

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

NEWSLETTER

September 2008

Issue 11

WELCOME to the September newsletter and the fantastic news that STEPS has secured permanent funding from Queensland Health. It will now become a service arm of the Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS).

Areti Kennedy and other STEPS staff are now able to make long term plans for the future and we are in the wonderful position of being able to promote the program again with confidence. We will keep you informed of developments!

STEPS 2008 - onwards and upwards

As soon as we heard the news about funding, the phones ran hot with calls to leaders. As a consequence, we have several leaders busy organising groups around Queensland including Port Douglas/Mossman and Townsville. We are also following up on previous requests from people wanting to attend Leader Training and plan to offer this course in several locations as well.

As it is now "business as usual" we invite leaders to contact us about any of the following issues:

- Running a group for the first time
- Running repeat groups
- Requesting Leader Training for other people in your local community who are interested in becoming a STEPS leader
- Assistance for any ongoing Networks of Support e.g. help to support ongoing groups

We are particularly keen to strengthen our involvement in this last category, as we strongly recognise the value of maintaining the connections between people that were formed during a Group Program. Please see our separate item on Page 2.

Leader Training

We are pleased to announce that STEPS Group Leader Training is back on the agenda. By the time this newsletter arrives, we will have offered training to all those on our waiting list in the Brisbane area. In addition, we will be offering another STEPS Group Leader Training course in November. The dates are:

Date: Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 Nov

Time: 9 - 4pm.

Venue: ABIOS offices, Buranda 4102

Interested participants are asked to contact Areti Kennedy or Diane Clarke for details and an application form: Phone 3406 2311.

Leader Training in other parts of the state can now be negotiated. If you have colleagues who would like to become a STEPS Leader, please let us know.

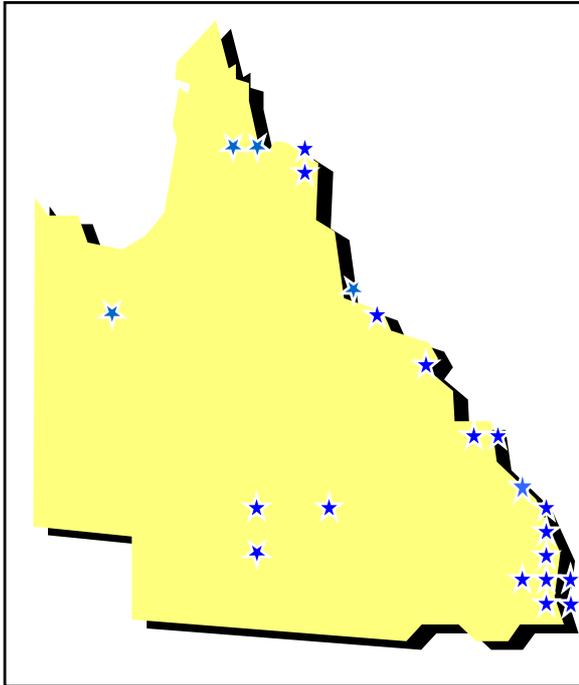
STEPS Lending Library

We have an exciting **NEW ADDITION** to our lending library – a DVD created by a STEPS participant in the Logan area of Brisbane. Milissa Valentine attended a STEPS group in March 08, run by Gavin Hawcroft and John Enright. During the organisation of the break up activity, Milissa suggested videoing participants talking about their experiences of attending the group. The resulting DVD has been professionally edited by Milissa and is a great resource for groups. Congratulations to Milissa on this impressive achievement.

RECENT ADDITIONS - STEPS Leader Conference 2008 (set of 5 DVD's) **AND** a new DVD that describes the STEPS project that can be used for promotional purposes. Contact Areti Kennedy for more details and to borrow an item.

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, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Charleville, Innisfail, Kingston, Wooloowin, Roma, Cairns, Mitchelton and Carina.

2008 Groups

Logan, Chermside, Bracken Ridge, Charleville, Rockhampton, Far South West QLD, Cunnamulla, New Farm

On-going support groups (all years)

Formal Groups:

Buranda/Annerley, Bundaberg, Mackay, Charleville, Innisfail, Mitchelton, Chermside, Logan, Remote Far South West Qld, Cunnamulla

Informal Groups

Bracken Ridge, Carina, Kingston, Capalaba, Cleveland, Varsity Lakes

On-Going Networks of Support

We are very keen to talk to Leaders who are continuing to support groups after the STEPS Program has ended. We realise that this is a very different task and want to discuss ways we can support you.

We have just returned from a conference that discussed similar issues, so we have some thoughts of our own, such as –

- Ways to offer you support
- Ways to offer you supervision
- Training – in terms of:
 - Way we offer training
 - Types of training topics

We are keen to hear from the leader group about your needs and welcome your feedback. Please contact Areti Kennedy or Diane Clarke with your thoughts and ideas.

STEPS Leader Network

Our first teleconference of the new “funded” life of the STEPS service, is taking place in September. As well as a brief update, we will be discussing important matters to do with the future of the group. These include:

- **Group effectiveness**
- **On-going training**
- **Communication amongst the group**
- **Inviting Leaders to contribute to updates of the Program workbooks.**

We encourage all leaders to become involved in the network, either by attending teleconferences, consenting to share contact details or being part of the leader email group.

We are particularly keen for leaders to share their own knowledge and skills as we realise there is a wealth of expertise within the group that has yet to be fully tapped.

If you would like more details about ways to become involved, please contact Diane Clarke.

Self Talk



People who are stressed often think in negative and unhelpful ways. These thoughts are often automatic, but unhelpful and can often sound like the truth.

