



IDEAS BANK

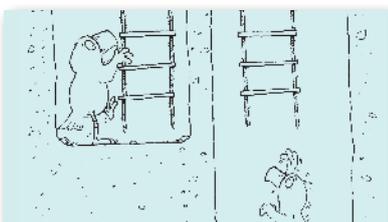
Strengths In Teams

Roll up, roll up, and be amazed by the strengths of teams! Celebrate the special qualities that make groups and organisations tick with the tireless and tenacious cast of *Strengths in Teams*!

Page 4

Putting gender on the agenda

What does gender equity look like to you? Author and community leader Linda Beilharz reveals the story behind the *Gender Fairness* cards.



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Shipsshape in 2014

Ahoy there, me hearties! The Good Ship Innovative Resources is about to complete another year's voyage on the restless waters of independent publishing!



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Symbols

Discover how *Symbols* helped a young man express his grief in an inspiring story from grief and loss counsellor Gillian Evans.



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In the Spotlight

Putting Gender on the Agenda

Linda Beilharz is a woman of many achievements. She was the first Australian woman to reach the North and South poles on foot, she's trekked across the Greenland icecap, she's a private pilot and has been inducted onto the Victorian Women's Honour Roll. She's also the Executive Officer of Women's Health Loddon Mallee. Now, Linda adds to that list her participation in the development of Innovative Resources' latest card set, as Caitlyn Lehmann explains.

Equal pay, universal suffrage, the right to own property and quite literally wear the trousers: men and women in twenty-first century Australia are pretty equal, right? It's a pleasant thought, but equity, as Linda Beilharz reminds us, 'is an 'interesting' issue, because we *feel* like we've got equity.' Start scratching the surface, and the reality that emerges is a little different. At Women's Health Loddon Mallee (WHLM), the analysis of women's health and wellbeing is central to the work undertaken by Linda and her colleagues. 'We look at gender roles, gender experiences and gender stereotypes,' she explains, 'and how they influence health, rather than biological determinants—that's the business of hospitals and the people with medical skills.'

One of the key concerns for her Bendigo-based organisation is violence against women. 'When you start to look at what would prevent violence ... gender equity becomes apparent as one of those foundational issues that needs to be addressed.' Yet, in recent decades talking sensibly about equity seems to have become increasingly difficult. As Linda and her colleagues know from working alongside councils, community groups and a host of other service organisations, the conversation becomes personal very quickly. 'To me, that's a sign that we don't have maturity around discussing gender, fairness or those two together. Men feel blamed, women feel that they might be given special privileges because of this debate about merit or quotas. There's not a lot of nuance.'

That lack of nuance suggested the need for a solution. 'We just thought we needed a tool that would help us open up the discussion in a really non-judgemental way,' says Linda modestly. That new tool, released this month, is *Gender Fairness*—the fruit of an inspiring collaboration between WHLM and Innovative Resources. *Gender Fairness* fills a long-standing gap in the Innovative Resources stable and will open rich conversations about gender equity from the boardroom to the classroom.

Fairness and gender are certainly issues that Innovative Resources has tackled before through card sets like *Change by Design* and *Name the Frame*. But one of the unexpected observations made by Linda and her team is that we have become more used to talking about fairness for minority groups or clients than for women, who represent more than half of the population. 'Even organisations that have a strong social justice focus often haven't look at gender. Yet there are ways in which men and women experience the organisation differently, and there is a value in looking at gender and what that means for workers and clients.'

Four years ago when the concept of the cards was first floated, the widespread lack of community understanding about gender



equity was publically and dramatically illustrated when Julia Gillard became Australia's first female prime minister. Her treatment by detractors and sections of the Australian media, and expectations of her as a female leader, were hotly and, at times, aggressively debated. Among the *Gender Fairness* cards, none is perhaps more resonant than 'Social Messages' with its cartoon captioned, 'Great speech, hate the dress.'

However, if Gillard's treatment revealed the misogyny deeply rooted in Australian culture, it also won headlines and renewed impetus for equity advocates. Coming at a time when many women, particularly young women, were rejecting the term 'feminist', Gillard's leadership not only reminded the community that inequity for women persists, but that being 'pro-women' does not mean being 'anti-men'.

