



Christmas Edition

It's out with the antlers and on with baubles! We're kicking off the festivities with a little Neolithic inspiration from *Sensitive New Age Cavepersons*. Hang the cave with holly, giftwrap some rock art, and sharpen your flints to carve the Christmas moa!

Creative Advocacy, Bottled and Uncorked

From talk of visual metaphors to the halls of Parliament House. Discover the surprising events that transpired at October's Literary Therapist.



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Walking and Talking the Boundaries

SOON chats with Russell Deal, Innovative Resources' Creative Director, to find out how *Walking the Boundaries* sprang to life.



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Ideas Bank: Strengths in Circles

It's great for little kids, and big kids too! Explore ways to create change and establish respectful, strengths-based conversations with our newest card set.



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In the **Spotlight**

Creative Advocacy, Bottled and Uncorked

There might not be an ocean, strait or bay dividing Castlemaine and Canberra. But that didn't stop workshop participants floating messages in bottles direct into the halls of Parliament House. October's Literary Therapist workshop, held at the historical Buda homestead in Castlemaine, attracted participants from around Australia and overseas, eager to try their hands at a range of writing techniques for therapeutic practice and personal growth. The homestead's garden provided a beautiful backdrop for their writings, reflections and musings—and for a colourful discussion about visual metaphors, which took proceedings in an unexpected direction.

When facilitators Karen Bedford and Russell Deal handed out the visual metaphor of a corked bottle, they asked the question: 'What message would you want to put in a bottle?' For Monique Toohey, who was preparing to meet with parliamentarians the next day, that message was both political and personal. Her message called on leaders to take a stand against the ills of intolerance, reminding them that Australian Muslims are also 'quietly working away to raise families, care for our communities and for the environment.'

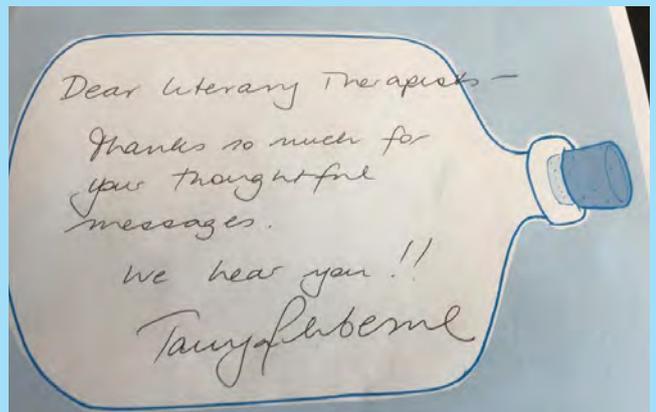
Monique is many things: she's a cultural intelligence trainer, social entrepreneur, author and psychologist—and an advocate for culturally appropriate services for Muslim women and young people. She was due to meet with senior opposition MPs to press for a change in the tone of Australian discourse about threat of violent extremism, and to remind federal MPs of the need for less problem-focused rhetoric and greater use of inclusive language and also to encourage genuine dialogue with Muslim communities around fostering a sense of belonging in young Australian Muslims.

Inspired by Monique's mission and her message of social inclusion, her fellow participants set pens to bottles, penning their own messages of tolerance, cultural understanding and concern for social justice, and the importance of welcoming and appreciating difference.

In Canberra the next day, Monique's first meeting was with Tanya Plibersek, Mark Dreyfuss, Joanne Ryan and Jenny Macklin. Here's her account sent back to the other Literary Therapist participants:

'After communicating our intended points of discussion I presented the Members with your bottled messages. They were so delightfully surprised and happy for me that you had written messages of support and solidarity. Without hesitation, Tanya asked was there any way they could send a message back to the group. I just happened to have taken some empty 'bottles' for them to do exactly that!

'I have to say their faces lit up and they giggled among themselves as they each had their turn writing their messages to us. It wrapped up



the meeting with plenty of warmth—and the positivity needed to make an impact.'

Media exposure after her audience with the MPs came as an added bonus, including an article in *The Age* and a radio interview for 3AW. As for attending the Literary Therapist, it was 'impeccable timing' Monique acknowledges. 'I love implementing techniques learned

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in training into my clinical and community practice, but this was extraordinary. I had a fantastic time on the course itself. I also loved the use of the 1-3-5 minutes writing exercises to stop being 'the editor' and be the writer more often.'

As well as attending the workshop, Monique uses many of Innovative Resources' cards at her practice in the Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows. 'I use the resources in every training program and with every one of my clients. They align with how I think and experience the world, looking for positives and getting clients to see—and use—their strengths.' She adds that she's a particular fan of the *Strength Cards*. 'I've developed so many therapeutic uses for them, which have yielded awesome changes with people I support.'

