

SKILLS TO ENABLE PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

NEWSLETTER

March 2006

Issue 1

Welcome to the STEPS Newsletter. This 3-monthly newsletter will keep you up to date about what's happening in STEPS across Queensland. This includes updates about STEPS groups running in Queensland, information on various topics related to brain injury and stroke and some fun activities for you to try with your group. There will also be a **Spotlight on...** section that will highlight a particular STEPS group and let you know what's happening with that group. Plus we'll let you know of upcoming events, profile STEPS staff and get you thinking with some puzzles and riddles. We also welcome your contributions, comments and feedback about the newsletter. See below for more information about this.

What is STEPS?

Skills To Enable People and Communities (STEPS) is a Queensland-wide information and skills program for adults with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), including Stroke, and their families and friends. It is a new initiative of the Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS).

- STEPS aims to improve community life for people with ABI, their families and their local communities
- STEPS will help people understand how to look after themselves, and to participate more in their communities

STEPS will also build and strengthen connections between families, carers, service providers and local agencies and foster a sense of strength and ability.

The STEPS project is a 3-year project which

How Does it Operate?

- **Groupwork sessions.** A 6-week interactive group program including a workbook for everyone to follow. The groupwork will focus on individual and group self-management skills. These groups can be led by trained STEPS Group Program Volunteer Leaders or interested local service providers.
- **Poster.** An easy-to-read framework of the STEPS program for groups to use.
- **Sharing Experiences and Ideas.** STEPS is designed for people to share and learn from each others' experiences.

STEPS Group Program Volunteer Leaders will be trained by experienced staff from ABIOS. Training will be delivered in flexible ways depending on communities' different needs across Queensland.

STEPS will also work with local services in your area to support the STEPS Program and its leaders.

Reader Contributions

Done something interesting?
Got some useful information to share?

Want to tell us about your STEPS group's activities?

Reader's contributions should include your name and address for verification, but can be published anonymously if you wish. Just ask us when you submit your piece.

We reserve the right to edit or refuse unsuitable material. We are unable to return material submitted, so please do not send originals or items of value you wish to keep.



STEPS CONTACT DETAILS

STEPS Program

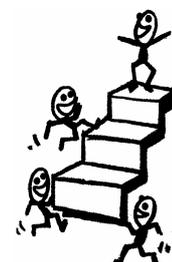
Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS)

PO Box 6053, Buranda 4102

Ph: (07) 3406 2311

Fax: (07) 3406 2399

Email: STEPS@health.qld.gov.au



SUPPORTING FAMILIES

What Does ABI Mean for a Family?

Acquired brain injury (ABI) can have a significant impact on an individual, but it can also result in changes for all members of a person's family and community.

- ❑ Generally, families have had little opportunity to prepare for a brain injury. Some families have good skills in coping with a major trauma or illness; some families may not. No one finds it easy to adapt and cope with all of the changes in their lives that a brain injury may bring.
- ❑ You may experience uncertainty about the future for yourself or your family member, particularly early after an injury. There may be major changes in finances, employment, driving, community involvement or relationships with others. A future that was certain or predictable may have changed dramatically.
- ❑ There may be changes in roles in your family, as the person with ABI is unable to continue in their previous roles or responsibilities. Family members may have extra responsibility for work, transport, managing finances, making family decisions, and for providing emotional or practical support or care.
- ❑ Family members can have many competing demands and needs, both for their time, energy and involvement. Caring for someone with an ABI may mean that you have less time for other relationships with family or friends. Partners, spouses, and children may sometimes feel left out or neglected. This can sometimes lead to competition and conflict.
- ❑ Families may have ongoing issues with grief, loss and adjustment to changes associated with an ABI. You can experience the losses for the person with the ABI (loss of hopes, dreams and ability to be independent) but also your own losses (loss of independence, loss of intimacy, loss of friendship, loss of sexual relationships, loss of financial security, loss of family, loss of time alone). You may feel sad, angry, confused, anxious, or depressed. It may be difficult for you to deal with and adjust to such dramatic changes and challenges.
- ❑ Your own needs might seem less important or become neglected as you focus on providing care and support to a person with ABI. You may find that you do not:
 - get time or have energy for your own interests, recreation or relationships
 - pay enough attention to your own psychological or physical health
 - take time out from being a carer to have rest and relaxation.

This can result in less emotional or practical support for you and can increase isolation and loneliness.

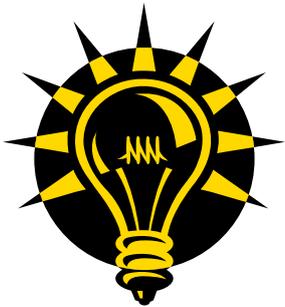
- ❑ You may sometimes be overwhelmed and exhausted by the emotional and physical demands of providing long-term care to a person with ABI.
- ❑ You might be more protective of the person with ABI following a sudden injury, particularly where the person was severely injured, or close to death. You may be reluctant to risk further injury or possible harm for your family member. You might be cautious, wary of new ideas, and worried regarding the consequences of small changes or risk taking.



