

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

NEWSLETTER

June 2006

Issue 2

Welcome to the second edition of the STEPS newsletter.

It has been a busy few months for the STEPS Project.

In this edition, we will provide some feedback about the STEPS groups run to date. There are some tips to manage fatigue and some resources that may be useful.

Three groups completed the STEPS Group Program in the SE Qld area, one in Brisbane and two in the Sunshine Coast.

There is also another Brisbane STEPS Group currently meeting in Cleveland.

The Brisbane group completed their 6 week program in May. There were 15 participants and all reported that participating in the group was a positive experience and all enjoyed our Group Break Up Activity – Picnic at the Story Bridge park in Brisbane. See the **Reader Contributions** section for two Brisbane participants' views about the group.

The Sunshine Coast has had 2 STEPS Group Programs completed-one in Maroochydore, and a recently completed group in Caloundra. For more information about the Sunshine Coast STEPS groups see the **Spotlight On...**section.

We hope you enjoy reading about our recent developments and our progress with STEPS .

Please contact us if you would like more information about the STEPS project or would like to provide us feedback about your STEPS experience.



Leader Training

STEPS staff have completed two Leader Training sessions- in Brisbane in May and in Mackay in June.

The training involved a 2-day course which covered 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. Jill from Cleveland and Laura from Gold Coast have started groups since participating in the Brisbane Leader Training. Congratulations and well done!

Other trainees are planning to start STEPS groups in their local area over the next few months.

If you are interested in participating in Leader training please contact Areti Kennedy

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

STEPS Program

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Fatigue



Fatigue is a common problem after a brain injury.

You can get tired doing physical activity, cognitive tasks or just everyday activities.

If you are fatigued, it can make things you already find difficult worse e.g. speech, concentration, balance, memory etc.

There are many ways to manage fatigue if it is a problem for you:

Plan Ahead:

- Plan rest times into your weekly and daily schedules.
- Avoid doing too much in a day.

Break Down Tasks:

- Split big jobs into lists of smaller tasks and tick off things as you do them e.g. don't clean the whole house at once, do one room every day.

Think About Timing:

- Plan more strenuous activities for times when you have more energy.

Avoid Stress:

- Being stressed can make you more tired.
- Get support from your family, friends or professionals when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Be Active and Have Fun:

- Being active or doing things you enjoy can boost your energy levels.

- The less you do, the less you feel like doing.

Eat Well:

- Having a balanced, healthy diet will give you more energy.
- Eat lots of fruit and vegies and avoid caffeine (in coffee, tea, cola and chocolate).

Sleep Well:

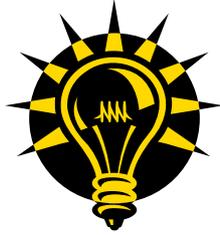
- Get into a regular sleeping pattern.
- Put bed times and wake up times on your schedules.



Medication:

- Some medications can make you more tired. Talk to your doctor about your concerns, never just stop taking medication.
- There are some medications to help with fatigue, discuss your options with your doctor.





SPOTLIGHT ON...

SUNSHINE COAST

Only 90kms north of Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast is a chain of sandy beaches beginning at Caloundra and including Noosa Heads, Mooloolaba, the Cooloola Coast and Maroochydore. The region also contains some of the most fantastic rainforest regions in this part of the world.

The first STEPS group was held at Maroochydore and the second group at Caloundra. Both groups were run by Libby Groves (STEPS Coordinator - Sunshine Coast).

The groups have included people with Acquired Brain Injury and family members/carers. The participants of both groups found the opportunities to meet others and swap information and contacts with each other very valuable. Issues identified by the groups included the lack of accessibility for people with disabilities to community venues, the need for support for carers as well as individuals with brain injury, and the need for more appropriate community respite services.

Both groups reported that they enjoyed the opportunity to meet with others who have had similar experiences and really enjoyed the Break-up Activity held in the community - a Fish and Chips 'picnic' for the Maroochydore group, and a sausage sizzle in the park for the Caloundra group.