More recently, she has employed *Shadows and Deeper Shadows* for cultural intelligence training with young leaders. She used *Shadows* as an icebreaker, inviting the young people to choose cards representing challenges they see in the community, and to describe what they would like to see instead and their role in that change.

Reflecting on her advocacy in Canberra, Monique says that seeing the excitement on the faces of Tanya Plibersek and Mark Dreyfus as they responded to the messages-in-bottles was priceless. 'They could do with a joyful dose of creativity more often, I think,' she adds cheekily. 'I think there is more of a role Innovative Resources might play in politics and shaping policy. Imagine strengths-based policy! Imagine the society we might become.'

Product News

Price Changes

Prices for *Talking ecoLogical* and *Strengths to the Max* have been permanently reduced.



Talking ecoLogical
Now \$59.50
(reduced from \$66.00)



Strengths to the Max
Now \$49.50
(reduced from \$54.50)

Vatican gets ecoLogical

In the wake of June's papal encyclical on the environment, *Talking ecoLogical* has landed in Rome thanks to connections of the card's author (and lapsed Catholic!) Ian McBurney. Reading the encyclical prompted Ian to muse on the connections between the Pope's call for action and the psychology of change behind *Talking ecoLogical*—both the cards and the encyclical emphasise the alignment of social and environmental concerns. The next question for Ian was, 'How do I get these cards to the Pope?'

Luckily, Ian knew a priest, a friend from his school days, now studying in Rome. They are hoping to introduce the cards to the papal committee responsible for promoting education about the encyclical. In the meantime, Ian is also taking action closer to home, with a copy of the cards going to the local Catholic Education Office.

New Designs

During 2016 we will also be introducing new-look packaging for two card sets, *Storycatching* and *Shadows and Deeper Shadows*. The alternative designs will appear as current print stock sells out.



SOON
SUMMER
Creative Writing
GIVEAWAY

It's that time of year when we abandon our desks, goggle at the Christmas lights and sling the salads in the picnic hamper. It's also a moment to contemplate, cogitate and get creative!

To enter our summer draw for a \$50 voucher, send in a piece of creative writing (150 words or less) that takes inspiration from one, any or all of the five *Storycatching* cards below. It might be a six-word story, a short dialogue, a poem, or a mini memoir. You could even try 'collaborative writing' with friends, colleagues or family.

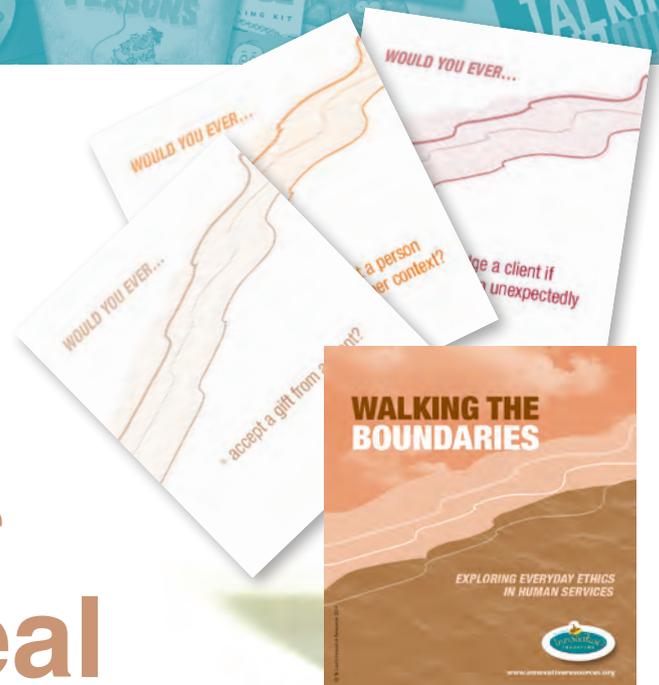
Submit your entry to caitlyn@innovativeresources.org by 22 January, and the entry which most takes our fancy will be the winner and featured in February's SOON.

With best wishes for Christmas and the summer period to all our customers.



In the Spotlight

Walking and Talking the Boundaries with Russell Deal



Where did the idea for *Walking the Boundaries* originate?

The precursor was conversations I had with a couple of old social work friends. We were ruminating on whether the nature of social work had changed since we studied many years ago, and whether students were coming out with a different picture of the profession compared to the one we signed up for. Some of us go back to the era of the Vietnam War, and a whole lot of other social movements at that time influenced our picture of our profession.

