

USA & Canada Special Edition

Join us for a celebration of shared learning and creativity with our colleagues and customers in North America!

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NOW AVAILABLE: *The Bears App* - See page 2 for the full story

The power of positive labels

Leading SFBT practitioner Elliott Connie shares his reflections on using *Strength Cards for Kids* in counselling.



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Feelings in central New York

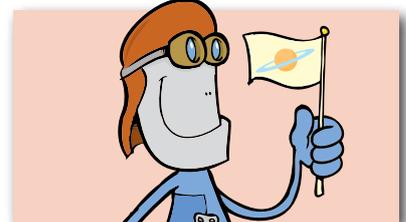
Read how Susan LaFever is using Innovative Resources' card sets to add colour and fun to her work as an elementary school counsellor.



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Vexillologists, we salute you!

Last month's SOON giveaway set the flags aflutter. Meet our winner, check your answers ... and well done to everyone who entered!



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The Bears App

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. Even though feelings enter our conversations all the time, we know that it can be hard to honestly say how we are feeling, or to find the right words to describe our emotional state.

In 2015, coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of *The Bears* cards, Innovative Resources has released *The Bears App*. Simply 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.

Ideas for counsellors, family workers and therapists...

- After meeting with a client, email them the Bear(s) they picked during their conversation with you as a reminder of the conversation, or as a reminder of their goals, plans or next steps.
- Acknowledge a client's efforts by sending a congratulatory Bear and a message.
- Send a client or anyone messages about what you see as their strengths by sending them particular Bears you have named after their qualities. For example, Bears you label as Determined, Caring, Happy, Resilient, etc.
- Buy *The Bears App* for a client so that Bears can be 'swapped' both ways. Ask your client to use *The Bears App* to send you a message about how they are travelling each day or regularly over a period of time.
- Invite a client to use *The Bears App* to track their own self-evaluation for a period of time.
- Use *The Bears App* to track how clients (or you) are travelling in terms of specific things such as diet, organisation, wellbeing, energy levels, mood etc.



Ideas for parents and families...

- Invite your child to pick a Bear from the App each morning to say how she/he is feeling.
- Invite children to use *The Bears App* to let you know how they are going with projects, sports events, feelings or situations at school or... anything!
- Use *The Bears App* with children to encourage storytelling and to imagine the emotions we express in different situations.
- Choose a Bear to send via text or email to your child or teenager (or adult child!) to let them know you're thinking of them. You can even post a Bear on their Facebook page!

Conference organisers and facilitators...

- Talk to us about bulk purchasing downloads of *The Bears App* for conference and workshop participants. Invite participants to use *The Bears App* to send feedback at the end of the day, or to let you know how they go as they implement ideas or practices you've explored together.

Don't forget, many of the activities described in the booklet for *The Bears* cards be adapted for use with *The Bears App*. We have no doubt that people will experiment and discover many creative ways to use and share these delightfully expressive characters in digital format.

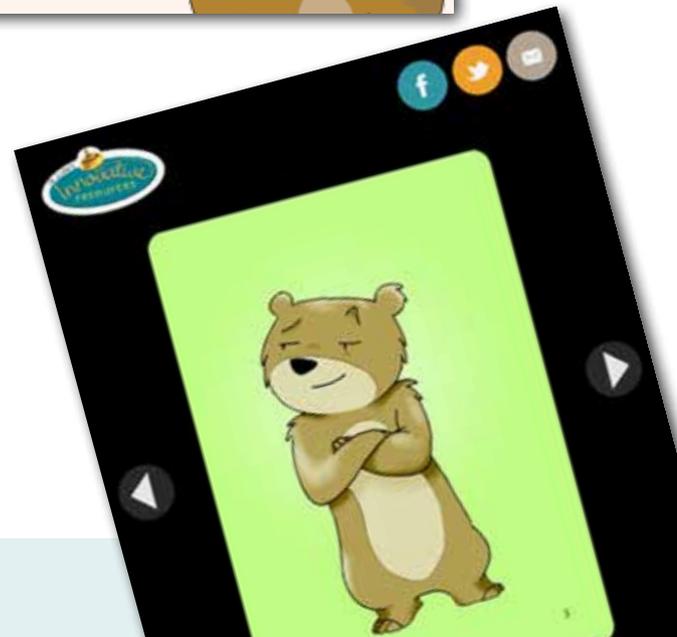
Let us know what you come up with!

