

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

NEWSLETTER

December 2006

Issue 4

Seasons Greetings



It is hard to believe that another festive season is just around the corner.

We have had a challenging and exciting year here at STEPS. We have had the pleasure of meeting and speaking with some fantastic people who are keen to help with the implementation of the STEPS program.

We would like to thank everyone for all their contributions and support over the year and would look forward to continuing to work with you in the New Year.

STEPS Group Updates

The Capalaba, Mackay and Bundaberg groups have all started and will all be completed by the end of the year.

A group of ABIOS clients have also formed a group at Annerley. This group will also be completed by the end of the year. This group has decided to have their Group Break-up activity and Christmas celebration with a steak at the well-known Breakfast Creek pub in Brisbane. See Reader contributions for a lovely photo of the fun they had at their Break-Up activity. We look forward to hear about their activity in the next edition of the newsletter.



Leader Training



Another STEPS training course has been completed in November in Brisbane with service providers.

The training involves a 2-day course which covers information about:

- the STEPS program framework – WHO ICF model and overview of self management
- how to promote a STEPS group
- preparing and running a STEPS group
- group facilitation skills and strategies
- keeping groups going after the STEPS program has been completed.

Leaders also participate in direct practical training in delivering sections of the STEPS Program. This section is both interesting and fun!!

Leaders receive a Leader Manual as an ongoing resource to refer to.

The participants for these groups have included staff from government and non-government agencies, and interested volunteers from the general community

If you are interested in participating in the Leader training please contact Areti Kennedy on (07) 3406 2311 or 1300 727 403

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

STEPS Program

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Attention and Concentration after Brain Injury

Attention and concentration are important areas of cognitive functioning that you rely on for most your daily activities and tasks. After a brain injury, people often experience changes in their attention and concentration.

Different kinds of attention

- **Basic arousal** – basic alertness and awareness of what is happening around you
- **Sustained attention** – ability to stay alert and concentrate over a period of time
- **Selective attention** – ability to focus your attention on one thing or task without getting distracted
- **Alternating attention** – ability to shift attention back and forth between tasks or activities
- **Divided attention** – ability to focus on more than one thing at the same time

Problems you may experience include:

- Finding it hard to focus on a task
- Getting distracted easily
- Getting off the topic in conversations with other people
- Being unable to finish a task or get to the end of something
- Getting tired or fatigued quickly
- Making mistakes or errors
- Taking more time to get things done
- Inability to do more than one thing at a time
- Difficulty understanding information or instructions
- Difficulty with memory and learning new information

Coping with attention and concentration difficulties

Alertness and energy

- Break down tasks into smaller parts and work on them one at a time.
- Focus – do tasks for a short time, rather than a long time.
- Plan more difficult tasks when you know you will be rested and have more mental and physical energy to get them done.
- Plan a variety of tasks to keep your interest Plan regular breaks and rest throughout the day
- Improve your sleep quality and physical health and fitness – the more you do regularly the more energy you will have in the long term.

Sustaining attention

- Write yourself a list of tasks or things that you are doing
- Write down new information or instructions as you hear it, to reinforce your attention
- Repeat things back to yourself or to others to confirm you have heard and understood the details
- Repeat key pieces of information you want to pay attention to e.g. names, places, dates or times.
- Use self-talk while you are doing a task to keep on track, e.g. “I am going to buy some shampoo

and soap” or “I must pay attention to ...”

Selecting, focussing and dividing attention

- Get rid of as many distractions around you as possible.
- Turn off distractions you can hear or see e.g. radio, television. This is especially important with driving or operating machinery.
- Get rid of clutter in your workspace e.g. office, kitchen, study at home
- Try to avoid noisy or busy environments e.g. shopping centres, crowds, and noisy restaurants.
- When you have been interrupted go back to your list to check where you were up to.
- Leave important items where you can easily see them and where they catch your attention – e.g. on the kitchen counter, beside the front door.
- Leave visual reminders and prompts where you can see them to remind you to keep on track e.g. a sign on the refrigerator or the bathroom mirror or the front door. Sticky Post-it notes are good for this.

Keeping on track

- Keep a list with you of what you are doing
- Use alarms or reminders to keep you on track throughout the day at regular intervals or times. For example, use loud alarms to remind you when cooking, or a short time before you have to leave the house.
- Have a plan for difficult or more demanding situations e.g. parties, social events, what you will say when you lose your train of thought.

Managing in the community

At home

- Use a daily or weekly planner or calendar to keep on track
- Make lists of things to do
- Use shopping lists
- Use alarms, computers and “Post-its” as visual reminders to keep on track and especially for cooking, washing and other home-based tasks
- Put things where you can see them
- Group things together e.g. keys, wallet, mobile phone etc.