From there, we reflected that we make assumptions all the time that our view of our professional world—and particularly its ethical boundaries—is shared by people we work alongside. We thought, ‘Well, that really needs to be challenged,’ because so many different agencies have multiple programs, and workers or practitioners on the same team may have significantly different roles and professional backgrounds.

What are some of the contexts where the cards can be used?

Walking the Boundaries, at least initially, will be really relevant to new staff joining any organisation. Certainly for group supervision and team meetings, the cards are a great way of just checking in with one’s colleagues as to similarities and differences of perspective. The cards can be used anywhere where we need to acknowledge that there are different ethical frameworks in play. For example, expectations for professional practitioners as compared to those of volunteers often aren’t thoroughly explored. There can be huge assumptions made that volunteers, such as foster carers, will share a whole range of our professional values that maybe they don’t—and maybe don’t need to.

Do human service workers generally find it easy to talk about ethical dilemmas?

I don’t think they necessarily find it difficult, but sometimes we forget that our view of the world is not going to be mirrored by everyone else. What we take for granted in terms of appropriate ethical responses, broadly defined, does deserve to be put in the spotlight and to be out in the open. That’s the point of these cards. The cards provide a safe context for that because they don’t prescribe a Code of Conduct. That notion of not being judged on one’s answers is an important part of why these cards work as an effective conversation building tool.

You started with a monster list of possible questions. How did you prune it down?

We looked for duplication. We also pruned very hard to avoid any questions that we thought led to one single likely answer. We really wanted to nail the little ethical decisions that would spread people’s responses.

That notion of not being judged on one’s answers is an important part of why these cards work as an effective conversation building tool.

What kinds of ethical dilemmas have been part of your own multi-faceted career as a social worker?

You worked in the prison system at one stage, didn’t you?

Yes, that presented many in-your-face ethical decisions, including around what you related to the prison officers. Obviously anything that related to security was really important, but working with prisoners meant that invariably you heard stuff, and it may have been around some illegal activities or relationship issues. Obviously passing on information and negotiating permission for that was quite complex.

But, equally, in a school situation there may be similar issues. If you’ve got a school counsellor who is building up a relationship with a student, and things are said by the student in confidence, the counsellor may have to negotiate a similar set of boundaries around what info is passed on to the teachers, principal or parents. I think, irrespective of the actual human service role you’re in, we all grapple with those boundary issues.

So what’s the response to *Walking the Boundaries* been like thus far?

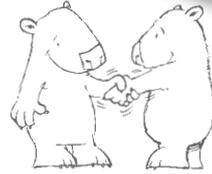
We’ve been using the cards in workshops for over 12 months and they invariably seem to be a great way of getting people talking and sharing stories. We wanted to make the scenarios represented in *Walking the Boundaries* as broad as possible. We’ve had no instances of anyone taking offense at what we’ve tried to do. It’s opened up some great conversations!

If you’re in the Canberra this month, catch Russell at the Australian STOP Domestic Violence Conference, 7-9 December. Russell will be running a workshop on ‘Getting Blokes to Talk: Safe Spaces and Visual Metaphors’ on Wednesday 9th December. Innovative Resources’ tools will be on display during the conference.

SOON

Ideas Bank

Strengths in Circles



Circles technology is a much-loved approach to group facilitation that is used in school classrooms, dispute resolution, mediation, juvenile justice, reconciliation processes and restorative justice practice.

Based on a framework of six key principles—Agency, Safety, Positivity, Inclusion, Respect and Equality—*Strengths in Circles* names 42 key elements that sit at the hub of Circles conversations. Each individual card can be a rich source of conversation and activity within a group.

Working one-on-one

Strengths in Circles can be used to help young people identify, name, develop and find ways to use their own strengths—and to recognise the strengths that others have. By developing their ‘strengths literacy’, young people are more able to make effective and intentional choices about who they want to become—and how to relate to others.

- Which card represents a Circles strength you do well? What happens when you use this strength?
- Choose a card that represents a strength you find challenging. Can you explain why?
- Which card represents a strength that people around you seem to find easy. How do they ‘do’ that strength? What additional strengths might be needed to do that strength well (you may like to pair *Strengths in Circles* with the *Strength Cards*).
- Thinking of a person in your school, family or community, can you choose a card that says something about what you particularly admire about how that person is with other people? How might you ‘borrow’ a little of their strength?
- Select cards to show which strengths you think are really important for any group or team. Are these strengths already in your repertoire, or are there some you might choose to practise or focus on?

