



## IDEAS BANK

# Storycatching

What stories do you remember at Christmas? How about the tale of the cat that broke the Christmas lights? Or that one about Uncle James and the plastic cherub? There's no doubt about it: Christmas is a time for storycatching!

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### Zoning in with Girltopia

Don't ask the teacher, ask the student! Get girls' health and wellbeing classes jiving with *Girltopia*...



CONT. P.3

### Calling Cards for Recovery

Find out how the Children Ahead program is bringing new hope to young lives with some help from Innovative Resources.

The Alannah  
and Madeline  
Foundation

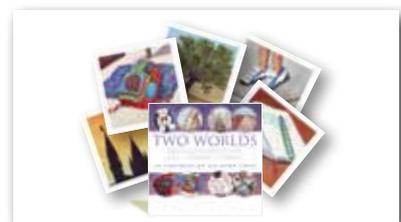
Keeping children safe from violence



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### Navigating Christmas: Tips for Separated Parents

Christmas means many things to many people. But for separated families, it can be an immensely daunting period...



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# SOON

## Ideas Bank for Christmas!

# Storycatching

What stories do you remember at Christmas? How about the tale of the cat that broke the Christmas lights? That one about the Uncle James and the plastic cherub? Or the saga of the sprinkler and 'the sheep that could'?

Whether your family is gathered for Christmas dinner or you're on the road with the kids in the backseat, stories are marvellous for passing the time, sharing memories and bringing people together. Innovative Resources' *Storycatching* cards are perfect prompts for unlocking those tales you'd half forgotten—or creating entirely new adventures!

*Storycatching* covers a wide range of subject matter and emotional territory. It is both simple and versatile, and does not require any special training. Teachers love it and families do too!

### Christmas card ideas

It's that time of the year when we send letters, emails and cards to people who matter, but whom we rarely see. Stuck for news or anecdotes to share? Turbocharge your correspondence by taking inspiration from...

- A card that represents an experience you both shared
- A picture that brings to mind an event from the past year you'd like to share
- A card that sums up your journey during the past year
- An image that reminds you of the person's strengths
- A card that represents your plans for the coming year.

### Musical storytelling

Make the post-lunch hours fly with a game or two at the table. Take a selection of cards from the *Storycatching* deck and ask someone to take charge of playing music. Now, let the music rip and pass the deck of cards around the table. When the music stops, the person holding the deck takes the bottom card and has a few moments to share a tall tale or memory.

You could make the game more elaborate by including the 'Christmas' and 'An unforgettable gift' cards. When the music stops and these cards are revealed, the person holding them might receive an extra present!

### Memory Game

Lay out all the *Storycatching* cards on the floor or table. Have everyone in the group scan them for a minute. Now turn all the cards face down. Ask everyone to write on a sheet of paper as many of the objects from the cards as they can remember. How many cards does each person remember? How many cards can be remembered between you all?

### Teachers

Enliven those final classroom hours at the year's end by using *Storycatching* for creative games and activities. Try the **Listening Game**: working in pairs, each student has two minutes to tell their story while their partner simply listens without interruption or comment. Now, ask the students who listened to re-tell the stories to the class. How good were they at listening?!



### STORYCATCHING

80 full-colour, laminated cards, 80mm x 110mm  
2-part cardboard box, 24-page booklet  
ISBN: 978 1 920945 24 4

Product Code: 4700

\$49.50 inc. GST

# SOON

## In the Spotlight

# Zoning in with Girltopia

What do young people think about the messages pushed at them in school? And what's the best way to make those messages stick? Year 10 student, Olivia Ormonde, cuts through the schmaltz of contemporary school health programs, and tells us how she'd use *Girltopia* to put meaning and authenticity back into important conversations with girls.

The issue of positive body image is pushed in many different ways all around the school. In the gym's change-room there are posters showing what healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) is and what foods are good to eat to maintain healthy skin. In the classrooms, there are more posters and diagrams littering the walls, depicting the side effects of drugs and of eating too much, and eating too little.

