



## IDEAS BANK

# Symbols

Symbols of peace  
 Symbols of hope  
 Symbols to keep  
 Yours dreams afloat

Go where words alone cannot  
 with this month's Ideas Bank

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### Bringing the Strengths of Nature to Life

A meerkat missed the cut and so did the macaque. Get the inside story with the creative duo behind *The Nature of Strengths*.



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### Trafficking in Strengths

Learn how a little domestic magic was made when *Strength Cards* were tacked up in a busy kitchen passageway!



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### Become a Member of Innovative Resources!

We have a new loyalty scheme for the dedicated professionals who use our resources. Discover how to join.



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## Ideas Bank

# Symbols

*Symbols evoke profound memories and emotions—often without our making rational or conscious connections. They fuel our imagination. In a therapeutic relationship, the use of symbols can assist a client to get in touch with otherwise inaccessible personal realities.*

The *Symbols* card set contains 100 visual images from a potentially unlimited range of symbols. While this set has its origins in grief and loss counselling, the possible applications for this resource are endless. Teachers, counsellors, workshop facilitators, social workers and team-builders will be among those to find their own creative uses for this set of cards. Here are some suggestions to try!

### Grief and loss counselling

The experience of grief and loss may feel utterly overwhelming or shattering for some people, while others may experience a sense of relief or ultimate peace, depending on the circumstances. Here are some questions that can be used to explore this often life-changing experience using *Symbols*:

- Can you use a *Symbols* card to help you describe your initial experience of grief?
- Can you use a card to help you describe how grief has challenged you?
- What card might represent your grief here and now?
- What has helped you most (or least) in your experience of grief?
- Can you locate your grief in your body?

### Mind-mapping

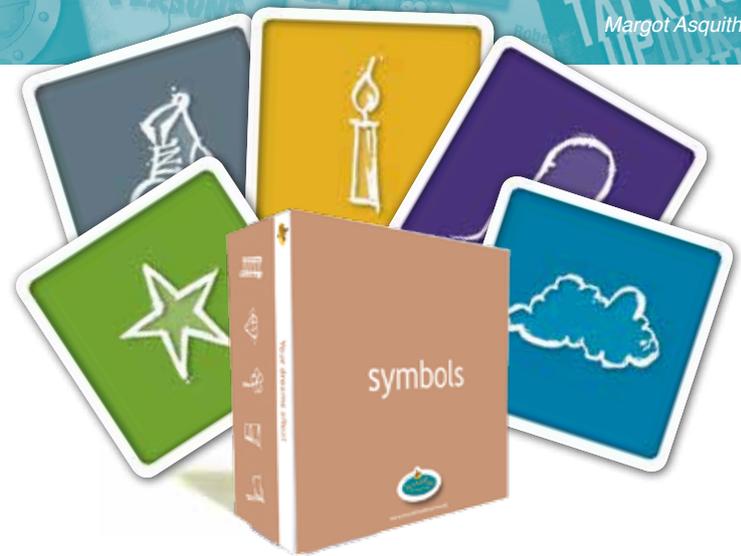
Mind-mapping activities build upon our powers of association. As visual or physical activities, they can provide valuable new insights into the meanings we give to our experiences. Try selecting a card that speaks to you in some significant way. Then choose other cards that seem connected.

- Can you say how the cards connect?
- Can you arrange them to reflect this connection?
- Is there a sequence of connections? Is this like a story?
- Does the map have a centre or a pivotal point? Is one card the central figure?
- Does the map say anything about what is important to you at present?
- Does the pivotal point sometimes change? What happens if you select another card as the pivotal point?

### SYMBOLS

100 laminated, full-colour cards, 105 x 105mm, polypropylene box, 48-page booklet  
Booklet authors: Russell Deal and Linda Espie  
Designer: Bradley Welsh  
ISBN: 9 781 920945 190

**Product Code: 4575    \$49.50 inc. GST**



### Exploring meaning and spirituality

*Symbols* can be used to explore spirituality and meaning in one's life—past, present and future. The questions below may provide a starting point to broaden spiritual reflection and connection, either alone or in conversation with others.

