

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIE S

NEWSLETTER

March 2008

Issue 9

WELCOME to the first newsletter of 2008! We hope you all had a very happy and safe Christmas holiday season and are looking forward to the challenges of the New Year. We have a busy few months ahead and we are especially looking forward to meeting some of our leaders face to face in March, at our STEPS Leader Conference. Please see Pg 4 for more details.

STEPS 2008

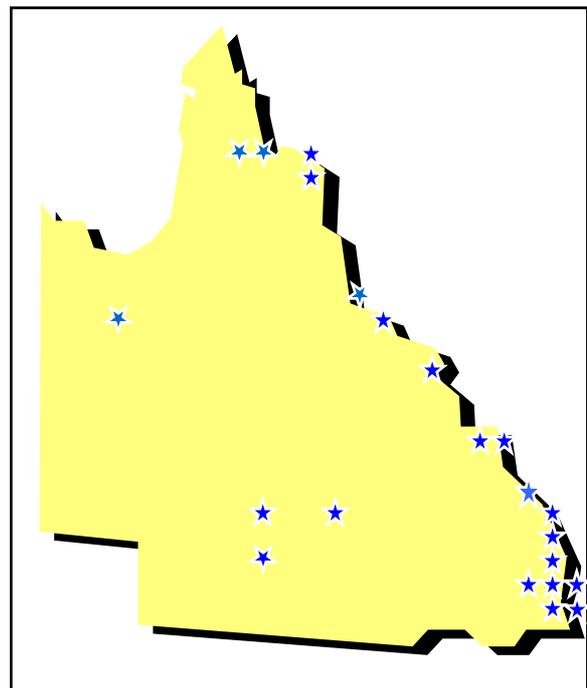
Our year has got off to a flying start with several experienced leaders requesting assistance to run repeat groups in the Brisbane area i.e. Bracken Ridge and Chermside, and some of our new leaders who trained in November 2007, wanting to run groups for the first time.

At this early stage of the year we are not able to report on the outcome of our funding submissions, unfortunately. However, we can assure leaders and group members alike, that we are operating on a "business as usual" basis until at least June 08.

However, we would like to advise STEPS Leaders that, in order to receive reimbursement for group running costs (e.g. room hire, catering etc) and payments through the incentive scheme, groups need to be completed by the end of June 08.

STEPS Groups in Queensland

Here's a snapshot of where STEPS is happening in Queensland at the moment.



2006 Groups

Maroochydore, Caloundra, Buranda, Cleveland, Gold Coast, Bundaberg, Capalaba, Mackay, Annerley,

2007 Groups

Gold Coast, Bracken Ridge x 2, Rockhampton x 2, Bundaberg, Charleville x 2, Innisfail, Kingston, Woolloowin, Roma, Cairns x 2, Mitchelton and Carina.

Confirmed 2008 Groups

Logan, Chermside, Bracken Ridge, Far WS QLD

On-going support groups (all years)

Buranda/Annerley, Bundaberg, Mackay, Bracken Ridge, Charleville, Innisfail, Mitchelton

Relaxation



Deep Abdominal Breathing

1. Sit in a comfortable chair that supports your head, or lie down. A quiet spot is helpful, but you don't have to go into a soundproof room.
2. Next, put one hand on your upper chest and the other hand on your abdomen. Breathe as you normally do. Notice which hand moves the most as you breathe. Don't change your breathing.
3. Which hand moves the most? The top one? High, shallow, chest breathing is physiologically connected with a stress mode. Low, slow, deep abdominal breathing is physiologically connected to a "relax" mode.
4. Now put both hands on your diaphragm (just underneath your chest) Breathe by expanding and contracting your belly to allow the breathe to come in and out. Imagine you have a balloon on your stomach, and it is going to fill and empty as your belly rises and falls.

5. Breathe in – any old way – then contract your belly to exhale. Pull your stomach muscles in toward your lower back as if you're blowing out 20 candles on a birthday cake
6. Let your belly rise, and the air will come naturally.
7. Gently pull in your stomach muscles again to exhale. Let your belly rise as the air comes in.
8. You are not forcing the breath, not breathing more quickly. It is an easy, natural rhythm, like a swinging gate.