Once a semester, during Years 7, 8 and 9, thirty kids pile into a classroom and listen to their PE teacher talk about health. In the lessons the experience is not an interactive one—though the teachers try. The lessons usually consist either of watching a graphic BBC documentary about the relevant topic, then completing a worksheet. Or listening to the teacher talk... then completing a worksheet.

The only other time we really talk about 'girl stuff' is at the girls' assembly which happens every term. Most of the time a motivational speaker or life coach comes in and talks to the girls in the school, usually about: how to love yourself, how to have good relationships and steps to having positive relationships.

At one of the four assemblies for the year, we break into year levels, then into class-sized groups. When these slightly smaller girl assemblies happen, I think the *Girltopia* cards would be a good tool to explore topics like relationships and positive body image. If the session was correctly run and girls were willing to talk (could be a problem in a large group of girls) using *Girltopia* would make these sessions a much more productive use of time. The interaction with the cards will make the participants think and actually engage.

Since we were ten-year-olds we have been hammered constantly with girl's health topics, and though it's sometimes well done, as soon as the words 'You're beautiful' or 'Let's talk girl to girl' come out of someone's mouth you tend to zone out. The use of the *Girltopia* cards could bring some fun and interest back into this subject, and perhaps take some strain off the Student Support Centre. I think the cards would be more effective in the junior levels of the school, as I feel the topics and images on the cards are more relevant to girls who are at the start of adolescence.

These cards would be good to start open-ended conversations, especially the ME, DOING and FEELING cards. The conversation-creating properties of the cards would also be good to use in the class rooms, which tend to be a silent abyss when harder, more emotional questions are asked. These cards would be a helpful tool to build trust in the classes and knock down the invisible barriers built up between the various cliques!



### GIRLTOPIA

70 laminated full-colour cards, 150 x 150mm  
Polypropylene tabulated box 64-page booklet.  
ISBN: 9 781 920945 497

CAT NO: 4150 AU\$62.50

# Calling Cards for Recovery

When Sharon Teague first met Trent, she confronted a wary, troubled boy at risk of dropping out of school. She also discovered a boy who could articulate his feelings with assistance. Innovative Resources' card sets have played their part in Trent's journey.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is one of Australia's most high profile charities, counting politicians and celebrities among its patrons, including Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark. It's been a remarkable journey for a charity born of terrible tragedy. The Foundation was set up in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged six and three, who were among the victims of the Port Arthur Massacre in 1996.

Today, the Foundation has established itself as a leading advocate for child victims of violence, caring for children who have experienced or witnessed violence, and running programs to prevent violence in children's lives at home and school.

Children Ahead is one of the Foundation's programs, developed to support the recovery of children affected by violence or trauma. It is designed to promote children's resilience and ensure they have the same opportunities in life that their peers may take for granted. Crucially, the program takes a holistic approach, promoting children's recovery by attending to all their areas of need.

Ten-year-old 'Trent' is one of many children who have benefited from Children Ahead after being referred by his school for aggression, abusive language and bullying. Exposed to domestic violence and his father's substance abuse, Trent had been removed from his parents to live with his aunt and uncle. But violence and disruption had left their scars. While still a toddler, Trent had even had drugs hidden in his nappies during police raids on his parents' house.

Trent suffered from nightmares and often talked about his mother, asking why she never called. At school, he was struggling academically and also struggling with friendships, alienating other children with his bossy and demanding behaviour.

Several services had already looked into Trent's case before his referral to Children Ahead. As Sharon Teague, Trent's caseworker recalled, Trent was extremely guarded and his involvement with other services lapsed due to his failure to engage.

The Alannah  
and Madeline  
Foundation



Keeping children safe from violence

Children Ahead offered a different approach. Over a four month period, Sharon formed a good relationship with Trent, making regular visits to his home and school, and providing the boy with time and space to address his experiences and feelings.

Unexpectedly, she and her team discovered that Trent was not only very creative, but also able to talk about experiences with the help of images. During one school visit, Sharon spread the *Shadows* cards on the floor. Trent studied the cards then thoughtfully picked out the card depicting a darkened figure and a baby crying in its cot. 'This is like my mum,' Trent began, 'how she feels sometimes; this mum is stressed. Sometimes stressed mums kill babies; she doesn't know what to do anymore.'

