

NEWSLETTER

September 2006

Issue 3

Another three months has passed since our last edition. It is amazing how time flies past so quickly.

STEPS Group Updates

STEPS is continuing to expand across the state.... There have been more groups run in Cleveland and the Gold Coast. Feedback from the participants of these groups has been very positive and has been enjoyed by all. See **Spotlight On** section for information on the Cleveland group.

The Brisbane (Buranda) group continues to meet every month. The group has a social get together and allows participants to have a social outing and catch up with each other. The group recently had an outing to South Bank for a morning tea. Despite small numbers everyone seemed to have a good time.

The Gold Coast group is setting up a group email list to stay in touch, and to organise their get-togethers. They plan to squeeze one or two in before the end of the year.

Leader Training



Since our last newsletter, Areti & Sue have been busy doing Leader Training in various locations. The Leader Training has been completed in Brisbane, Mackay, Bundaberg and Rockhampton. The training was attended by a variety of people including volunteers (carers, people with brain injury), health professionals and disability service workers.

Two further Leader Training sessions are planned at this stage for the rest of 2006.

New STEPS Groups

Busy, busy, busy towards the end of the year, with new STEPS groups to start in Capalaba (Brisbane), Bundaberg, Rockhampton (x2) and Mackay before the end of 2006. Some of these groups will be run specifically for people with stroke, while others will be for a mixture of people with traumatic brain injury and stroke. We look forward to hearing about the progress of these groups.

Good luck to you all!

Farewell

STEPS would like to farewell one of our team Libby Groves.... Libby was the STEPS Co-ordinator for the Sunshine Coast area. Libby was a STEPS Group Leader for two groups on the Sunshine Coast – Caloundra and Maroochydore.

Libby and her family have moved to Western Australia.

Libby worked at ABIOS since 1997 and worked on the STEPS project since January 2006. Libby worked tirelessly editing the Participant and Leader Workbooks. Her enthusiasm for her work and her attention to detail were especially important in developing the Workbooks.

Libby was an integral part of the team and will be sadly missed by the STEPS team and ABIOS as well. We wish Libby and her family all the best with their move to the West.

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

STEPS Program

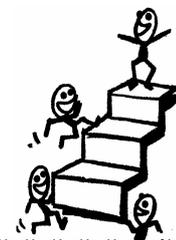
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Getting a Good Sleep



Sleep patterns can change for many reasons:

- Changes in sleep routines due to work, living situation, or family illness or injury
- Changes in your physical health and well-being
- Stress and worry

Good sleep patterns are important so that you have enough energy for all your daily activities (work, home, driving, having a social life). Lack of sleep can affect alertness, mood and concentration.

There are some simple strategies that you can use to improve the quality of your sleep.

■ **Get into a good sleep routine.**

- Go to bed only when you feel sleepy at night-time.
- Try to get to sleep at about the same time every day.
- No matter how poor your sleep at night, get up at the same time every day - use an alarm clock.
- Don't oversleep because of a poor night's sleep.

■ **Sleep only at night time.**

- Sleep during the day will affect your sleep at night so avoid naps during the day.
- If you get tired try to just have a rest on the couch. Don't rest on your bed.

■ **Wind down before bedtime.**

- Don't watch exciting movies just before bedtime.
 - Try a relaxation tape
 - Listen to relaxing music
 - Read a book
- Start preparing for bed at least 30 minutes before bed e.g. lock the house, have a shower, put on pyjamas, brush your teeth, turn down the lights.
- Try a warm drink – e.g. milk.

■ **Spend time in bed *sleeping*.**

- Don't do other activities in bed e.g. reading, watching television, or eating.
- Keep the bed only for sleeping.

If you are awake for a long time:

- Get out of bed.
- Do an activity until you are sleepy (make sure it is something boring).
- Go back to bed – repeat above if needed.

■ **Alcohol, drugs, and medication**

- Avoid drinking alcohol, especially at night time. Alcohol changes the kind of sleep you have, and can make sleep restless.
- If you smoke cigarettes, nicotine levels may also affect your sleep so try to cut down.
- Some prescription and recreation drugs can change your sleep patterns, so ask for information from your Pharmacist or GP.
- Over the counter medications (e.g. pseudoephedrine) can also change your sleep patterns, so ask your Pharmacist or GP for information about *all* medications you are taking.

■ **Caffeine**

- Avoid caffeine after lunch as this may affect your sleep at night-time.
- Caffeine is in coffee, tea, chocolate or cola drinks.
- Try decaffeinated tea or coffee, or cola.