THE BEARS APP

[AU\\$1.29 \(Apple\)](#)

[AU\\$1.99 \(Android\)](#)





In the Spotlight

The power of positive labels



Elliott Connie is a family and marriage counsellor based in Keller, Texas. He's also a bestselling relationship author and an internationally-known speaker and presenter, who has trained clinicians around the world to use Solution Focused Brief Therapy.

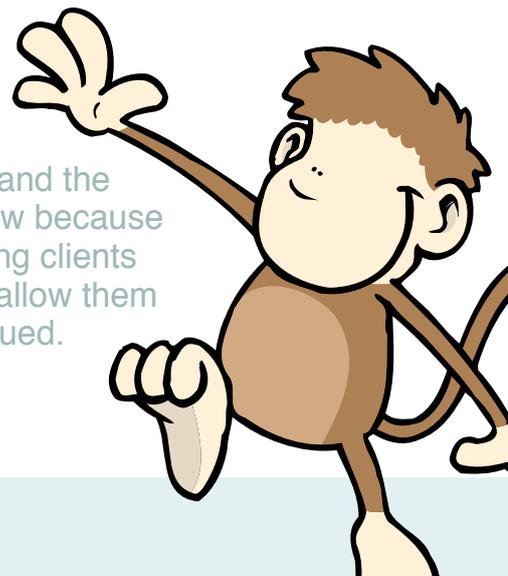
Elliott grew up in Boston and has worked with leading solution-focused practitioners in the US, UK and Sweden. When we got in touch with Elliott, he had recently returned from a teaching stint in Moscow, Russia. For this special issue of SOON, he has kindly contributed his story about using *Strength Cards for Kids*.

I have to be honest. When I was originally told about Innovative Resources' strength cards I was not sure I would like them. To be even more honest, I sort of anticipated I would find them somewhat useless. Not that I had any particular problem with the concept; it was just that I have never really found tools useful in my work. I have been working with children and their families for years and it is one of my great professional joys. In this time, I had never used a tool that I found helpful—until now.

Once the cards arrived in my office I decided to use them in a session with a client who had been having a particularly hard time in school following rules and getting good grades. He was also having a hard time following the rules of the house and staying out of trouble at home. His parents had become more and more frustrated dealing with him and his issues.



I believe in strength cards and the *Strength Cards for Kids* now because I see the power of assessing clients for positive labels that will allow them to feel empowered and valued.



I had been working with this family for several weeks, and using the solution focused approach we had seen marginal and inconsistent improvement in the boy's behaviour both at home and school. He was able to participate in therapy, but it would be a stretch to say he seemed to be enjoying each session. I think it would be more accurate to say he tolerated the process. That is, until I used the *Strength Cards for Kids* in a session with him.

The boy is about 9 years old and, as we began to talk, I asked him to find a card that represented who he would like to be going forward. He chose a card and began to describe to me why he wanted to demonstrate the skill it represented in the future. Then I asked him what he would catch himself doing in the future that would fit with this skill being a bigger part of his life. For the first time since I knew him he seemed to enjoy the therapy. He seemed to have a true sense of joy as he answered the questions, and was very detailed as he described the behaviours he would be exhibiting in the future.

As I sit here writing this piece about our interaction, I am compelled to reflect on what I think happened and why my young client responded the way he did. It seems to me that people, especially children, do not like being given negative labels such as having 'ADHD' or 'depression'. People, especially children, respond much better when given positive labels, even if it is a label they intend to pursue.

In this case, my 9-year-old client left the session elated, and two weeks later the parents reported that it was as if they had a whole new child. He was turning in his work in school, following the rules at home and school, and seemed happier than he had been in years.

I believe in strength cards and the *Strength Cards for Kids* now because I see the power of assessing clients for positive labels that will allow them to feel empowered and valued. Such tools have a role to play, and it is about time they found their way into our practice.

