

# Steps forward

The newsletter of the Glasgow STEPS Team

Issue 3

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## A festive welcome

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STEPS is the primary care mental health team for South East Glasgow. We can help you beat stress.

Visit us online:  
[www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com)



Picture: Thomas Nugent/Geograph.org



**By Jim White**  
Team leader,  
Glasgow  
STEPS

**W**elcome to the third edition of Steps Forward, the occasional newsletter of the Glasgow STEPS Primary Care Mental Health Team.

A lot of new readers have signed up for the newsletter and we're aware many of you will have missed our

tips this time last year on how to avoid getting angry at Christmas. We're taking another look at that, in the light of a successful Controlling Your Anger workshop that the STEPS team ran in December.

Elsewhere we look at how stress has hit the news recently, and offer some useful tips on New Year's Resolutions for anyone who's looking for ideas.

As always, there's much more information about stress and wellbeing on our website: [glasgowsteps.com](http://glasgowsteps.com).



## In the news

### Glasgow: a tale of many cities



Picture: Thomas Nugent/Geograph.org

Levels of mental health and wellbeing are badly unequal across the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area — but action should be possible to change this.

That's the key finding from a new report by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health, which looked at things including stress, self-reported wellbeing, lifestyle, alcohol use and much more.

Important differences were found

between local areas; between men and women; and between people of different ages.

Poverty and deprivation were “crystal clear” factors.

The report's authors say that the findings will allow better planning and focusing of resources — if they are listened to.

The report is online at [www.gcph.co.uk/mentalhealthprofiles](http://www.gcph.co.uk/mentalhealthprofiles).

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### Stress is the leading cause of time off work

Stress is now the main cause of long-term absence from work, says a new UK-wide survey of bosses and staff.

The 2011 Absence Management Survey found that job insecurity was a leading source of stress in the current uncertain economic

climate. Other complaints included workload and management style.

But there was some good news: the survey found that more companies reported an increased spend on employee wellbeing than reported a reduced one.

**How can you spot if you're stressed? Next page: the 14 signs**

## Stress: how to spot it

**People talk about stress all the time. But what does it really mean? Here are the 14 most common signs of stress that are reported by people across Britain.**

**You can find out a lot more at [www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com)**

### • **Worry**

There's always something on your mind. The job, money, the kids: even when everything's going well, you worry that it won't. And then you start worrying about being so worried.

### • **Tiredness**

You might feel you drag yourself through the day, or you're so tired your mind is in a fog. This can happen even if you're sleeping well.

### • **Anger**

Stress brings out the worst in us. We can say the most horrible things to people — and, at the time, really want to hurt them. Of course, then guilt kicks in.

### • **Poor sleep**

You can be dog-tired ... but the second you switch off the light, you're wide awake. Or maybe you wake up a lot at night, or too early in the morning.

### • **Feeling worthless**

You feel you don't deserve any respect because you find it hard to respect yourself.

### • **Feeling hopeless**

Sometimes we feel so overwhelmed by stress we can't see any future. Everything seems grey. **If you can't see any way out, your GP can help.**

### • **Feeling irritable**

Everything gets to you, which means you feel you can't relax or enjoy anything.

### • **Panic attacks**

Maybe out of the blue, your heart starts racing, your breathing changes and you feel something awful is about to happen. Panic attacks can be terrifying — but they're not dangerous, and you can learn to control them.

### • **Feeling on edge**

You're always on the go, fidgeting away. You want to relax but you just can't sit at peace.

### • **Poor concentration**

You can be watching a film or talking to someone and you realise you don't have a clue what's just been said.

### • **Feeling like you can't ever switch off**

Even when you're lying in bed, your mind races away. You can't shut down your thoughts, no matter how hard you try.

### • **Waiting for the worst to happen**

Do you find yourself saying: "But what if ...?" When we're stressed, we expect things to go wrong ... which can mean we avoid doing things.

### • **Being tearful**

Stress often makes us more emotional and we can feel like we're often overwhelmed.

### • **Drinking too much**

Nothing wrong with a few drinks ... but don't drink to cope with stress. It only makes it worse.

## 'Tis the season where we're **angry**



Racing round busy shops, traffic jams in the pouring rain, Cliff Richard on the radio ... Christmas is meant to be a happy time, but sometimes it just leads to us getting **angry**.

Christmas dinner is a great example. Everyone wants it to be fun, but the pressure to keep smiling can be too much — especially when the turkey's burned, the kids won't come to the table, and Uncle Jim's fallen asleep with the bottle of brandy in his hand. And then the fight begins about what to watch on TV ...

Sometimes it all gets too much, and before we know it we've said or done something we really end up regretting.

Anger is perfectly normal. Just like all our other emotions, such as happiness and sadness, it's part of what makes us **human**. But if we feel we're getting angry all the time — and that we're upsetting other people when we do — then it might be time to think about it.

### So when does anger become a problem?

- Do you often lose your temper?
- Does it cause problems at home or work when you do?
- Do little things that don't seem to annoy other people get you really wound up?
- Do others complain about your temper?
- Do people sometimes seem scared of you?

If you're answering yes to most or all of these, then anger could be a problem for you.

### What makes us feel this way?

Anger comes from the way we react to the things happening around us. Our **nature**, and how we **think** and **feel**, affects how we **react**.