- Which *Symbols* card(s) help you define or describe your understanding of spirituality?
- Can you find a card or group of cards which represent meaning in your life?
- Is there a card which represents mystery?
- Which *Symbols* cards seem contrary to your beliefs or understandings of spirituality?
- Do any of the cards hold a religious resonance for you?
- Are there any cards that might offer you a greater sense of purpose or direction in your life?

### Exploring identity

Sometimes a symbol has the capacity to help us integrate (or at least hold) seemingly opposite feelings within our identity. Questions such as those below can be used in counselling and groupwork, but are also available for us to use in our personal reflection and self-exploration:

- Which symbols would I use to describe myself to someone who doesn't know me?
- Which symbols are fundamental to who I am right now as a person?
- Which symbols reflect parts of myself I could readily give up?
- Which symbols would my partner, parents, children or colleagues say were me?
- Do any of the symbols reflect my shadow side—parts of me I would rather not have?
- Do any of the symbols scare me, challenge me or repulse me?

### The blank card

A blank space can be anything and everything you want it to be. For this reason we have included a blank card which can signify anything you wish, such as a symbol, dream, memory, thought or hope. Start exploring!

- What message might this blank space have for you?
- What story might this blank card hold?
- If you had one wish, what would it be symbolised by?
- Do you have enough space in the world for yourself?
- Can you be with uncertainty?

## In the Spotlight

Bringing the strengths of

# nature to life



Different metaphors work for different people. Different concepts work for different metaphors. Different illustrative styles suit different concepts. Sound complicated? Well, maybe. But when

asked the question, 'What was the biggest challenge in creating *The Nature of Strengths*?', artist Robyn Spicer offers an earthy response. 'The meerkat,' she muses, '... and the macaque. That's why they never made it into the final card set!'

It's a few weeks after the launch of *The Nature of Strengths*, and Robyn Spicer and author Karen Masman Bedford are in the office reflecting on development of this appealing and evocative new resource. Like many of Innovative Resources' card sets, *The Nature of Strengths* takes its cue from strengths-based practice, and it follows the likes of *Funky Fish Feelings*, *Ups and Downs*, and *Growing Well*, which all use nature-based metaphors. But as Karen explains, nature itself is the inspiration for *The Nature of Strengths*. 'We wanted to create a set of cards that named strengths and used the metaphor of the behaviour of animals, plants and trees, sea creatures and reptiles.' The focus, she stresses, is not on having strengths, but rather on doing strengths. 'We can practise strengths,' she affirms, 'and we can be inspired by seeing how nature does them.'

The result is a set of 28 cards, each depicting a specific strength suggested by the behaviour of a particular species. Humans, of course, have always found solutions and possibilities in nature's ingenious designs. However, the challenge here was to present the cards in a way that strongly 'emphasised the process of curiosity and exploration of nature.' The key for Karen and Robyn was the age of discovery synonymous with the Enlightenment, that period in Western history when intrepid voyages, natural wonders and new ideas thrilled the imaginations of artists, intellectuals and the wider public. Styled in the manner of an 18th-century naturalist's notebook, *The Nature of Strengths* uses watercolour illustrations to evoke the careful, yet hastily recorded, observations of early explorers. The next, even bigger, challenge was deciding which animals and plants to feature. 'We came up with a huge list, and we whittled it away!' Robyn laughs.

'We can practise strengths,' she affirms, 'and we can be inspired by seeing how nature does them.'



Natural history illustration, like these examples from the 18th and 19th centuries, inspired the cards.



As the cards' artist, Robyn's vision was integral from the start. 'We'd worked with Robyn on lots of projects,' Karen acknowledges, 'and I knew she could do just about any style you asked.' Robyn, herself, describes the project as 'an educative experience.' 'It was great for me because I learnt a new style. I was looking into everything from magazines like *National Geographic* to books.' Most of the final illustrations are based on a combination of sources. 'Another one we didn't do in the end was the snow monkey because it was beyond me!' The snow monkey, or Japanese macaque, survives winter temperatures below -15C by warming up in natural hot springs. 'Wet, frosty fur!' Robyn exclaims. 'Fur's tricky!'

For Karen, there was the challenge of balancing the numbers of reptiles, plants, mammals and insects. Another was keeping the text on each card as succinct as possible—'and making sure we had the right scientific name,' Karen chuckles, remembering some unexpected headaches that arose. As for naming their favourite cards, Robyn professes to be 'very fond of most of them' while Karen immediately responds, 'The frog. I love the frog, being green. And I love the [Australian teak] seedpods too.'