To learn more about Elliott's work, publications and to tune in to his YouTube presentations, visit www.elliotspeaks.com

SOON

In the Spotlight

Revving up for fun and feelings in central New York

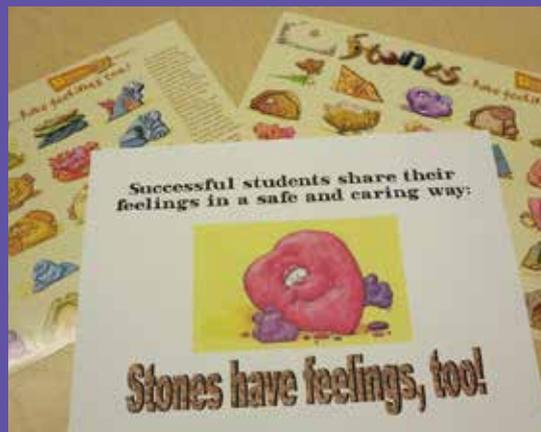
Susan LaFever is an elementary school counselor at Norwich City School District in central New York, where she works with students from Pre-K to 2nd Grade. In the past few years Susan has purchased a number of Innovative Resources' card sets at her own expense—'because they are awesome!'—and, boy, does she use them in some fabulously creative ways!

Susan recalls studying for her Play Therapy certification when she unexpectedly stumbled onto Innovative Resources. 'I believe I found them when searching the internet,' she muses, '[but it] has been a while since I started using your resources, so I'm not positive.' At the time, she had been thinking of working in a hospital, 'However, I decided I love the excitement of learning found in a school setting when working with children.'

So how does Susan use her cards? With sophisticated simplicity! 'Each year I use one of the card packets as my "theme" and design at least one opening activity to accompany the cards.' That opening activity is used with students and their caregivers when they meet the school counselor for the first time. In 2013, she picked *Stones ... have feelings too!* and developed an activity for children in changing families. 'Students used the *Stones* stickers to create family portraits illustrating their homes,' including their multiple homes in the case of children staying at different family residences.



With her added interest in Sand Play Therapy, Susan quickly spotted that the stones also 'lend themselves naturally to creating "zen" type sand trays,' which she used as a closing activity.



Susan encouraged the students to use the *Stones* cards to share their feelings in a safe and caring way. 'After a few sessions, students know to come right into my room and point to the card showing how they are feeling, then describe what is going on [in relation] to the feeling they choose'. With her added interest in Sand Play Therapy, Susan quickly spotted that the stones also 'lend themselves naturally to creating "zen" type sand trays,' which she used as a closing activity.

This year, the *Cars 'R' Us* cards have been colourfully displayed in Susan's office ('my roads started on the wall!') and she has also been using *The Bears*. Students made feelings books using *The Bears* as their starting point, while other activities have been developed using *Strength Cards for Kids*. Here are just a few of the photos Susan sent showing the colourful activities she's developed using the cards and their stickers!





SOON Giveaway



Vexillologists, we salute you!

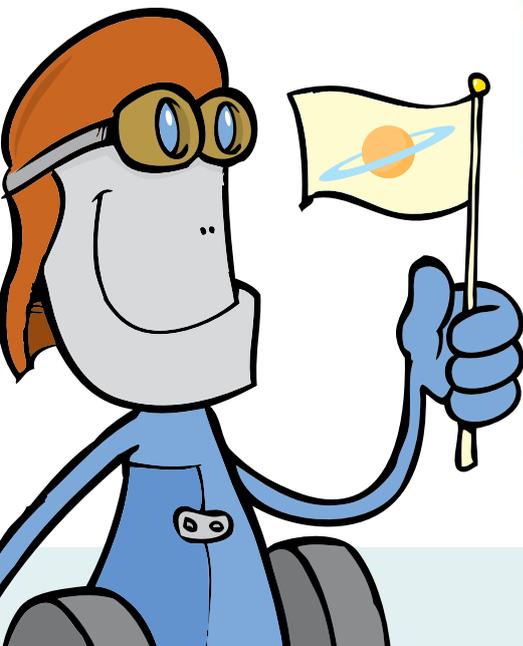
Last month's Flag Spotters Giveaway attracted a record number of entries for February's prize draw. From psychologists to school class groups, counsellors to pastoral carers... well, we had no idea that flags would ignite such wild enthusiasm!

Congratulations to Julie Rudder, who won the \$50 Gift Voucher.

Julie is a counsellor in the northern Sydney region and works with family carers who are looking after loved ones at home. 'I provide a listening ear for carers and support them in their caring journey,' she explains. Those being cared for may have a disability, dementia, mental health issues or be frail aged.

'I have been using the *Words* cards for 2-3 years to explore grief and loss issues. Given the freedom to choose from any of the 100 cards in the set, one of my clients, whose mother had recently died, chose 25 cards to reflect what she was feeling. I asked her to group the cards before she shared what they meant to her. She later reflected on how this process helped her to bring order out of the chaos of her feelings and enabled her to move on. I have found other carers have had similar experiences when using the cards in this way. It's a great tool!'

