

## OED (Objective Erasive Disease): Excerpts from an Alzheimer's Dictionary

### Aphasia, n. (/ə'feɪziə/)

Loss of speech, partial or total, or loss of power to understand written or spoken language, as a result of disorder of the cerebral speech centres<sup>i</sup>. Individuals suffering from Aphasia often respond with frustration when confronted by confused replies of others. Some caregivers have reported that maintaining composure while trying to decode the person's speech, prevents catastrophic reactions.

2008 H. Rossi Living Room Conversation. The little old woman's demeanor changed as I walked into the living room and placed the Tupperware in her hands. She sat upright, her tired eyes sparkled, and she dramatically exclaimed, "Oh you shouldn't have. I'm not even the slightest bit hungry." Meanwhile her facial expression and quick hands betrayed her performance. She treated the first taste as a food critic, smelling the dish, closing her eyes, and savoring the flavors, but after she gave the meal her approval with an "Mmmm delicious," she transformed into a competitive eater. Between mouthfuls she casually mentioned, "Hope I wish I could eat all of this, but my appetite hasn't been the same since my ...my orgasm." (awkward pause) "That's right Gram, your aneurism."

### Hallucination, n. (/hæl(j)u:sɪ'neɪʃən/)

The mental condition of being deceived or mistaken, or of entertaining unfounded notions; with a and pl., an idea or belief to which nothing real corresponds; an illusion<sup>ii</sup>.

Path. and Psychol. The apparent perception (usually by sight or hearing) of an external object when no such object is actually present. (Distinguished from illusion in the strict sense, as not necessarily involving a false belief<sup>iii</sup>.) The person experiencing the hallucination cannot distinguish what they perceive as reality from reality itself; the realities are synonymous. Correcting the individual will only incite them, but allowing them to live a life filled with hallucinations can be physically and mentally damaging for everyone involved.

2006 J. Rossi Warren Hospital Patient Room. "Johnny! It's pouring rain! I'm getting soaked! (pause) Hope, I never expected this from you...why won't you let me by?! Why do you insist on standing on those steps?! (pause) Move aside so I can go to church! I hate you both! You are dead to me!" I stand next to my daughter, helpless, as my mom screams from her bed, arms strapped, struggling with hallucinations from the comfort beneath her dry blanket.

2009 H. Rossi A Visit on Mary's Porch in June. "This one woman at nutrition always causes trouble. She'll even point out the run in your stockin', but I don't care. It's only a run, not the end of the world." Her tone shifts to that of a child, shamefully admitting to something wrong. "Anyways, today she used my bathroom. (pause) She took so long in there that the bus honked to hurry her up. The driver wanted to finish his last round of stops. I thought she just had to pee, if I would have known she was going to have a bowel movement I wouldn't have let her into my house, I didn't even want her to use my toilet Hope, but she asked me in front of the whole bus."

I can only watch the fight as she purses her lips, raises her eyebrows, and admits defeat by dropping her shoulders, looking to me for validation. "Don't worry gram. If you don't want someone using your bathroom just tell them no next time."

Before I finish my statement she defends herself, raising her voice in exasperation. “Hope you don’t understand, some people just don’t take no for an answer, it didn’t matter what I said, she would have followed me off of the bus and barged into my house after I unlocked the door.”

“You don’t have to worry about someone coming into your house. The bus driver wouldn’t let them off the bus if he saw you didn’t want them in your house.”

“I told her no Hope! And she came anyway! She stunk up my bathroom and was talking to me while she was in there, asked me if I had something...I think she asked for a clean pair of pants or underwear, as if she pooped herself, I told her I didn’t have any and that she had to leave. (She takes a breath.) I haven’t been in the bathroom since.”

“Don’t worry gram. I’ll check to see if it’s clean.” I step into the bathroom to find the toilet paper unrolled on the floor, what appears to be a haphazard attempt to reroll the quilted squares. Droplets of some sort spot her freshly cleaned hopper seat. A stiff paper-like substance floats inside the bowl, threatening me with its ability to clog. And then, my eyes find the source of the overwhelming smell of defecation. The once neatly lined Serenity lay scattered on the shelf, crowned by a doubly soiled pair.

After I clean the mess, wash my hands a couple times, and finish my visit with my gram, I call my dad to tell him the news. The heat drains from my face when he asks, “Were they Serenity? (pause) Not many people wear Serenity brand Hope.”

Paranoia, n. (Brit. /ˌpærəˈnɔɪə/ , U.S. /ˌperəˈnɔɪə/)

Med. Originally: a delirium, dementia, or other disorder affecting the function of the mind. Later: mental illness characterized by a persistent delusional system, usually on the theme of persecution, exaggerated personal importance, or sexual fantasy or jealousy, often as a manifestation of schizophrenia<sup>iv</sup>.

More generally: any unjustified or excessive sense of fear; esp. an unreasonable fear of the actions or motives of others<sup>v</sup>. Even a person’s closest family and friends can become suspects worthy of fearing when she believes that everyone is out to get her.

2005 D. Jahoda A Doorstep on March Blvd. I pulled aside my curtain to see who was frantically pounding on my door. When I recognized my good friend Mary I hurried to unlatch the lock. A scour greeted me. With fists clenched, eyes narrowed, brows furrowed, and lips drawn down, she accused me of stealing a picture of her grandson, who is of no relation or interest to me. “But Mary I don’t have it. You showed it to me a week or so ago, but you put it in your purse before you left.”

“Dolores I want it back now. You have always admired my things and I vividly remember how you doted over that picture of him and his platoon. You asked me if I would give it to you and I said I wouldn’t part with it. Now I want it back!”

“But Mary, honestly, why would I want to keep a picture of your relative?” This disagreement continued between the family for the next two or three months as we tried locating the stolen picture. Mary’s paranoia coupled with her hallucination created a rift in the family, but finally the picture was found. Mary thought I placed it in her house to trick her and I can’t convince her otherwise. Luckily she doesn’t remember the incident and I can still visit as a close friend.

2007 T. Rossi Phone Conversation. An exasperated, barely discernable voice cries out “Tony what did you do with that truckload of garbage? You threw out my letter describing my increase in pay! You and Johnny are

trying to steal my money!”

I try to find words to calm her, but nothing comes to mind. I stand there silent, phone pressed against my ear. Her ranting stops. Just as I began to relax and slowly exhale I hear the dial tone. I hang up and slowly dial each number, planning what I’m going to say as I hear “Hello?”

“Hey Johnny. Mom flipped out. I can’t handle her paranoia...”

---

<sup>i</sup> Quoted from OED

<sup>ii</sup> Quoted from OED

<sup>iii</sup> Quoted from OED

<sup>iv</sup> Quoted from OED

<sup>v</sup> Quoted from OED