At the cards' official launch in late 2014, held at the Lot 19 Arts Space in Castlemaine, Victoria, Robyn's artwork took centre stage. Framed for display, most of her original illustrations sold immediately. 'I've been really pleased,' Robyn admits, 'because [*The Nature of Strengths*] crosses age boundaries. Little kids like it, older people like it. It has a timelessness about it.'

Already people have been finding an array of uses for the cards. At a recent workshop on ecological sustainability, participants were invited to each choose a card that seemed meaningful in some way, and to write a poem inspired by their card. One of Robyn's relatives took a completely different approach, purchasing the cards to frame them and give as gifts to grandchildren in recognition of their special strengths. Karen has had rich discussions with the cards when she hosted friends from Sydney for a long weekend. 'What they seemed to really like was the pairing, especially Holding On and Letting Go. So we talked, thinking about the coming year, what is it that we wanted to hold on to and let go of. That was a really great conversation.'

Karen is especially looking forward to hearing how the resource is used in schools and hopes teachers will send their feedback. 'It took years for this project to come to completion. I have to say it was a great pleasure, an absolute joy.' Robyn agrees. It was 'a gentle process really, and it was lovely.' Inspiring strengths inspired by nature—the product of an inspired partnership.



SOON

# Sneak Peek

## Walking the Boundaries:

Exploring everyday ethics in human services

Coming in August 2015

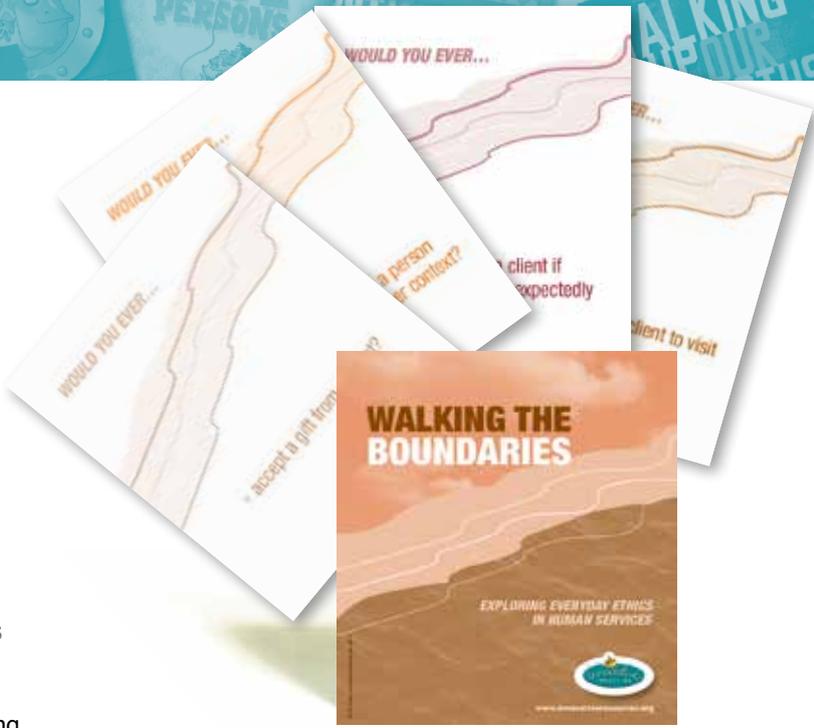
Every human service profession and most organisations have code of conduct guidelines.

But practitioners face a myriad of everyday ethical decisions regarding both clients and colleagues that may not be clear-cut or defined by a code of conduct.

The 80 *Walking the Boundaries* cards pose just some of the questions that practitioners have to negotiate every day where there is rarely an absolute right or wrong answer.

*Walking the Boundaries* has been designed by social workers for all human service practitioners to consider. It is particularly relevant to orientation processes for new staff, for supervision and for team-building.

If you want to immediately unleash hours of discussion and debate in your team of practitioners open a pack of *Walking the Boundaries* and stand back!