In social situations

- Choose environments which have less distractions, e.g. activity, noise, competing demands
- Plan one-to-one or small group activities
- Talk to people about your difficulties, and ask them to slow down, repeat information, or to help you keep on track.

In conversations

- Have important conversations and discussions one-to-one, and where and when you are not likely to be distracted.
- Look at the person when they are speaking – concentrate on their eyes, face
- Rephrase or repeat back what someone has said, “So what you mean is ...”
- Ask for information to be repeated for you if you didn’t get it the first time
- If you get stuck, just let the person know “I’ve just lost track, tell me that part again ...”



Reader Contributions

Annerley

A big thank you to Shannan from the Annerley group for bringing her camera along to the Annerley Break-up. Below is the photo sent in by Shannan of the Annerley group at the Breakfast Creek Pub.



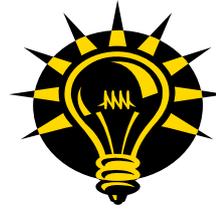
Feedback from the Capalaba group:

The Capalaba STEPS was enjoyed by all. Here are some comments from Capalaba group:

-The meetings were **so beneficial** to us that we would like them to continue.
- The Group Meetings are **communally supportive**.
- **“It is like Family meeting with the Group”**
- People are **getting to know each other** and are all from different places.
- Coming to the Group has given **Confidence to speak and builds self esteem**.
- We have come to terms more with **our own injury** especially when we meet others with similar injuries.
- **This is what makes people heal”**.
- The Capalaba Group has been a **very peaceful and accepting group**.

During the Capalaba Group Sessions there have been 2 major crises and the Group has all **rallied around**.

The Capalaba Group had a very successful “Break-up” which was held at **The Plantation** on Wednesday, 15th November at Gumdale where many of the group enjoyed the pool activities and then finished off the outing with a “Picnic lunch”. Our day was cut a little short as we had to make a dash to our homes before the **Hail Storm** hit the area. It was an eventful day in total and was enjoyed by all.



SPOTLIGHT ON... BUNDABERG

Bundaberg was founded in 1870. It is located at the Southern end of the Great Barrier Reef and is approximately a 4 hour drive from Brisbane.

Bundaberg is well known for its sugar production and is the home of Bundaberg Rum.

A great deal of preparation and advertising was done in the local area to promote STEPS. A poster display was displayed in the Bundaberg local library.

The STEPS program commenced on 16th October and was facilitated by two Volunteer leaders – Nene Buckland and Leanne Williams.

There were 7 participants. The group had a “Croquet and BBQ” outing. The participants reported that they found the course very beneficial and gave it a “thumbs up”. The photo below shows the group having a fun time at their Croquet and BBQ in the park.

We would like to thank our volunteer leaders Nene and Leanne for their fantastic efforts with running the program.



Group Activities

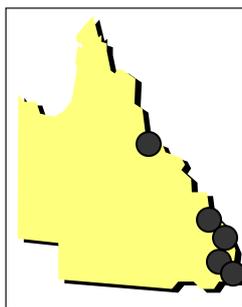
In Week 5 of the STEPS program the group discusses where to begin looking for community activities or groups in local areas.

Some good places to begin looking are:

- Asking family or friends
- Looking the White/Yellow pages telephone book
- Your local paper or community newsletter
- Library notice boards
- Internet
- Neighbourhood/Community Centres or Community Health Centres
- Local City Council
- Radio
- Community Noticeboards
- Disability Information & Awareness Line (DIAL)
- Brain Injury and Disability Services eg. Brain Injury Association of Qld (BIAQ) or Sporting Wheelies Gym

STEPS Groups in Queensland

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



- Bundaberg
- Mackay
- Sunshine Coast
- Gold Coast
- Brisbane: Annerley, Buranda, Capalaba, Cleveland

Christmas Party



STEPS celebrated the completion of the first year of the Project with a Christmas party on December 5th at the ABIOS office.

We were joined by many people who have participated in the STEPS program, service providers and members of the STEPS Advisory group. See our next edition for photos of our Christmas celebrations.

Thanks to all who made the effort to come and join our celebrations.

Here is a quick and easy recipe that you may want to try for Christmas....

Chocolate Truffles

3/4 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 cup walnuts, chopped
12 oz. chocolate chips
1 teaspoon vanilla essence

Melt chocolate. Add all the other ingredients. Mix and cool in refrigerator for 10 minutes. Roll into balls. Then roll in toppings of your choice. Topping suggestions: coconut, nuts, candy sprinkles