■ **Exercise**

- Get some gentle, regular exercise because this will help with your sleep.
- Don't overdo it if you haven't been getting exercise for a while. Start slowly.
- Talk to your doctor or a Physiotherapist about the kind of exercise you can do.
- Avoid exercising at least four hours before bed-time.



■ Time outside

Spend some time in the sunshine during the day, because this may help with your sleep patterns e.g.

- Sit outside with a book
- Go for a short walk
- Do an activity e.g. gardening

■ Sleep Environment

- Make your bedroom and bed as comfortable and pleasant as possible.
- Get rid of any noise or distractions e.g. use ear-plugs.
- Use curtains to block out light and noise and dim the lights.
- Make sure your pillow and bed are comfortable.
- Make sure the bedroom is the right temperature for the weather.
- Essential oils like lavender can be relaxing.

■ Be patient.

- It can take time to re-settle sleep patterns
- Keep using the new ideas and you should start to see changes.
 - If you need further advice, talk to your GP or a Psychologist.

RESOURCES

The following Internet sites have some good information about Brain Injury:

- Brain Injury Association of Qld
www.biaq.com.au
- Stroke Association of Qld
www.strokeqld.org.au
- Headway Victoria
www.headwayvictoria.org.au
- Brain Injury Association of America
www.biausa.org



Reader Contributions

The Redlands group is alive and well. We celebrated completing our course by having lunch on Coochie Mudlo Island. It was an outstanding day!!

Since then we have met for a beginners' Internet course at Carindale Library. We have also completed Part 1 of a presentation/discussion on Understanding your Brain Injury. This is to be completed in coming weeks. After that we will be ready to play again and we can't wait to return to Coochie. We also have a beginners' email course coming up at Carindale library and lots more ideas.

Finally we would like to formally welcome Clint to our group. Clint undertook his first STEPS program at Buranda (ABIOS) but recently moved to the Redlands and delighted us by asking to join our group. Clint your presence is already greatly valued.

Perhaps this Redlands' report should end with a quote from one of our members who recently commented "my life has gone up a notch since finding ABIOS and joining Redlands STEPS group".

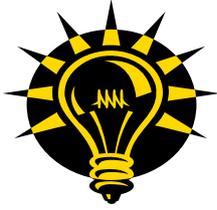
Jill Akehurst – STEPS Leader Cleveland

Feedback from Cleveland STEPS members...

We discussed last week at our STEPS get together the STEPS program and our break-up at Coochie Mudlo. It was a unanimous decision by all that the Cleveland STEPS Program was a great success and all who participated in it were able to gain more knowledge regarding their individual ABIs. We were able to put some of the helpful information to use to make our lives a little easier to manage. We are now using our diaries more regularly instead of being left in the drawer unused.

We had a wonderful day at Coochie Mudlo for our break-up and we are making plans to go again very soon.

Cleveland STEPS group



SPOTLIGHT ON...

Cleveland

is in Redland district and is 45 minutes from Brisbane CBD and is nestled among the coastline of Moreton Bay. It includes the islands of North Stradbroke, Peel, Karragarra, Lamb, Russell, Macleay and Coochie Mudlo.

The Cleveland STEPS was run by Jill Akehurst, who is a Neuropsychologist by profession. The group started in June and was attended by 5 people. The group consisted of people with a brain injury, their supporters/carers and a carer from a brain injury support service.

The group reported that they found the experience very beneficial and enjoyed meeting with other people.

The Group Break-up activity was held at Coochie Mudlo Island in Moreton Bay. The group spent the morning walking around the island and learning about the local area. They then had a fish and chips lunch at a local café and returned to the mainland via ferry.



The group are now meeting regularly every month and are having contact in between group meetings. Some of the group members are meeting at a local library, and walking their dogs together. This is a great outcome for the members of this group and may inspire other participants to do similar activities.

Group Activities

During Session 4 of the STEPS program we discuss how the Internet is a good source of information that can help you understand your health issues.

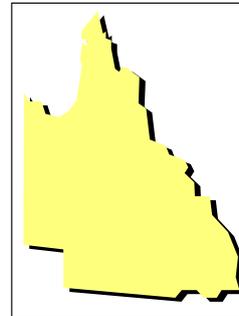
Some of the following questions can help you decide about the quality of the information you access on the Internet:

1. What is the purpose of the site?
2. Who is responsible for the information?
3. Is the subject coverage complete and in-depth?
4. Is the information up to date?
5. How easy is the site to use?

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.



- Buranda
- Bundaberg
- Cleveland
- Cherbourg
- Capalaba
- Mackay
- Rockhampton x2
- Gold Coast
- Caloundra
- Maroochydore
- Charleville
- Roma
- Innisfail
- Gladstone