**PRE-ORDER** *Now!*

ISBN: 978 1 920945 78 7  
CAT NO. 4805  
RRP: AU\$49.50 (includes GST)  
Author: Russell Deal  
Designer: Mat Jones

# SOON Giveaway

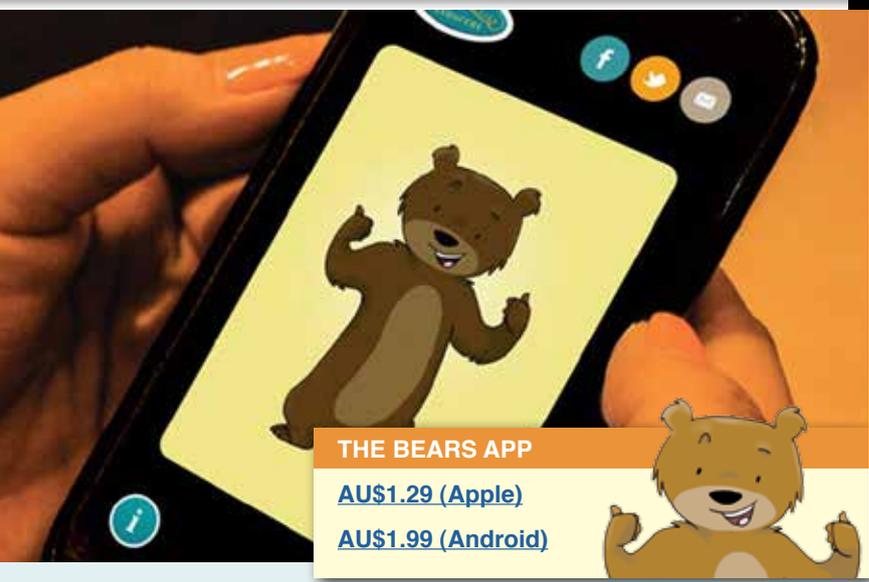


Do you have a favourite card set? A client who loves to use cards? Or a favourite card activity to share?

Send in your story—inspiring, surprising or just plain no-nonsense—to be in the running for a \$30 gift voucher from Innovative Resources.

To enter, simply tell us your story in 50-100 words and send it to [caitlyn@innovativeresources.org](mailto:caitlyn@innovativeresources.org). Entries close on Wednesday 24 June 2015. We'll pick a winning entry to publish in SOON.

And who knows... there might be some consolation prizes too!



## The absolute classic for talking about feelings—now available as a simple App for your mobile device!

*The Bears* have a worldwide reputation for their ability to invite people from all cultures to identify, talk about and constructively harness their feelings. Now you can download all 48 Bears onto your mobile device—and let them to do the talking!

*The Bears App* gives practitioners, clients, children and adults simple and fun ways of giving immediate feedback, encouragement, reminders and messages about feelings using a much-loved metaphor. Keeps your B ears about you, on the road and in your pocket!

## In the Spotlight



# Trafficking in Strengths



My daughter laughed when I bought my [Strength Cards](#). She said, 'You've always wanted your own, haven't you?' She had been using the *Strength Cards* in a therapeutic setting. My other daughter could tell me the pictures on some of the cards because her teacher had the *Strength Cards* at school. When I named a strength, such as 'resilient', she'd remember, 'Oh yeah, it had a chicken with a broken wing crossing the road.'

I wanted to keep the cards handy as I'm an emergency teacher. But I especially wanted to have them for home. With seven people in our household we can easily become focussed on what we find annoying about each other. So it's good to do something every now and then to remind us of the positives in those around us—and ourselves.

The day my *Strength Cards* arrived, I put up A4 sheets of papers, one with each family member's name, on a sliding door in our kitchen passageway. It's a high traffic area in our house. Then I blu-tacked a large selection of *Strength Cards* onto the door, so people could place the strengths next to individual names to recognise the strengths of family members.

It was very popular and successful too. I was able to speak to the kids individually about strengths and about family member's strengths without needing to gather the whole family for a meeting.

People could move the cards around while they were walking past—it didn't take any effort or time.

Putting up the cards in a busy pedestrian area also meant that people were constantly reminded of the strengths that other family members saw in them. We could give and receive positive messages without having to do it face to face! And I could highlight when family members used their strengths by saying something like 'That's very resilient of you. Do you have that strength card next to your name? Why don't you go and put it there?'