Learning to recognise when you are thinking unhelpfully and negatively and looking for more realistic ways of viewing your experiences and testing these out in action are important skills to overcome stress.

This tip sheet is designed to help you to develop strategies to challenge your unhelpful/negative self talk and thinking.

Challenging your unhelpful self talk

Once you have learned to become aware of unhelpful thinking, the next step is to evaluate the thoughts you identify, and to look for more helpful and realistic alternatives.

You can do this by asking yourself the following questions:

- **What is the evidence for this thought?**
Do the facts of the situation back up what you think, or do they contradict it?
- **What alternative views are there?**
There are many different ways to look at any experience. How else could you interpret what has happened? Get as many alternatives as you can, and review the evidence for and against them. When you consider it objectively, which alternative is more likely to be correct?
- **What is the effect of thinking the way you do?**
How does it influence how you feel and what you do? What are the advantages and disadvantages of thinking this way? Can you find an alternative that will be more helpful to you?
- **What thinking errors are you making?**
Stressed people typically distort how they see their experiences in systematic ways. They jump to conclusions, overgeneralise from specific things that happen, take responsibility for things that are not their fault, and so on. Which of these errors can you find in your own thinking?

Group Activities

Thinking about Self Talk can be a challenge. One way is to start recording your thoughts - write down the things that you say to yourself and answer as many thoughts as possible.

- Writing them down will allow you to distance yourself from them.
- You may need to work out answers to 50 to 100 thoughts on paper before you can do it in your head with ease – if then.
- Finding effective answers will become easier and easier the more you practice.

Common problems in answering negative thoughts

- **The need for practice**
Standing back, questioning, evaluating and answering our thoughts is not something we normally do. You may well find it difficult at first to be objective and to find answers which affect your feelings to any great extent. Do not be discouraged if at first you cannot always find effective answers.
- **Dealing with extreme distress**
You will probably find it particularly difficult to find rational alternatives to your negative thoughts when you are feeling very badly upset. In this case, you may find it helpful to simply write down what is distressing you, to distract yourself until you are in a better position to do so once you are feeling better. Beware of making the situation worse by telling yourself that you are a failure, or that the therapy will not work for you.
- **Putting yourself down**
Watch out for self-criticism when you are recording your thoughts. You may find yourself thinking, for example, “I must be really stupid to think this way”. Remember that negative thinking is a sign of depression, which you can overcome, not a lack of intelligence.
- **The need for repetition**
Do not get discouraged if you find the same thoughts occurring again and again. If you have been depressed for some time, thinking negatively will have become a well-established habit. It will take time to break it. The more often a particular thought occurs, the more opportunity you will have to answer and change it.



SPOTLIGHT ON... Townsville

The Townsville region extends from Bowen in the south and to Mission Beach in the north. The region has a colourful history shaped by Aboriginal tribes, miners, pastoralists and war. Remnants of these times are evident in the colonial architecture, historic pubs, museums and displays of gold mining machinery and cottages. Townsville is the main administrative, commercial and manufacturing city of northern Queensland.

1360km from Brisbane and 4 hours south of Cairns, Townsville is a relaxed coastal city renowned for its magnificent tropical climate. At the base of Castle Hill, a 300 metre red granite outcrop, Townsville is a charming blend of old and new.

Along Cleveland bay is the treelined Strand with a memorial to those who fought in the Battle of the Coral Sea. From here departs the ferry to Magnetic Island, only 30 minutes away, across Cleveland Bay. This tropical island is a national park and is a very popular location for watersports and bushwalking.

From Townsville you can travel west to the old gold towns of Charters Towers and Ravenswood, or north to the Tully River for fishing and white water rafting.

Crystal Creek-Mt Spec National Park is a 7222 hectare mixture of lowland hardwood forest and tropical rainforest offering splendid vies over Halifax Bay and the coastline. Many kinds of orchid, along with ferns and palm trees can be found near cool lagoons and beautiful pools

STEPS in New Farm

Under the auspices of Open Minds, Adam Jones (Senior Support Worker) started the first of a planned series of STEPS groups in the Fortitude Valley/New Farm area. The groups were held at the New Farm Council Library.

Our group ran its first cycle from 6 June with five attendees with acquired brain injuries along with their carers. Most weeks about 7 people attended, which was encouraging. They consistently attended throughout the entire six weeks and expressed a keen desire to continue the group.

We found the materials excellent although a little difficult to fully cover in a session. The course manuals and other resources incited many intense and quite open discussions about what the clients were going through, the difficulties and challenges they faced and the victories they had enjoyed. We noticed the clients were very open and supportive of each other. Some have continued their friendships outside of group sessions.

The clients particularly enjoyed the DVD featuring interviews with people with ABI. It provoked a lot of encouraging talk amongst the group members as they could see other people had overcome great difficulties.

Our end of group activity was to have dinner followed by a visit to the Broncos verses the Sharks football match on Friday night. One of the clients had known a Bronco's team member before his accident and organized free tickets. As two of the clients had wheelchairs we were seated in a prime position. It was a chilly but great night! The Broncos thrashed the Sharks, by the way.

We are pleased to announce that we will be running more STEPS groups and have pinned down a regular weekly time with the library. For those that are interested in attending the New Farm STEPS group please call Adam on 38964205 or Mob: 0423 579 056.

The next group is due to start on the 19th September 2008 and will meet every Friday 10 to 12 at New Farm Library. However, if you are unable to attend this program, please contact Adam for details of future dates.

STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

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