Here are the flags featured in last month's issue, just in case you were still puzzling!



SOON

In the Mailbag



Hamida Bhimani is the Head of Nursing Practice with the Community and Health Services Department in the York Region of Ontario, Canada. Last October, three of Innovative Resources' card sets went winging their way to her office in the town of Newmarket. We got in touch to ask how she was using them. Here's her reply:

1. I used *Picture This* to help a new team discover what is important to them as a team and set group norms.

2. I used *Change by Design* by applying it to a specific real life work situation related to a change that staff are facing. The application of the *Change by Design* principles was really effective.

3. I plan to use the *Vision for Supervision* cards to assist first-time coaches who are in formal and informal leadership roles to get comfortable with coaching!

Thanks, Hamida. We hope *Vision for Supervision* prompts some great conversations about leadership and coaching to bring out everyone's best!

March SPECIAL OFFER

It's 10 years since Ben Furman's *Kids' Skills* was translated into English!

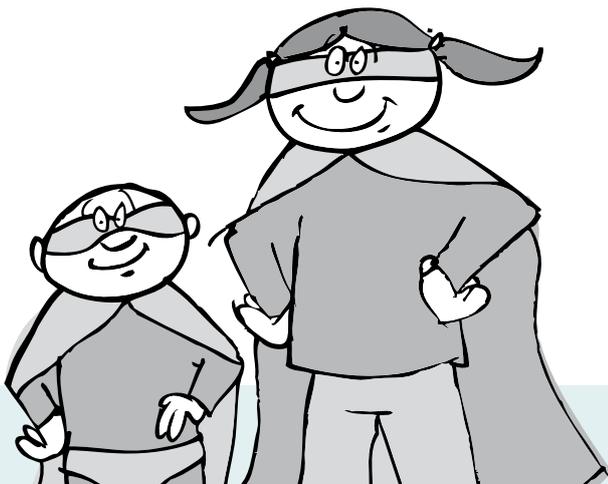
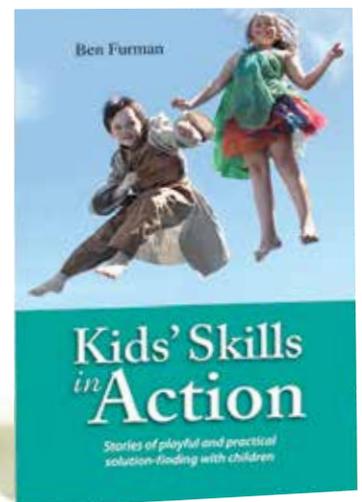
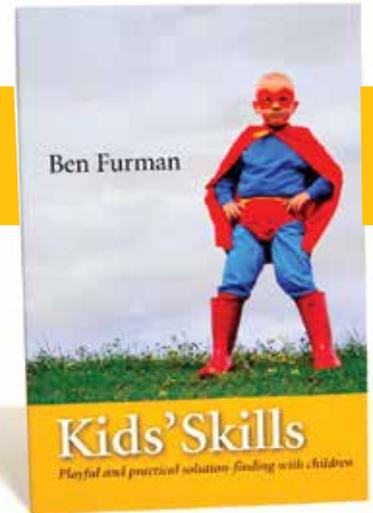
To mark this special anniversary, Innovative Resources is offering:
2 BOOKS FOR THE PRICE OF 1!

During March, customers who purchase *Kids' Skills* (\$31.95) will receive the companion book *Kids' Skills in Action* (\$26.90) for FREE. **Just mention this offer by phone or email when you place your order.**

Since renowned Finnish therapist Ben Furman first introduced his radical Kids' Skills approach, countless parents and human service professionals have learned to reframe children's 'problems' as skills that need to be developed.

Kids' Skills introduced Furman's simple, 15-step process that invites children to become active participants in skill-building and solution-finding, and creates dynamic and playful partnerships between carers and children.

In *Kids' Skills in Action*, discover real-life accounts and conversations describing the Kids' Skills method in practice. The stories capture a range of situations to reveal how parents and professionals have used the Kids' Skills approach to help children surmount difficulties, from managing anger to overcoming fears, preventing bedwetting to coping with divorce.