In the intervening period, the *Gender Fairness* cards have been critiqued, interrogated, revised and buffed to a fine polish. 'We had a team of workers working on this and we had to discuss every card.' Linda laughs when she recalls where they began, 'We started off naming what we didn't like. And then we thought, "Well, that's a bit negative!"' So the team changed tack, restyling the cards to invite users to imagine how our society could be different.

From an early stage, it was also decided to add cartoons to the cards to introduce a light-hearted edge, because talking about gender 'can get quite serious and polarised.' Although piquantly captioned cartoons have a long and illustrious association with social justice campaigning, *Gender Fairness* is, in fact, the first Innovative Resources' card set to use them. Just like the text their messaging has been interrogated from every angle. For example, on the 'Fairness' card, the original cartoon depicted two holes the same depth with a smaller bird trying to reach a shorter ladder. Now, the final illustration shows two birds of the same size to avoid implying that women are inadequate or less developed than the male. A deeper hole also takes the viewer to the nub of the issues by evoking the greater number of challenges women may face in the first place.

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SOON

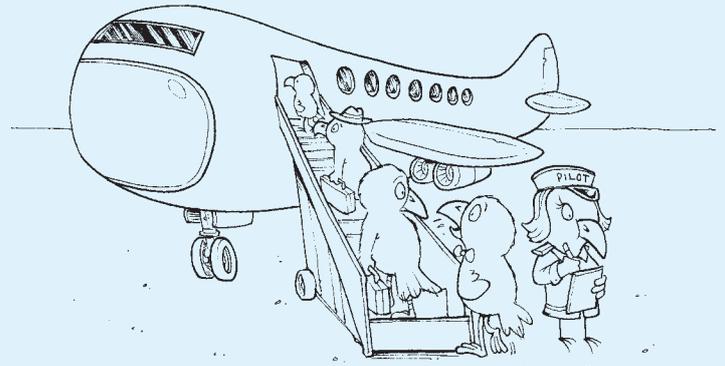
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When Linda reflects on the development process she acknowledges, 'We did a lot of learning through our discussions.' As a consequence of the dramatic drop in funding and support for women's studies in the early 1990s, an important part of the process involved recovering and updating their knowledge. 'We haven't been enriched by academic thinking in the same way that used to happen [in the 1970s and 1980s],' she reflects. Linda chuckles when she remembers the team's preliminary conversation about including the theme of sexualisation—'Really? Is that still happening?' we asked ourselves. 'Yep, it is!'

One of the newer concepts to be incorporated into *Gender Fairness* is 'Entitlement', in recognition of the increasingly complex nexus of legal, assumed and moral rights that influence understandings of equity. In response to the subtle ways in which inequity manifests in contemporary society, the cards' topics and questions also invite reflection on both systemic and personal issues—'Our key message is that it's a community issue and a society issue, not a problem for the individual.' Perhaps the cards' greatest achievement is that they also provide scope to use gender as a means of exploring social equity more broadly through the inclusion of several cartoons that purposefully depict gender neutral characters.

So how have people responded to the cards? Very warmly indeed, if the reaction of a group of female councillors in Victoria's Wimmera is anything to go by. 'I ran a session for them on gender equity and showed them the cards,' Linda reports. 'They were in small groups, two or three of them around a few cards each, and they were laughing and giggling and saying, "Oh yeah! That's what happens!" The way that they related so immediately and so quickly to the concepts I found really fantastic. Those things that they experience became more overt and able to be talked about, rather than just something that you put up with and you accept as a norm.'

Linda hastens to point out, however, that the cards are designed to get men and women talking—they are not just for women's benefit. 'I really hope that men will like the cards because this is not *Gender Fairness* for women to do for women, it's for men and women to do for women. My hope is that the cards help men understand gender fairness as much as women.' Linda owns she'll also be curious to discover how people's conversations unfolds. 'I imagine there are facets of the issues that we haven't got here that will come up as



'Where's the pilot?'



The 'Visibility' cartoon is inspired by a real-life anecdote. Linda knew of a female pilot who flew tourist flights. She used to stir her passengers by nonchalantly asking, 'I wonder where the pilot is?' as she headed for the pilot's seat!

the cards are discussed. The more aware you are, the more you look, and the more you see examples.'