We had some simple rules to support our focus on personal strengths. For example, it was OK to let people know which strengths you put next to their names, but you didn't have to. It was also OK to move a card from one person's name to another, but only after the first person had seen the card and knew that someone had recognised that strength in them. It was even OK to put strengths next to your own name. The one action that wasn't permitted was to take away a strength from someone's name because you disagreed that they had demonstrated it. After all, someone else had thought that strength should be there!

It was a great activity which I plan to do again. I currently have just one strength on the door, where family members can reflect on it as they pass. I can use it to draw people's attention to times when that strength is used or required. 'Resilient' is the current one.

*Sent in by Denise.*



## Australian Social Enterprise Awards 2015

**BREAKING NEWS:** Russell Deal, our Creative Director at Innovative Resources, is a finalist for this year's Social Enterprise Champion Award!

This year, the Social Enterprise Champion is a new award category recognising an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to social enterprise. Winners will be announced at the Awards Ceremony on Wednesday 23rd June in Melbourne, and will be selected by an independent judging panel of content and sector experts.

St Luke's Regional Director Carolyn Wallace writes, 'Being a finalist in the category of Social Enterprise Champion undoubtedly highlights Russell's remarkable accomplishments over a workspan of 30+ years, including his time at both St Luke's and Innovative Resources. We greatly value Russell's contribution to significantly shaping the landscape around Strengths-based work.'

Well done Russell—we'll have fingers crossed on Awards night!



## Workshops and Training

### Tools for Working with Families

Explore the uses of our new *Positive Parenting Cards* along with other card sets developed and published by Innovative Resources such as *Baby Strengths* and *Two Worlds*.

In this workshop designed specifically for family workers, Andrew Shirres will unlock the potential for cards to open up conversations in ways that enable families to 'spiral up'.

Bringing in the key principles of strengths-based practice, this workshop will serve not only as a refresher for those working from a strengths perspective, but will also offer new ideas, reflections and activities to take away from the day.

Note: free shuttle available from the Bendigo train station, and lunch provided.

- DATE:** Thursday 23 July, 9:30am-5pm
- VENUE:** Innovative Resources, 62 Collins St., Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)
- COST:** \$297.00 (includes a set of *Positive Parenting Cards*)

### Adventures in Girtlopi

In our work with girls we can often draw on their natural desire to communicate and connect to facilitate supported conversations. When conversations are focused to notice strengths and to take a celebratory, optimistic view of growing up, we can support girls' resilience and pluckiness as they step toward adulthood.

In this workshop we will look at oodles of ways to use the *Girtlopi* cards to trigger stories, questions, reflections, curiosity, awareness and learning, which can help to bring to light—and transform—many of the problems facing girls today.

This workshop, led by Jane Bennett, will be of particular interest to youth workers, teachers, counsellors, welfare workers, health professionals and mothers. It's also for anyone wishing to explore the important foundations of a woman's journey to maturity.

- DATE:** Wednesday 22 July, 9:30am-4.00pm
- VENUE:** Academic Centre, University College, 40 College Crescent, Parkville, Melbourne, Vic.
- COST:** \$260.70 (includes a set of the *Girtlopi* cards)



### Facilitation Daze: *Back by popular demand!*

- Are you new to training and facilitation?
- Have you been training and facilitating for a while and want to be reinvigorated?
- Do you want to explore participant-centred, interactive group work activities?

Booked out when it first ran in May, Facilitation Daze is on again in August! This workshop is all about sharing the skills and experiences of group facilitation and engagement. It is a day of trying out ideas that have grown out of St Luke's Strength Approach, as well as those inspired by Paul Z Jackson. Designed for facilitators, group workers and culture builders, Facilitation Daze will be jointly hosted by Russell Deal and Andrew Shirres.

- DATE:** Tuesday 11 August (9:30am-5pm)
- VENUE:** Innovative Resources, 62 Collins St., Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)
- COST:** \$297.00

Head to the Innovative Resources website to find out more about these events and to register.

## Become a Member of *Innovative Resources*

We really value our relationships with the teachers, trainers and dedicated human service professionals who use our products, and we'd like to reward our loyal customers with the opportunity to join a new membership scheme.

**Here is what you'll receive for your free membership:**

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- receive invitations to attend special events
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