Present tense: Billy Bob Thornton in the film *Bad Santa*

There's lots more about anger, and how to deal with it, on the Glasgow STEPS website. Take a look at [glasgowsteps.com](http://glasgowsteps.com) for more. On the next page we'll take a look at some simple things we can all do to control our anger.

## **Anger:** what three different people have said

● I've got a really bad temper on me. The slightest thing can set me off. The other day my wife forgot to put the milk back in the fridge. I went crazy. I threw the milk at the wall and stormed out of the house.  
**Ahmed, age 32**

● When I get a drink in me I always get in fights. Somebody just needs to look at me the wrong way and that's it. It doesn't matter who they are. Red mist. I just don't care. Hit first and hit hard.  
**Hugh, age 24**

● Sometimes I get so angry I just don't know what to do. I'll end up thinking about what's upset me for days. I end up doing nothing about it, and then I get angry with myself for being so weak.  
**Susan, age 50**

## The **ABC** of anger

We can break anger down into three steps: the **A**, **B** and **C** of anger.

Knowing your ABC doesn't mean that you'll never get angry. But it might help you to control it better. There's lots more advice on our website at [glasgowsteps.com](http://glasgowsteps.com).

### **A — Anger trigger**

This is the situation that sets you off. It might be speaking to someone, being stuck in traffic ... or burning the Christmas dinner.

#### **The kind of things people say:**

"This is the final straw! This kind of thing *always* happens. It *shouldn't!*"

#### **What you might ask yourself:**

Is it really the worst thing that could happen? How will you feel tomorrow? Is this situation really worth the effort of getting so cross?

**Watch out for:** Putting too much weight on what *should* or *ought* to happen.

### **B — Behaviours and belief**

This means what we **feel**, **think** and **do**.

**An example:** "I feel pure raging. Nobody gives me the respect I *should* have. I'll show them — I'll give them a piece of my mind."

**What you might ask yourself:** Am I thinking about what's happened in the past rather than what's happening now? Will getting cross really change anything right now?

**Top tip:** Stand back. Wait a minute. Then think about what else you might do instead of getting cross right away.

### **C — Consequences**

This is what happens as a result of what you do.

**What might happen:** You get cross, swear and storm out of dinner. Later on, your brother has a go at you ... and you end up arguing with him as well.

**Ask yourself instead:** Will reacting angrily now make things better ... or worse?

**What else you might do:** If there's a situation that you feel needs to be fixed, wait until you (and others) are calmer: maybe the next day.

**That's** the time to have a calm, open discussion about what went wrong.

## **Breathing retraining: a quick way to calm down**

How we breathe is an important factor in how our bodies handle stress — **and that includes anger.**

Here is a quick way to calm your body when you're feeling stressed. It can also help prevent panic attacks.

Don't be put off if you can't do it straight away. For more, visit our website. Go to [glasgowsteps.com/self-help/anxiety](http://glasgowsteps.com/self-help/anxiety) and select "8 quick control skills".

**Take a breath in and think "1"**

**Breathe out and think "relax"**

**Take a breath in and think "2"**

**Breathe out and think "relax"**

**Repeat up to 10 and then back down to 1**

**Think only about the number and the word "relax"**

**Use slow, normal breathing (10-12 breaths a minute)**

**Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth**

**When you breathe in, your stomach should push out while your chest should not move**

**When you breathe out, your stomach should pull in ... while, again, your chest should not move**

**Practise twice a day in different places**

## What's your resolution?



Picture: Ali Kariman

**Box clever: A change to your diet can make a big difference**

If you're looking to make the difference in 2012, how about these five tips?

**1. Watch what you drink.** You can check your daily intake at [www.nhs.uk/units](http://www.nhs.uk/units). If you feel you need help, your GP will be able to offer more advice.

**2. Be more active.** This might just mean walking more each day. You'll be amazed how much better you start to feel.

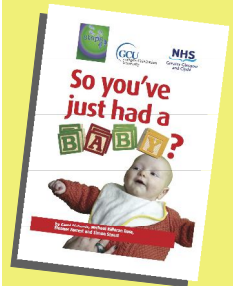
**3. Face your fears.** Anxiety can hold us back in all sorts of ways. What's stopping you? Have a look at [glasgowsteps.com](http://glasgowsteps.com) for

more advice, tips and ideas about what you can do to take the first steps.

**4. Eat fewer chips.** A better diet doesn't have to be a hassle — and eating better can have a big effect on your physical *and* your mental wellbeing. Visit [www.eatwell.gov.uk](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk) for some more ideas.

**5. Take the first step to stopping smoking.** Yes, we know everyone tells you this. But there's a good reason for that. And think of the money you'll save! Call Smokeline on 0800 84 84 84 — you won't regret it.

## A helping hand for all new parents



Every new mum and dad gets stressed: it's the most normal thing in the world.

So You've Just Had A Baby? is a new booklet offering simple and practical advice to help new parents deal with how they feel ... and stay on top of things.

Written by a team from Glasgow STEPS, together with a midwifery expert from Glasgow Caledonian University, it looks at common problems including the Baby Blues, anxieties ... and getting through each day.

So You've Just Had A Baby? is available to download from [www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com).

**We hope you've enjoyed reading *Steps forward*.  
The next issue will be out around summertime in 2012.**

If you've any comments on this newsletter, we'd like to hear them. E-mail us: [info@glasgowsteps.com](mailto:info@glasgowsteps.com)