With the release of the *Gender Fairness* cards, school teachers, educators, social justice advocates, youth workers, community leaders and ordinary citizens around the country will have a brand new tool to tackle this most fundamental, yet thorny issue in our communities. Here come 24 vital, thought-provoking cards to put gender at the top of our agenda.



GENDER FAIRNESS

24 full-colour, laminated cards; 99mm x 210mm; online booklet of suggestions. Cards and package printed on 100% recyclable materials. ISBN: 978-1-920945-77-0

Product Code: 4928
\$49.50 inc. GST

SOON Giveaway

It's a bird, it's a plane...No! It's a complimentary sticker pack flying your way!

This month we're offering a free set of stickers to our supporters who have used the card sets below:



TALKING PICTURES



SENSITIVE NEW-AGE CAVEPERSONS



WHAT WORKS



NOTE TO SELF



UPS AND DOWNS



TALKING ECOLOGICAL

To claim your complimentary sticker pack, simply tell us in 100-150 words about a time when you used one of these card sets, and email your story to caitlyn@innovativeresources.org. We'd love to see your piece in SOON and there's a choice of stickers on offer!

SOON

Ideas Bank

STRENGTHS IN TEAMS

Teams are everywhere and we are part of them from the day we are born. We have all experienced the satisfaction, the pleasure, and indeed the exhilaration when things go well in our teams. Equally, we know the frustration and hurt when things don't!

Strengths in Teams provides great reminders of the strengths that help teams flourish and stay resilient. Here are just a few ways to put the lively circus troupe of *Strengths in Teams* into action:

Riding the Ups and Downs

No team stays on top forever, but for teams that take part in competitions—sports groups, dance troupes, choirs and even hair stylists!—missing the winner's post can create tension and conflict, and cause individuals to focus on weaknesses and deficits.

Strengths in Teams can be used to ensure a team's strengths and successes are also noticed, and to celebrate the positive contributions each member has made. Spread the cards on the floor or on the table (or keep the *Strengths in Teams* stickers handy). Some possible questions might be:

- What do you believe are the most significant strengths in your team?
- What particular strengths got your team through the event?
- What strengths have got your team through challenging times in the past?
- If your team was to win an award for strengths, which ones would you nominate?
- Which strengths do you contribute to the team?
- Which strengths do you need to practise?
- How do you think you or your team could practise that strength?

Strengths and Leadership

As well as using *Strengths in Teams* to explore the nature of teamwork, these cards can also provide a window into leadership. Simply spread out the cards and invite participants to scan them while introducing questions with a focus on leadership:

- Which three (or more) cards sum up your strengths as a leader?
- If leadership skills are spread throughout your team, using the cards, which team member do you associate with each strength?
- What particular leadership skills does your team need at present? Is it a time of change, consolidation, turmoil, stability, growth or turbulence, and what leadership skills does this phase demand?
- Who already has one or more of the strengths you want to practise? How does that person demonstrate those strengths? What advice might you imagine they would give?

November SPECIAL

20% OFF STRENGTHS IN TEAMS



Recognising Shadows

Sometimes there is a fine line between strengths and deficits, and sometimes what is a strength for one person can be experienced as oppressive or disrespectful by another. To explore this fine line using *Strengths in Teams* it can be useful to initiate 'Shadow' questions, such as:

- Do any members of the team or those outside the team struggle with any of these strengths?
- Do we sometimes overdo some strengths? If so, which ones?
- Do any strengths predominate to the detriment of other strengths?
- Is our array of strengths too narrow?
- Do we ever use any strengths inappropriately or insensitively?
- Is it possible to be too self-congratulatory about our strengths?
- Do any of our strengths inhibit or become a barrier to others outside the group?

Job Interviews

Many years ago, we discovered the application of *Strengths in Teams* in interviewing job applicants, particularly for positions with management or supervisory obligations. Try giving interviewees a subset of the cards with the question:

- We assume you have all these strengths but what key leadership strengths would we see you demonstrating after three months in the position, if you were successful?

This activity, if introduced respectfully and with permission for the applicant to decline the invitation, invariably leads to interesting discussion and some novel insights for all concerned.

Strengths in Teams can be used to ensure a team's strengths and successes are also noticed...



