IN THE SPOTLIGHT
When Sharks Cometh

The future is about to strike. It may bring joy. It may bring challenge, accident or disaster. Andrew Shirres reflects on how we might choose to face the unknown with thoughtful equanimity.

Creative Parenting
The Positive Parenting Cards have made quite a splash this year. But what reflections did they prompt for the ‘parents’ of the cards themselves?

Walking the Boundaries
It’s possibly our most probing, surprising and challenging card set ever. In this month’s Ideas Bank plunge into ethical ambiguity with Walking the Boundaries.

Oh, what a feeling!
When Toyota ordered a set of Cars ‘R’ Us, we revved the motor and honked the question: “What was Toyota wheelly up to with our cars?!”

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When Sharks Cometh

Andrew Shirres is one of our training gang at Innovative Resource, with a passion for teaching the strengths approach and unlocking new ways to use our cards and tools. Last month he was in Canberra, a mere kilometre from the unfolding Liberal leadership drama. This week he’s about to shoot off to Townsville. Somewhere betwixt, he was handed the high seas, darkly dramatic ‘shark’ card from Ups and Downs and invited to put pen to paper…

There’s a big scary shark headed our way. Frightening isn’t it?
Or maybe not.
While we might sit there nervously thinking ‘What did I do to deserve this?’ we could choose another way. We could wonder, ‘How can I face life’s challenges with the equanimity of that little person in that tiny bathtub?’
When it feels as if life is charging headlong at us, when we know that a ‘big moment’ is just around the corner, we can wonder about what we might do to face the inevitable with that ‘fold your arms kind of calm’ we would all like to display.
Maybe, just maybe, we might think this isn’t the first time this has happened. Perhaps we will remember what we did to get through the last time. Or who was with us. Or what we learned.
We might reflect that life goes on. We might decide that our little bathtub is small enough to rise and fall with the turbulence, that we are adaptable beings, and we can ride this one out.
We might also reckon we are the right person for this task or that we have faced tougher times before and survived.
We might anticipate, accept and embrace the challenge while planning for what’s next.
We can do all these things while folding our arms, leaning back just a bit, and floating gently in our little bathtub.

Educators and facilitators: Help groups build environments where everyone thrives.

Discover what many Indigenous communities have known forever: sitting in a circle with others and establishing simple, respectful guidelines for communicating might just be the most useful solution-finding technique ever invented!
The Circles approach to groups and teams is safe, respectful, democratic, inclusive and strengths-based. Each Strengths in Circles card contains a building block for putting Circles into practice—in schools, teams, organisations and communities.

$49.50 inc GST  Cat no. 4932
In the Spotlight

Creative Parenting

The Positive Parenting Cards have made quite a splash this year, generating new insights and discussions among parents and carers in countless settings. But what reflections did they prompt for the ‘parents’ of the cards themselves? SOON asked three of the creative team behind this resource to each pick a card. Here are three very different responses reflecting their unique perspectives.

The Designer: Anna Marrone

I’ve chosen ‘Something my parents did that I would like to more of is…’

The pasta on the pattern reminiscent of a table cloth really makes me think of family dinners around the table—something I’d like to make part of my family ritual in the future.

From a design perspective, the geometric pattern acts as a link between all the cards, giving them a consistency when spread out in front of the user. This card also reminds me how amazing the brain is. Even when the imagery of each card doesn’t directly relate to the sentence starter, the brain sometimes can’t help making a connection.

The Editor and Co-author: Karen Bedford

I selected the card ‘As a parent I wonder …’

There are so many things I wonder about as a parent. I have to admit that in my life right now words like ‘parenting’ and ‘family’ and ‘home’ are like giant, shape-changing, mega-clouds of steaming immensity. S’cuse the hyperbole. For me, they have more in common with ‘infinity’ and ‘universe’ and ‘the meaning of life’ than with ‘gingham’ and ‘curtain’ and ‘kitchen bench’. I wish the word ‘family’ would shrink back into the manageable neighbourhood of BBQs and kids’ sleepovers. Or fall down between the cushions on the couch alongside the discarded paper clip and the furry lolly. Family lived in those domestic spaces for decades, and it seemed to belong there. But recently it all changed. I woke up one morning and suddenly said to myself and anyone else who would listen: ‘Honey, the kids have all left home.’

Arriving here now in this place of quiet with all three of my children having flown the proverbial nest, I find I am a little like a stranger in a strange land. I’m wondering what to do with the pile of certificates for trying hard in maths? I’m wondering where to put the plastic soccer trophies? I’m wondering what happens now? It takes a bit of getting used to, this letting go of tending to their needs, providing the taxi service, almost daily visits to the supermarket, and more than daily feasts of whatever carbohydrates can be found in the pantry, boiled up and smothered with tomato sauce and cheese.

I wonder about the whole glorious mess of my family. I don’t know quite how I feel about it. Feelings are tricky, I find. The thing about feelings is that I feel more than one of them at the same time. In fact, pretty much all of the time I feel opposite things at once. So, regarding the empty nest … regarding family … regarding parenting—I’m bereft and I’m thrilled. I’m exhausted and exhilarated. I’m proud and I have regrets. I adore my children utterly and I sometimes wish they would change. I feel like I did my utmost as a parent and sometimes I feel it wasn’t enough. Sometimes family feels like the most wonderful of adventures and sometimes I am a bit … well … a bit disheveled in the wake of it.