On Reflection

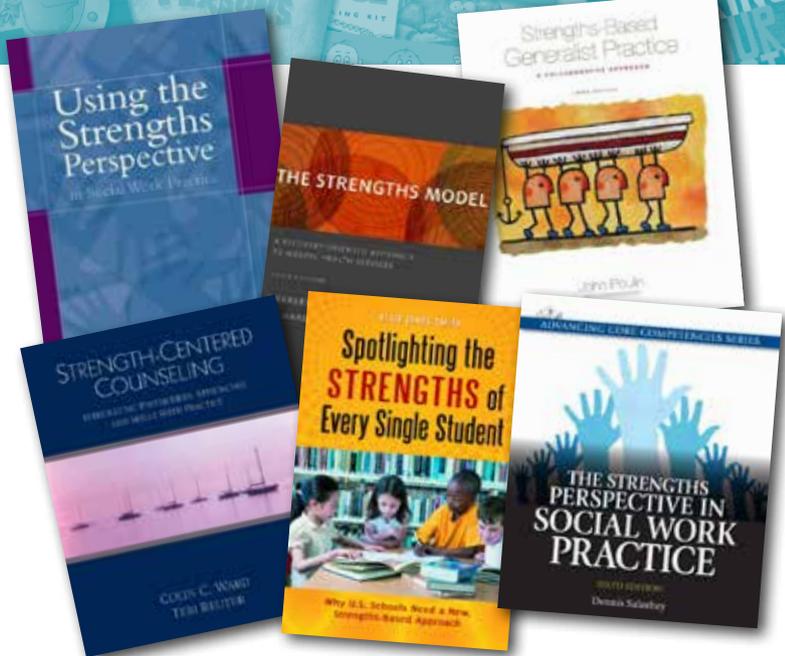
Strengths: Down Under and Up

When strengths-based practice began to emerge in the 1980s, the helping professions in North America were saturated with psychosocial approaches based in individual, family and community pathology, deficits, problems and abnormalities. Some thirty years later, long-term studies of strengths-based care and interventions have indicated that strengths approaches work—they improve self-care abilities, confidence and self-esteem in ways that allow people to independently carry out daily living activities.

Strengths-based practices are gaining impetus globally across fields as diverse as human services management, healthcare, commerce, and education and training. With that diversity, strengths-based practice has also found many champions around the world, from skilled practitioners working daily with families, abuse victims or refugee communities, to theorists and researchers who promote strengths approaches through writing and analysis.

Among those champions, perhaps few are more notable than the team at the University of Kansas—Dennis Saleebey, Charles Rapp and Anne Weick—who led the formal development of strengths approaches in the USA. Their work paved the way for strengths-based practices to be adopted across America and Canada, and, indeed, around the world. And their work also fed the efforts of a pioneering bunch of social workers at St Luke's Anglicare in Bendigo, Australia, who were on their own quest for alternatives to traditional, deficit-based approaches to family work.

Like so many practitioners who have embraced and adapted strengths-based approaches, we've since made some contributions of our own. In fact, that team at St Luke's created something unexpected when they fused their interest in strengths-based practice with an exploration of the possibilities of visual metaphor and an understanding of the value of tactile tools for clients.



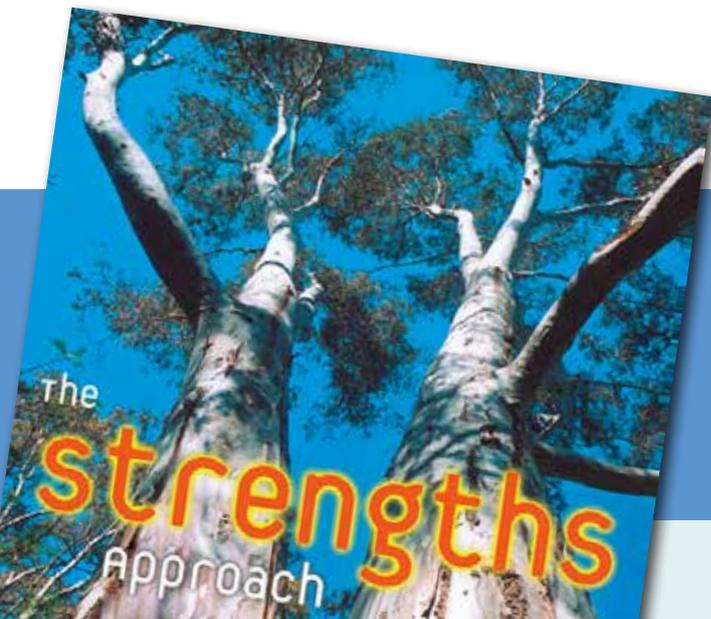
Much of strengths-based practice is dominated by talk. Yes, verbal interactions can change lives. But strengths can be unearthed and change promoted in other ways too. The popularity of the conversation-building card sets published by St Luke's Innovative Resources bears testimony to the invaluable role visual metaphor can play in strengths approaches.