Researching in pairs

Working in pairs, students can explore the significance of concepts introduced by the cards through an array of playful research activities. These activities can be built around a single suit or individual *Strengths in Circles* card. For example, you might invite students to:

- Find a series of quotes with a keyword/concept from the card in them.
- Find dictionary definitions of keywords/concepts of your card.
- Find synonyms and antonyms for keywords on your card.
- Find song titles or book titles with key words from your card.
- Tell/write an anecdote from your own experience, emphasising the relationship between what you learnt and the concept on your card.

Gratitude Activity

Most children—even very young children—have an innate sense of what is fair, and inviting children to put themselves in others’ shoes (as the cards do) is an essential part of developing empathy and caring for the feelings of others.

For this activity, choose the card ‘We show gratitude’ from the POSITIVITY suit. Ask everyone to talk in pairs about things that others do for them that they might be thankful for. For example:

- What do people at home (parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, others) do?
- What do people at school (teachers, cleaners, those in the office, others) do?
- What do people in the community (shopkeepers, bus-drivers, others) do?
- What do other students in this class do?
- What are the different ways of showing gratitude to someone?

Mix everyone up so that they are next to someone different. Going round the Circle, each person turns to the person on their right and finishes this sentence stem: ‘I would like to thank you for...’ Give students a moment or two to think of something to say. If they get lost for words ask others in the Circle to help out with ideas.

Strengths in Circles for adults

Strengths in Circles is powerful tool that adults of any age in any group or organisation can also use among themselves for establishing respectful, strengths-based conversations. Enhance collaboration, open up possibilities and create change!

- Can you think of a time when you were part of a group that did that concept (or theme) really well? What do you think made it possible for that group to do so well?
- Was there a particular person who demonstrated or exemplified that value?
- What is already happening in your organisation/community group/family that you could build on even more?
- Which of the cards do you think would make the most positive difference in your group or team?
- Imagine the best possible group or team—which card concepts do you think you would notice and appreciate seeing in operation most?
- How could you (or your group) do even one tiny step towards this today?



STRENGTHS IN CIRCLES

42 full-colour, laminated cards, 210mm x 100mm, plus 36-page booklet. Packaged in polypropylene box. Authors: Sue Roffey & Russell Deal ISBN: 978 1 920945 79 4

Product Code: 4932 \$49.50 inc. GST



New Training for 2016

Strengths-Approach to Practice (1 day)

Sometimes 'the problem' can be all-consuming, making us feel stuck and creating barriers to change. Strengths-based practice refocuses our energies and attention by helping us identify, mobilise and celebrate strengths. And everyone has strengths—they are our qualities, capacities, relationships, values, stories, experiences, skills and more. In this workshop, participants will learn how to build cultures where strengths and connectedness flourish, enabling clients to develop resilience, the capacity for lasting change and genuine agency in their own lives. Presented by Andrew Shirres, this practical workshop is for social workers, counsellors, managers, educators—and anyone who works with others!

- DATE:** Wednesday 16 March, 2016
- VENUE:** Innovative Resources, Collins Street, Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)
- COST:** \$217.80

The Literary Therapist

It's on again! The Literary Therapist is our popular interactive workshop that uncovers the potential of creative writing to refresh our spirits, open doorways for clients and be part of our repertoire of self-care strategies. Join Russell and Karen to explore the importance and power of creative writing as a tool for engaging with clients in counselling and in group work, with colleagues in supervision and strategic planning, with communities in teaching and presentations, and with ourselves through our own critical reflection and self-care. The workshop covers a wide range of practical, readily-useable ideas, skills and prompts to bring writing alive in some very novel ways, from moon writing to stretched listing. Perfect for anyone who works with people and is passionate about writing ... or would like to be more so!

- DATE:** Monday 18 and Tuesday 19 April, 2016
- VENUE:** Buda Historic Homestead, Castlemaine, Victoria
- COST:** \$385.00



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- participate in product development surveys

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Head to the [Innovative Resources website](#) to find out more about these events and to register.

In the Mailbag

I just wanted to say that I have downloaded *The Bears App* and have recommended it to all the local 'chappies'. I use it almost every day with my students—it is really great! It has helped students I work with to articulate and identify emotions in a non-threatening way.

There is something very easy and unique about students using this app on ipads and similar devices. All of the students I have shown it to can use it easily and identify with a Bear with minimal explanation. With one student, I've even gotten to the point of just saying 'show me your Bear' and this young person takes the time to find the right one for how they are feeling that day, or then and there.

It's been a positive tool and I am looking forward to using others in my practice. If *The Bears App* is an 'experiment' then I would encourage more of these types of innovations. However, I think there is still something really valuable in having tangible things like cards as well.

Malcolm Brown, State School Chaplain (Brisbane, QLD)