Group Activities

The suggestion to consider using relaxation techniques in your daily life was discussed in Session 3 of the STEPS Program. It was suggested that relaxation might be a useful strategy to manage stress.

Stress is an unavoidable fact of life and is not always negative. However, it can become a problem if it occurs too often, goes on for too long or is too strong.

These ideas might help you manage your stress:

- spend time identifying what causes you stress;
- monitor how you behave when you are stressed;
- Practice the strategies that help you to manage stress.



SPOTLIGHT ON... Mt Isa

For thousands of years the ochre-red territorial sign of the emu foot marked the boundaries of a slice of Australia which is today's Isa Country. Running from north-west to south-east and about 130 kilometres in average width by approximately 485 kilometres long, this tract of North West Queensland was inhabited by the Kalkadoon tribe.

This proud warrior tribe were masterful tool makers, fashioning impressive Stone Age weapons. Their greenstone axes were one of the products of a remarkable trading nation. Their goods were so prized they were found as far away as South Australia.

It is ironic that the Emu-foot province is today one of the world's great metal trading regions. In February 1923, lone prospector John Campbell Miles discovered silver-lead-zinc ore in a low range, about one kilometre across the valley from the sandy bed of the Leichhardt River in North West Queensland. He named his prospecting leases Mount Isa, a corruption of Mount Ida, a West Australian gold field.

The horse that carried John Campbell Miles to the spot where he discovered silver-lead was named, aptly enough "Hard Times". It was a prophetic name because "hard times" probably epitomises the early history of Mount Isa. Between 1923 and 1963 Local Government was administered by Cloncurry Shire Council. Then on 1 July 1963, Mount Isa commenced its existence as Mount Isa Shire Council.. City status was proclaimed on 30 May 1968 when Mount Isa's population officially exceeded 18 000

Today, the City of Mount Isa boasts all the amenities for modern city living and despite its relatively young status, has many attributes which are the envy of other, more populated cities.

STEPS in Cairns

A STEPS Group was run in Cairns, at the Edmonton Community Health Centre, from October to November 2007. It was lead by Ancilla, (OT) and Anne (Speech Pathologist). There were 6 participants, 3 males and 3 females. 3 people had a history of traumatic brain injury and the others had experienced stroke.

Highlights for the group were the relaxation session, where they had a chance to practice techniques, the "Remember Me" video, and the session on understanding brain injury.

There was enthusiasm for the break-up activity. Several options were explored before a decision was made on lunch in a Chinese Restaurant (see photo).

A common issue amongst the group was communication impairment so people were encouraged to contribute as best as they could. It was great to see the confident use of strategies when they ordered lunch, interacted with each other and organised their transport home.

The group was keen for extra sessions to cover all of their topics of interest, and back up resources, such as recorded hint sheets as an alternative to written material.

The group plan to continue meeting monthly.



Anne Kavanagh and Ancilla Fasiolo

Leader Networking and Support

The major event to be offered by STEPS in 2008 is the -

STEPS Leader Conference

We have a full 2 day program to offer our leaders and are busy registering their attendance and making travel plans.

The theme of the conference is "Stepping Ahead Together" and as well as presentations from Griffith University and ABIOS staff, there will be considerable focus on discussions and activities that allow leaders to get to know each other and make plans for the future of the STEPS Leader Network. We have 3 exciting keynote speakers who will discuss themes about happiness, community engagement and leadership.

We are also in the process of arranging to have the conference recorded, so we are able to offer leaders who were unable to attend in person, the chance to see and listen to the conference on DVD.

NEW LENDING LIBRARY

We are pleased to announce a new resource for on-going groups. STEPS now has a resource library of CD's, DVD's and videos about brain injury and stroke, and related topics that can be borrowed by STEPS leaders.

We are hoping these materials might be borrowed by leaders and watched by groups who continue to meet after the STEPS program has finished. Themes include:

- Information about brain injury and stroke
- Individual stories about people who have survived a brain injury or stroke
- Issues about healthcare for people with disabilities
- Related topics e.g. anger management

Last but not least...

I know Christmas seems a long way in the past now, but just wanted to update you about the Christmas meetings that took place last December. To our knowledge meetings were held in Buranda, Michelton, Bundaberg, Charleville, Innisfail and Mackay.

Here are two photos taken at our offices here in Brisbane. People arrived and left at different times, hence the need for 2!



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