many times as possible, every single day. So, it's become the most common topic of conversation we have right now.

After about seven consecutive rounds of locating space and time, she tells me that it's a very boring topic of conversation.

— Danae Io