Stroke and subsequent aphasia can impact a person’s identity negatively, interfering with quality of life. Co-constructing personal narratives about the stroke and other aspects of a person’s life is a promising intervention for addressing identity issues. This series of three studies explored key aspects related to identity, personal narratives, and the perceived impact of telling one’s story.

Study 1 involved a survey examining whether speech-language pathologists view themselves as having a role in supporting the reconstruction of self-identity in adults with aphasia through the use of personal narratives. Results revealed that, whereas the majority of respondents viewed themselves as having a role in supporting self-identity, less than one-half reported targeting self-identity directly in the treatment of recent cases. Additionally, approximately 40% reported having had no educational activities in self-identity and in personal narratives. Thus, the results indicated a potential gap between the perceived role in supporting self-identity and existing educational activities. This could account for infrequent use of techniques used to support self-identity in treatment.

Study 2 used a collective case study design to explore a framework for clinicians working to co-construct narratives with adults who have aphasia. This involved
developing and piloting a ‘My Story’ protocol to co-construct personal narratives in adults with aphasia. The seven-session protocol was piloted with three participants who have aphasia. Results showed that the co-construction process allowed for participants to organize and make meaning of the events of their life, including goals and imagining the future. Furthermore, participants reported co-construction to be a highly positive experience.

Study 3 used qualitative interviews with the three participants in the ‘My Story’ Project to learn about their perceptions of the work. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to explore self-reported changes resulting from participating in the project. Results revealed three super-ordinate themes: More than a story: My life came back to life; Co-constructing ‘My Story’ was a positive emotional experience; and Hope. This study provided support of the meaningfulness of co-creating a personal narrative in contributing to positive identity changes and communication confidence.