Yes, parenting is full of wondering. It is sobered by worry and niggled by guilt. It is fuelled by hope and love. It teaches you and challenges you. It floors you and fills you.

As a parent I wonder … most of the time.

The Concept: Lorraine Leitch

I chose the card ‘One thing my children would say about me as a parent is …’

I developed the concept for the cards during home visits to families. So often workers find that parents are focussing on the problems, with little thought about what else is going on for them. I wanted the various cards to be a prompt for conversations about reflecting on what is important for them to pass on to their children, in the hope that they would start to think about the positive aspects of their parenting, the impact of their own childhood experience on their parenting, and the beliefs and values they want to pass on to their children.

Early on I used the prototype cards with a family affected by partner violence. The mother was struggling to think about the positive aspects of her parenting. Her son came to the table where the cards were spread out, picked up this card, and said: ‘Mum, you love us and look after us, you try and keep us safe.’ It was a privilege to witness the lift of her shoulders, the smile come to her face, and the embrace between the two people. This comment by her son reignited her determination to work to keep her children safe.
Walking the Boundaries

‘Would you ever … open a pack of Walking the Boundaries with colleagues?’ We hope so! Because this is the card set for exploring the ambiguities and ethical dilemmas that human service professionals confront every day.

Use this provocative, stimulating set of 80 questions for planning days, supervision sessions, with students and teams, and your own professional development. Here are a few ideas for starters:

Team building
Walking the Boundaries is a great team-building and professional development tool, as long as participants feel safe to answer honestly. Introduce them at your next team meeting or planning day and keep an eye on the volume control in the room!

• Which questions do you think your team would agree on?
• Which questions do you think your team would not agree on?
• Can your team agree which 3 cards are likely to be the most important to keep in mind over the next period of time or during the next project?

Invite each member of the team to pick a card, reflect on it and report on their reflections at your next meeting.

• What card(s) is missing? Can you think of any more questions you would add to the card set? Invite team members to create their own Walking the Boundaries card and introduce it!

Reflecting on context
Sometimes practitioners might vary their responses to a question or dilemma according to the particular context. Invite participants to choose 3 or more cards, and then discuss such questions as:

• Would your response to these questions always be the same in every situation?

• If not, when might it be different?

• Would it change with different clients—for example, with children, adults, teens or people with various disabilities?

• Would it change according to the community in which you work? For example, would there need to be different responses if you were in a rural, regional or urban setting?

• Would it change according to the type of service offered?

• Would it change according to the organisation you are working for?

• Would it change if you had a different supervisor or worked in a different team?

• Are there questions that you would have answered differently in the past? Why did you change your view?

WALKING THE BOUNDARIES

80 laminated, full-colour cards, 105mm x 120mm, polypropylene box, 44-page booklet
Author: Russell Deal; Designer: Mat Jones
ISBN: 978 1 920945 78 7
Product Code: 4805          $49.50 inc. GST
In the Mailbag

Oh, what a feeling!

They’re household names and our shyest customers: cosmetic companies, fast food retailers and banking sector giants, whose trainers use our cards for staff development and planning.

Of course, when corporate customers come knocking we don’t usually intrude on their affairs. But when Toyota ordered Cars ‘R’ Us in June, we got just a little excitable. After all, our Cars ‘R’ Us cars are a handsome bunch. Were they about to hit the roads as Toyota’s new family models?!

Happily, we learned that one of the company’s regional training managers was using the cards in regular monthly meetings with sales staff. Here’s the lowdown:

‘I used the Cars ‘R’ Us cards this morning in the company meeting. I got everyone to choose a card that resonated with them and then discuss it. It was an excellent session—lots of laughter, lots of engagement and insights as to how people felt. I followed up with brief talk about attitude, which summed up the exercise beautifully.

‘It’s a winner! The cards work brilliantly at eliciting feelings and emotions. I think it’s particularly interesting as the automotive industry is a pretty different culture to community services where I’ve worked before.’

WHAT’S MISSING FROM YOUR TOOLBOX?

A Patchwork Life

Designed to inspire conversations, storytelling and creativity for women of all ages, this beautiful resource includes 40 cards and complementary sticker sheets. Use A Patchwork Life to reflect on thoughts and feelings, relationships and the stuff that matters through the metaphor of quilting, patchwork and being ‘stitched together’.

CAT NO. 4225 AU$54.50

Change by Design

Analyse, create and evaluate change in an inclusive and respectful manner. Change by Design recognises that leadership is a shared responsibility, and that change happens best when those affected are empowered to let their leadership qualities shine. Featuring 60 powerful questions, Change by Design challenges us to think about how we enact shared leadership in teams, organisations and companies.

CAT NO. 4100 AU$59.50

Choosing Strengths

Strengths are not just qualities we have, they are also choices we can make! Each Choosing Strengths card features the phrase ‘I can choose to be …’ and identifies a strength that anyone can choose to make their own. Making good choices: it’s a skill we all need to reach our potential. Youth workers love this resource for solution-focused conversations with young people!

CAT NO. 2400 AU$49.50

Talking ecoLogical

Creating a sustainable future isn’t just about reconsidering our values and challenging the status quo. It’s also about making life better than it ever was! Teachers, town planners, boards and community groups: here’s a card set to spark rich discussions about identity, shaping the future, our relationships with the environment … and each other:

CAT NO. 4940 AU$66.00