STRENGTHS IN TEAMS

30 full-colour cards, each 210 x 148mm, polypropylene box, 24 page booklet.
ISBN: 9 781 920945 459
Illustrator and designer: Andrew Bowler

Product Code: 2300
\$49.50 inc. GST

SOON

In the Spotlight

A Shipshape 2014!

By Russell Deal
Creative Director at Innovative Resources

Innovative Resources is about to tick over into its 22nd year as a social work publisher!

Since starting out back in 1992, we've been privileged to hear countless stories of how our materials have profoundly touched people's lives. We love hearing stories of how our card sets and books have been useful—and we love to hear stories of how they might be improved.

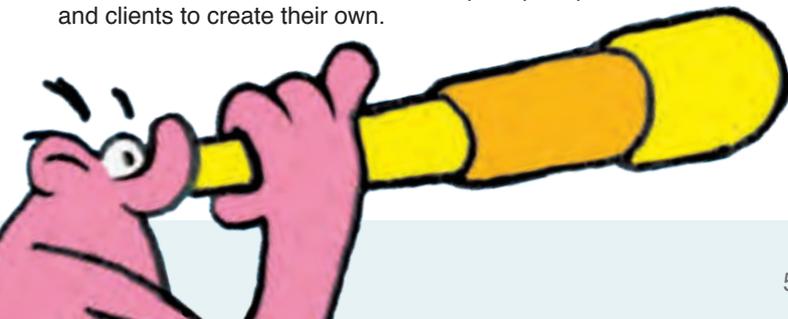
This year, we've been delighted to throw five brand new card sets high into the air, where each has caught the eye of a diverse professional community: *A Vision for Supervision*, *Life Tweaking*, *The Nature of Strengths*, *Gender Fairness* and *Talking ecoLogical*. This inspiring line-up includes not only our first card set dedicated to supervision and our first for exploring sustainability, but also—at long last!— cards for talking about one of the most complex, personal and thorny issues for our community: gender equity.

With the release of each of these card sets, we reflect with pride on our longevity as a not-for-profit social enterprise, particularly as one that has never sought government or philanthropic funding to create or promote what has become a unique store of conversation-building materials.

We're not only proud, we're also energised!—by the enthusiasm and support of the countless social workers, educators and human service professionals, who have returned during 2014 to add new and existing resources to their tool kits, and generously shared their insights and experiences along the way. Yep, we know you're a diverse lot when we see orders heading out to Thailand, Korea, Norway, Germany and even Mauritius, to people in fields as diverse as aid work, art therapy and fast food retail training!

So what have we learned over the years to enable us to survive as a truly boutique publisher in the volatile, mercurial publishing world? Here's are four key thoughts (we have many more) about the ingredients for both our continuity and the success of our resources in your hands:

- Visual metaphors are powerful. Pictures really are worth thousands of words and, when coupled with carefully chosen words and questions, the power and influence of a visual metaphor is magnified. We remain fascinated by the possibilities of visual metaphors to transform lives.
- No single metaphor works for everyone. We all have different preferences and construct different meanings from both different words and images. It's always best to let people choose the metaphor that works best for them—and we're always inspired when we hear that our materials have prompted practitioners and clients to create their own.

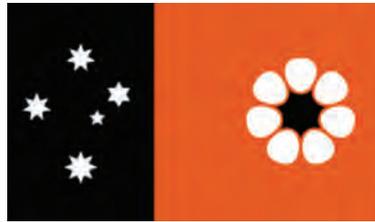


- People need to feel safe with conversation-building tools. Creating a safe, respectful context is vital, as is finding the right question. Keeping concepts simple, using plain language, and incorporating colour and humour all help to create safe conversational spaces.
- Every detail on every card is worthy of serious consideration. The last thing we want to do is inadvertently cause offence or make you settle for second best. We interrogate every card right up until we go to print. Generally, there is a minimum of 18 months' work behind every product. Sometimes it's been four years!

Today we have a 'tribe' of strengths-based practitioners and collaborators spread across many countries. We also have no shortage of ideas for the future! So hoist the mainsail and heel her hard to starboard, because this little publishing ship is 'seriously optimistic' that she will ply the seas for at least another twenty-two years!