Today, all those years after the ideas of Saleebey and his colleagues were welcomed by workers at St Luke's Anglicare, the transmission of ideas, insights and developments has become a two-way exchange. Innovative Resources' strengths-based tools are now finding their way into the hands of increasing numbers of teachers, counsellors, managers, trainers and human service workers in the United States and across the border in Canada.

Not so long ago, Innovative Resources fielded a proposal from workers in Canada for a French translation of the *Strength Cards*. We have also had our own internal discussions about more Spanish translations for those working with Hispanic communities in America, following the release of our English/Spanish *My Feelings/Mis Sentimientos* cards in 2008. So, for this issue of SOON, we're spotlighting our colleagues and customers in North America in a celebration of shared learning and creativity.

As many of our long-term supporters know, practitioners in Britain, Sweden and Finland 'get' the power of visual metaphor—that's why a number of our resources have been translated into Swedish and Finnish. But we're eager to see our connections with practitioners in the United States and Canada grow and flourish too, and to keep that essential cycle of ideas flowing.

Russell Deal OAM (*Creative Director*)
and Caitlyn Lehmann (*SOON editor*)



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Workshops and Conferences

ST LUKE'S INNOVATIVE RESOURCES AND
WOMEN'S HEALTH LODDON MALLEE WARMLY INVITE YOU TO:



Gender FAIRNESS WORKSHOP

Looking for ideas
to get gender onto
your workplace
agenda?

Needing resources
to start or progress
conversations about
gender fairness?

tools & techniques for creating conversations about gender equity

Many of us are not practised at talking about how gender influences our identity, our relationships at home and at work, and our attitudes and expectations of each other. Our society is so clearly divided into male and female roles that we take for granted that men and women, girls and boys have fundamentally different lived experiences from almost the time they are born. And these differences are not equal. All the research demonstrates that men have greater access to power, wealth and leisure. Women have greater responsibilities in the home and in caring for children, the sick and the infirm. What does this mean for women and men in the workplace, in relationships and at home, in communities, and in other social settings?

In this workshop participants will:

- explore innovative and interactive ways to use the *Gender Fairness* cards, and other hands-on original tools
- gain information and understanding about gender equity and explore why it is important to talk about it at work, in the home and in the community
- use creative techniques such as writing, art, visual resources and questioning styles to explore and understand our own gendered attitudes and expectations
- take away conversational tools and techniques for opening up and progressing discussions on topics such as power and control in the workplace, at home and in social settings.



The Facilitators

KAREN MILGROM

Karen has an Arts degree, Diploma of Education, a Graduate Certificate in Professional Writing and Editing and a Cert IV TEA. She is experienced in training and facilitation, community development and health promotion. Karen has worked in a range of government, community and health services where she has initiated and implemented social justice, family violence prevention and problem gambling programs. She works as Gender Equity Worker at Women's Health Loddon Mallee, and teaches Community Services Work at Bendigo TAFE.

KAREN MASMAN

Karen has a Master's degree, a Diploma of Teaching and a Diploma of Counselling Psychology. As the managing editor at St Luke's Innovative Resources, she has been involved in creating many strengths-based resources for counsellors, teachers and social workers. Karen is the author of a book called *The Uses of Sadness* and a card set called *The Nature of Strengths*. She recently facilitated a series of therapeutic creative writing programs resulting in a book called *The Treasure Trove*.

- When:** 9.30am—4.00pm; Wednesday 22 April 2015
- Where:** Academic Centre, University College,
40 College Crescent, Parkville VIC 3052
- Cost:** \$198 Includes morning and afternoon tea, lunch, a set of *Gender Fairness* cards and booklet of suggestions and techniques.
- Registration:** Required prior to the workshop. Please post/fax the attached registration form, or register online: www.innovativeresources.org (search for *Gender Fairness* Workshop)
For more information email: info@innovativeresources.org

www.innovativeresources.org