Next, he selected the card showing a security door and barred window, and said 'There are lots of padlocks; a cranky person lives here. He doesn't like people to see what's inside; it's messy.' Choosing another card he explained, 'They're laughing at his face 'cause it's weird. They're laughing at him.'

Trent also selected the cards that showed images of a seagull and a boy lying in bed, which reflected his strong connection to nature and love of the outdoors. When asked to select a card that represented the future, he chose the card of a table laid for celebration and said it could be any time his family were all together.

In another session, Sharon used *The Bears* to help Trent articulate his feelings. He picked out card 2 for his aunt and identified her as sad. When his caseworker probed a little further, he was unexpectedly insightful. He felt that his aunt was sad for him because of his experiences, so he didn't talk to her about what was going on.

Another significant occasion was a joint session at Trent's home where he and his family used the *Strength Cards*. Each of them chose cards for the others, giving reasons why they had done so. Trent's aunt told him she thought he was 'caring', 'brave' and 'determined', and offered beautiful examples of times when he had shown these qualities. His uncle picked 'energetic' and 'fair' for him, and Trent felt he was 'loyal', 'adventurous' and 'creative'. Trent's smile and his expanding chest revealed just how successful this activity was for his self-esteem!

Other visits involved playing games to practise and model certain behaviours, like taking turns, listening, respecting other people's choices, problem-solving and communication skills. The program staff linked Trent into a homework club where he could receive individual attention. To improve his connections within the wider community, Children Ahead also paid basketball club fees for Trent to help him learn boundaries and develop social skills while having fun.

'We are still working on assertive communication, managing his strong emotions and building Trent's self-esteem,' Sharon cautions. But school reports show that Trent is progressing well and teachers have remarked on his improved attention in class. Carer reports also indicate that Trent is more relaxed and sleeping better. Best of all, Trent had made friends at his local basketball club. He had even been invited to a birthday party for the first time in his life.





# Navigating Christmas

Christmas means many things to many people. To some it is filled with magical memories of sparkling lights, tinsel and brightly coloured presents under the tree. Others anticipate the delights of a table laden with meats, salads, puddings and—in the Southern hemisphere at least—a medley of tropical fruits.

For many it is filled with the joys of giving and receiving—if we are very lucky, these gifting rituals may even help us draw close to the true spirit of Christmas where we are reminded of the abundant blessings in our lives.

However, for many, Christmas can be a time of tension and loneliness. It can be a time when we are reminded of the painful fractures that may have occurred within families. This can be especially so for families who have separated. Even with the very best will in the world from everyone involved, there are so many things to navigate about Christmas: Where will the children go? How will the parents share them over the festive season? How will they navigate the two separate worlds of their parents? What if relationships have broken down to the extent that they can no longer see beloved grandparents?

At Christmas time, instead of mistletoe and holly, separated families can feel that their path is strewn with obstacles—swamps of despair, no-through roads of disappointment and mountains of dashed dreams.

Mike Friganotis, Community Education Officer at the Cairns Family Relationship Centre, has some great tips for separated families. Scroll down or read them [here](#).

## Two Worlds: a Tool for Building Conversations with Separated Families at Christmas

When a couple separates, one world becomes two. When that couple has children, they too face the challenges of navigating their way through the two new worlds of their parents. These challenges can be daunting, even overwhelming—especially at significant celebrations such as Christmas.

*Two Worlds* is a unique resource for building healing conversations with children or adults experiencing separation...or any significant transitions and life changes.

*Two Worlds: when relationships end and parents separate*, is a set of cards published recently by Innovative Resources and the Anglicare Diocese of Sydney. The 48 *Two Worlds* cards use stunning, original, water-colour illustrations by Carolyn Marrone to help provide a voice for everyone touched by separation.