'Tools of the trade' in the territory

It's been twelve years since our roving Creative Director, Russell Deal, travelled to the Northern Territory. But recently he was back, rolling out a series of three workshops in Darwin and a further two in Alice Springs for Anglicare NT.



Thanks to the enthusiastic support of CEO David Pugh, who championed Innovative Resources throughout his time at St Luke's Anglicare in Victoria, the Darwin workshops were fully subscribed and the Alice workshops attracted more participants than had actually registered!

At each workshop, the participants were receptive and keen to embrace the Innovative Resources approach to strengths-based practice. Excitingly, there was also keen interest in ways to adapt Innovative Resources' conversation-building tools to work respectfully in local cultural contexts. While Russell acknowledged that the interest was in part due to David Pugh's support, he also attributed this curiosity to the rich tradition of using visual metaphors within Indigenous communities and gatherings.

'With such a rich history of cave paintings, message sticks and ceremonial dance it shouldn't be surprising that there is such an immediate understanding of the power of visual metaphor to communicate profound truths,' Russell explained. 'In more recent times Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities and organisations have created powerful and aesthetically beautiful posters using the amazing painting skills now visible across a wide range of communities.'

Russell also saw firsthand some great conversation-building resources with health and welfare themes specifically designed for isolated communities, where residents may have English as their third or fourth language.

'It would be great to be able to partner with Territory organisations and artists to co-create conversation-building tools that could be used both in indigenous communities and in mainstream organisations. This was how we created *Talking Up Our Strengths* with SNAICC, but there is ample room for a whole suite of materials that can work across multiple cultures,' he reflected.

Innovative Resources has always enjoyed running its workshops outside capital cities, and Russell says it's looking likely that there will be follow up workshops in the Territory in 2015.

At each workshop, the participants were receptive and keen to embrace the Innovative Resources approach to strengths-based practice.



SYMBOLS

Gillian Evans knows Innovative Resources' card sets very well indeed. She has been using them for years in her work as a grief and loss counsellor. Back in 2009, she also used them with African refugees in Australia, an experience that she generously shared in a previous edition of SOON.

We received a spontaneous email from Gillian in September after she found the *Symbols* cards an unexpected asset while struggling with a delicate situation. Here's her story:

'Thank you for the *Symbols* cards! I used them with a 15-year-old boy whose father died suddenly away from home. The young man was grieving. He felt flat, he was not able to concentrate at school. He was visiting the grave every week and talking to his father before bed. Last time he saw his dad, he just said 'See ya'. A big issue was that he felt he didn't get to say goodbye.

It was our third meeting, and I didn't know what to 'do' with him in the session. He doesn't initiate conversation and, although I do work with grief and loss, I don't usually work with children and young people. So in desperation, really, I got out the *Symbols* cards, without having thought through what to say.

Initially I just said, 'Go through the cards and whichever cards, say 6 to 10, jump out at you, put those on the board.' When he had done that, I then thought, 'NOW what am I going to do?!' So I suggested, 'Put them in any order that they seem to go for you.' That wasn't a helpful question. He made a random story of the cards—some of it, I could see, touched on his grief, but the relevance wasn't clear.

That was when I tried a second question. I asked him if he could choose any of the cards to tell a story about his grief. He quickly put aside half of the cards he'd already chosen, leaving four that included the 'egg timer' and the 'green shoot'. This was their significance: he knows that one day he will not grieve, that his life will change and, whilst acknowledging that it would not be tomorrow, it will happen.

Using the *Symbols* cards was so much more honouring of his grieving process. Afterwards I photocopied the cards as he had laid them out as he wanted to take a copy home (then realised I should have invited him to take a picture with his phone!). It was a respectful, hopeful half hour that we had together. He asked that we meet again during the school holidays. His mum and step-father are also very supportive.

These days I mostly work with couples and I don't usually use cards, though I have them in my cupboard. But I'm already expecting that *Symbols* may be helpful for another young client who found her brother's body after school one day. But I will give myself time to read the *Symbols* booklet beforehand, and use much better questions next time.



SYMBOLS

100 laminated, full-colour cards,
105 x 105mm, polypropylene box,
48-page booklet
ISBN: 9 781 920945 190

Product Code: 4575
\$49.50 inc. GST