The Maroochydore group completed their STEPS Group Program in May and have since met in early June for a social gathering/coffee morning at a local shopping centre and are planning to meet each month for a "catch up".

.....**We look forward to hearing further updates about the Sunshine Coast groups.**

BRAIN TEASERS...

Here are some puzzles for you to solve:

1. VISIONVISION

2. MIND
MATTER

3. PRO MISE

4. QT π

RESOURCES

TADAust Connect is a dial up internet provider for people with disabilities, the aged and veterans. It offers low cost plans with unlimited downloads and no annual fees.

For further information about TADAust contact them on 1300 735 439.

Group Activities

Session 3 of the STEPS program focuses on Stress Management. One of the strategies discussed during the session is deep breathing as a way of managing stress.

Participants learn that deep breathing can help to control the impact of physical effects of stress and can help to keep you calm so you can think and act more helpfully and calmly. The group then practices this strategy in the session so that they can use it when they are stressed and to try to relax themselves when faced with a stressful situation.

Reader Contributions

Here are two letters from two members of the Brisbane STEPS Group.



My name is Lorraine Taylor and my parents are Pam and Ernie. I had a Brain Injury approximately 6 years ago. I first heard about STEPS from my ABIOS (Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service) co-ordinator. At the first meeting I was very nervous and shy. Over the weeks I became better at joining in the sessions and gained a lot of information, help and confidence from others in the group when they told their stories. I found the workbook very helpful, with lots of good advice. I would like to think that other people like myself will be helped by this program.

A few words of gratitude from Denise....

Thank you so very much for introducing me to the STEPS program. On 8th December, 2000 I suffered a cerebral haemorrhage caused by an aneurysm bursting in my brain, along with two strokes. Since my operation and my time recuperating I have not fully understood what has been happening to me and have been frustrated about not knowing what was going on and why I was not functioning as I was before the aneurysm.

When I was contacted by BIOS to attend the STEPS group I was really excited. On March 29 I attended my first session of the STEPS program. As I was driving approximately 20kms

to attend the first session, I had some apprehension as I didn't know what to expect, although I believed the group would benefit me in some way or other. After attending the first session, I felt a strong session of "belonging" (like I was at home). I didn't feel any different to anyone else, I found like I fitted in with a lovely group of people and I am now proud to call them my friends. Upon attending more sessions, my feeling of belonging intensified, my confidence has improved to a new level, and I began to take more care of my appearance and have implemented strategies discussed in the group to help with handling things in my daily life. One thing I have yet to master is time management which was a problem before my aneurysm and is still a major problem now. However, I am confident it will happen!!!

The effects of my disabilities post aneurysm are still with me, although I feel I can manage them a lot more and most of all I have finally acknowledged that I had a Brain injury and having a brain injury is not bad, it is "just different".

Denise Rundle

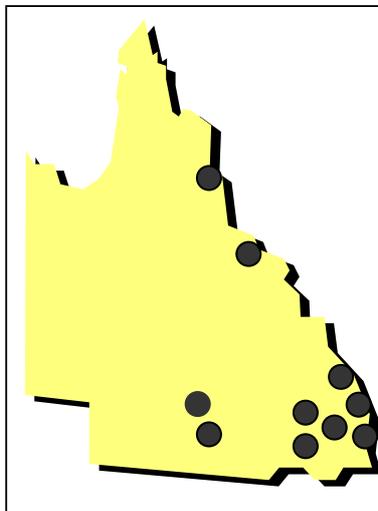
Brain Teaser solutions.

- 1. Double vision**
- 2. Mind over matter**
- 3. Broken promise**
- 4. Cutie pie**

STEPS sites in Queensland

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

Some sites are up and running, others are still in the development phase.



- Brisbane
- Bundaberg
- Charleville and Far South West Queensland
- Cherbourg
- Cunnamulla
- Innisfail
- Mackay
- Maryborough
- Sunshine Coast
- Toowoomba