Tips for Families

- ❑ Be honest about information you receive. Sometimes it is difficult to accept information that you might not like to hear.
- ❑ Learn what you can about ABI. Ask questions if you want to know something.
- ❑ Remember every brain injury is different and every family is different too. You are the expert on your family, so offer your knowledge about the person with ABI when it might be helpful.
- ❑ Aim for minimal disruption at home. It is important to keep some family routines, e.g. daughter attending netball training, eating dinner together.
- ❑ Talk to someone about how you are feeling. Get counselling if you need it. You may need information, education, support and counselling to assist you to cope with the major challenges in your life since the brain injury.
- ❑ Be open to practical suggestions others might make, e.g. transport, respite. Even if you aren't ready to make changes, it can be useful to keep the information for the future.
- ❑ Maintain some quality time with other family members, e.g. children, grandparents.
- ❑ Encourage different family members to have quality time with the person with ABI, e.g. children, grandparents.
- ❑ Listen to and respect others' emotional responses. Other family members also may be dealing with their own emotional reactions and issues, including grief, sadness, anger, frustration, anxiety, or depression. This may be the case even many years after an injury has occurred. Find out about local support services that might help them.
- ❑ Ask for help when you need it.
- ❑ Accept help when it is offered.

- ❑ Acknowledge when you are under stress
- ❑ Don't try to be everything to everyone
- ❑ Look after yourself
- ❑ Make some time to enjoy something for yourself
- ❑ Stay healthy
- ❑ Learn some simple relaxation techniques
- ❑ Ensure you have your own support network
- ❑ Remember...it's a long road- pace yourself. Try to put into place strategies, solutions or activities that you know are sustainable and practical for your whole family



SPOTLIGHT ON... CHARLEVILLE

Charleville is the capital of the Mulga Country. It is situated on the banks of the

Warrego River approximately 740 kms west of Brisbane. It is one of the major settlements of the south west Queensland. It was gazetted in 1868 and named by the Government Surveyor W.A.Tully, after a town in Ireland.

The Charleville Health District comprises an area of 232, 624 sq kms, with an approximate population of 10 000 people.

The Charleville region was identified as a potential high need area by the Brain Injury Association of Queensland in 2000. Research at that time indicated that while the general population in the Charleville district is not large, the proportion of people with ABI is considerable.

This study also identified that there was a need for consistent follow-up with information, support and assistance for people while they are in hospital and after they leave hospital, to maintain community links and informal support networks. For suspected ABI, there is a need for support while obtaining a diagnosis.

The Far South West Queensland Acquired Brain Injury Service was established in 2002 to complement the large range of existing services available and to address some of the needs of clients with Brain Injury. The service is funded by Disability Services Queensland.

The Far South West Queensland Acquired Brain Injury Service, Bluecare and other community and disability services are working with STEPS staff to get the STEPS Program up and running in Far South West Queensland. Charleville is the first site in this area.

More Resources for Families

Lash, M. (1993). *When a parent has a brain injury: Sons and daughters speak out*. Massachusetts Head Injury Association. Worchester, MA.

Tunstall, J. (2001). *My Mum had a Stroke*. Neuropsychology Unit, Griffith University, Qld. Ph. 3735 3333

Brain Injury Association of Queensland, Ph. 3367 1049 www.biaq.com.au

Out of the Shadows. A video and resource package describing the experience of siblings of people with brain injury. Centre for Work, Leisure and Community Research, Griffith University Qld, Ph. 3382 1295

Brain Crew. A resource package for children with a relative who has had a brain injury. Ph ABIOS 3406 2311

Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre Ph. 1800 242 636

Lifeline 24 hour Crisis Counselling Line Ph. 13 11 14

Kids Help Line Ph. 1800 551 800

GROUP ACTIVITIES

At the end of a STEPS Group Program session, ask each participant to state one important thing they have learnt, or one thing they will take away with them after the day's session. You'll need to allow some extra time for this, so everyone has a chance to contribute. If your group really likes this, you could do it at the end of each session! Sharing your learning straight away might help reinforce things so they are not forgotten so easily.

STEPS Project Staff

- Areti Kennedy is the STEPS Project Officer. She is responsible for coordinating STEPS across Queensland, working with local communities to develop STEPS Group sites, training and supporting STEPS leaders and supporters.
- Sue Wright has joined the STEPS team and will help with training and supporting STEPS leaders.
- Libby Groves is the STEPS Coordinator for the Sunshine Coast.
- Libby and Sue have joined Areti Kennedy and administrative support staff Roslyn Jones, Lois Kidd and Rhonda Peters to complete the STEPS team

Coping with Changes after Brain Injury WORD SEARCH

See if you can find the following words:

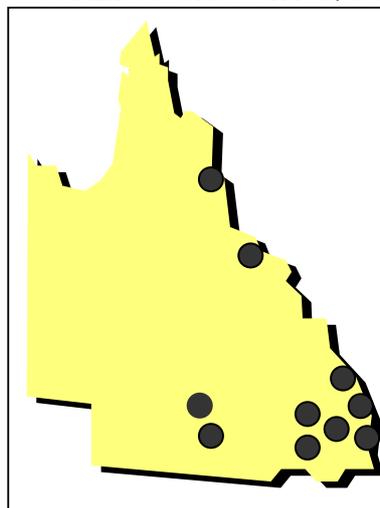
Relaxation Coping Problem Solving Fun Respite Visualisation
 Strategies Talking Understanding Family Support Stress Tension
 Helping

R	E	L	A	X	A	T	I	O	N	N	P	R	E	V	V
T	N	P	R	Y	P	I	E	Q	M	J	F	X	Z	S	I
R	A	U	O	S	S	S	T	R	A	T	E	G	I	E	S
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P	T	T	N	I	T	O	R	E	G	S	R	O	A	K	A
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U	E	A	P	P	N	Q	E	N	G	P	I	O	R	F	I
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B	S	N	Y	L	I	M	A	F	D	R	T	N	K	O	A
C	S	I	T	P	O	O	T	A	L	K	I	N	G	F	T
T	H	F	S	T	N	I	E	O	U	T	Y	R	C	Q	I
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P	A	S	G	N	I	D	N	A	T	S	R	E	D	N	U

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