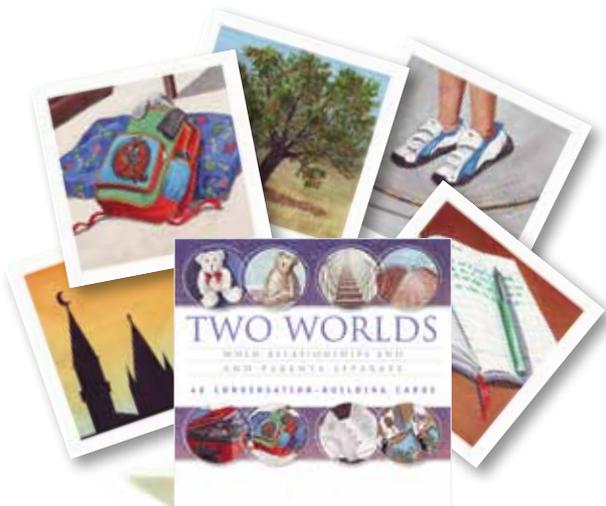
Designed by experienced separation counsellors and child and family workers, *Two Worlds* is a unique resource for building healing conversations with children or adults experiencing separation ... or any significant transitions and life changes.

Use these cards to ask questions like:

- Can you choose three cards that describe the kind of Christmas you would like to have?
- Can you choose three cards that describe the kind of Christmas you would wish for your children or other loved ones?
- Thinking of the lead-up to Christmas and Christmas Day itself, can you choose cards that speak about the challenges you may face?
- Can you choose cards that speak about strengths you will want to draw on to meet these challenges?
- Can you choose cards that express what you think is the most precious thing about Christmas?
- Can you choose cards that are the key things you would like to discuss with your ex regarding arrangements for your children at Christmas?

### TWO WORLDS

48 laminated, full-colour cards, 140mm x 140mm, polypropylene box, 44-page booklet,  
ISBN: 978 1 920945 69 5  
Illustrator: Carolyn Marrone  
CAT NO: 2600 AU\$49.50





# Some Tips for Separated Families at Christmas

By Mike Friganiotis,  
Cairns Family Relationship Centre

- Negotiate the time to be spent with the children over Christmas, and involve the children in those plans.
- Plan ahead—children will feel happier if they know what is going to happen in advance.
- If you aren't spending Christmas Day with your children, suggest having your own special day on a different date, not too far away.
- Remember that older children will want to be more involved in the planning, and may want time to do their own thing as well.
- Talk to your ex about what presents you intend to buy—you don't want duplicates. Set budget guidelines so that one parent doesn't upstage the other. Thoughtful presents can reassure the children that they are wanted and loved. Do not try to 'buy' your children's affection by outdoing each other with presents—they will feel torn between the two of you, and get the wrong message.
- If you are the resident parent, make sure your ex knows about, and has the opportunity to attend, the child's special functions such as nativity plays, concerts and events.
- Encourage the children to have meaningful contact with both parents on the day—face-to-face is best, but where that is not possible use telephone, email, letters, videos, SMS or even Skype.
- Try not to argue or fight in front of the children as it will spoil their day, and yours! If both of you are able to settle your differences for a short time, it will be reassuring for the children to see their parents co-operating for their benefit. Maybe both parents can be present when the children open their presents.
- It may also be preferable for step-parents to keep a low profile, or to share gift giving at a separate time. New partners need to make sure that the children feel welcome and get an equal share of the presents compared to their step-siblings.
- Depending on the age of the children, separated families may be able to arrange for the children to have Christmas lunch with one parent and dinner with the other, or to celebrate Christmas with one parent and the next day with the other—two Christmases for them!
- Grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins can be very important sources of support for the children, especially in families where the extended family is an important part of the culture. Make sure that your children are able to contact their relatives on both sides of the family. Children grieve when they are not able to see people they feel close too.
- For those parents who are without their children at Christmas, arrange to spend time with friends or family so that you do not feel lonely and reassure the children that you are OK.
- While children in general like to see their parents together, there are circumstances when this may not be safe or of benefit to the children. For example, if you and/or your children have experienced violence or abuse, you should not think that you need to spend time with the abusive partner for the benefit of your children—everyone needs to feel safe and secure.

## Merry Christmas



From everyone at  
**Innovative Resources**

We would like to extend festive greetings to all our customers and colleagues, and wish you a safe and happy New Year.

Watch out for details of our exciting new card sets due for release in 2014. We look forward to your continued support as we enter our 22nd year of publishing seriously optimistic resources for teachers and human service workers everywhere.

