



2014

IDEAS BANK

Talking Up Our Strengths

Celebrate the strengths and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures! It's NAIDOC Week this month and *Talking Up Our Strengths* is at hand to help you mark the event.

Page 2

The Gentle Art of Angels

Discover the unique artistry of Trace Balla as she talks about creating the 52 heart-warming illustrations for the *Angels* cards.



Page 3

NoNo Takes a Bow

After more than thirty years in print, *NoNo the Little Seal* is about to retire. We pay tribute to this classic picture book for keeping children safe.



Page 5

Workshops, workshops...

Three inspiring workshops are coming up. Max those strengths, tweak those lives or hone your solution-focused practice!



Page 6

TALKING UP OUR STRENGTHS

Use these cards as reminders about the importance of our history, kinship bonds, and the strengths and values so deeply rooted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The images offer a way to nurture pride and help people put into words, memories, feelings, ideas, hopes and dreams.

It's NAIDOC Week in July, a special time to celebrate the contributions of Indigenous Australians all around the country. It's also a time to share stories—stories that strengthen pride in Indigenous culture and help a younger generation of Indigenous children to grow and flourish.

Designed to be used by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike, *Talking Up Our Strengths* is a resource to build appreciation of the richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This unique set of 22 photo-montage cards, developed in conjunction with SNAICC*, explores themes of identity, pride, the past and future, connection, heroes, land and much more.

Suggestions for teachers

Talking Up Our Strengths can be used to explore Indigenous culture in the classroom and to broaden conversations about cultural diversity and social justice:

- Look closely at the cards. Which symbols, events or people do you recognise? Choose one to research.
- Use the cards to reflect on the strengths and values of your school or any community you are part of. Invite your students to create a similar set of cards or posters featuring words and images that are important to them.
- Invite your students to reflect on the importance of traditions. Ask questions such as: Who taught you to be proud of your culture? Which card(s) show that person or those people best? Which card(s) reflect your favourite family or community traditions?
- Invite a leader of your local Indigenous community to speak to your class. Use the cards to help your students form questions to ask.



Storytelling and reflection

Use the cards to tell stories or explore the relationships between ideas by laying them out in a sequence. Some questions might be:

- Can you order the cards to show how important certain aspects of your life are to you?
- How do your strengths (or the strengths in your community or family) build on each other? What strengths are needed before others can grow?
- In the future, what strengths would you like to see developed in your life? In your family or community? In Australian society? In which order?

Fostering awareness in organisations

Cards from *Change by Design and Respect and Justice* can be used in conjunction with *Talking Up Our Strengths* to build cultural awareness and inclusive practice in teams, groups and organisations.

- Lay out the *Talking Up Our Strengths* cards on the floor or table. Using the *Change by Design* cards, reflect on your engagement with Indigenous peoples and different aspects of Indigenous culture. Does your team/group/organisation: ...think about what is going on? ...take the initiative? ...value contact with others? ...respect difference?
- Use the *Respect and Justice Cards* with *Talking Up Our Strengths* to reflect on how the principles and practices of the Strengths Approach contribute to building respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities. Pick cards from each set that seem to speak to each other and use the pairings as prompts for discussion. Why do these pairings seem significant? For example:
 'Our Knowledge' and 'How do we challenge stereotypes?'
 'Our Sport' and 'How do our similarities connect us?'
 'Our Struggles' and 'How do we nurture our wellbeing?'

TALKING UP OUR STRENGTHS

22 full colour cards, each 160 mm x 140 mm,
 Polypropylene box, 24-page booklet
 ISBN: 9 781 920945 411
 Booklet authors: Russell Deal, Rosie Elliott
 and Veronica Johns
 Designer: Tim Lane

Product Code: 4825 \$42.50 inc. GST

* Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication contains images of people who have since passed away.

In the Spotlight

The Gentle Art of ANGELS

A unique synthesis of artistry and therapeutic acumen underpins Innovative Resources' *Angels* card set. Illustrator and author Trace Balla talks about creating the 52 heart-warming images that make up this exquisite and inspiring resource.

It's a largish hop to enter the studio of Trace Balla. The step below the doorway is a work in progress, but it's cosy and surprisingly spacious inside this artist's cubby, tucked against the back fence of her home in Central Victoria. Trace's bench top is busy with papers, and I wonder if time permits her much use of the daybed under the window. On the wall, a cheerful bevy of Australian birds are chortling away on paper. They sprang to life for one of Trace's books and are instantly recognisable as her creations—spirited, loosely drawn illustrations that belie the care of their execution, like the *Angels* cards Trace created for Innovative Resources.

Angels is perhaps the most magical pairing of concept and artist in the Innovative Resources' stable—and like most great pairings, it has serendipitous beginnings. There's a story of a brief meeting with Trace at Castlemaine's Theatre Royal. Trace remembers attending one of Innovative Resources' Literary Therapist workshops, where she led a session on therapeutic bookmaking. After that, Russell Deal and Karen Masman 'invited me to do the *Angels* cards,' Trace recalls, 'They gave me this beautiful list of words—really positive words.' And, she adds, beaming, 'They gave me so much freedom!'



The project was a natural fit with both Trace's artistic bent and with her outlook on life. She describes her career as a 'morphing' one, which began with early training in animation and print-making, and later included a stint studying art in London. There, she realised that the emphasis on conceptual art was an uneasy fit her own creative instincts. Pen, ink, pencils and, more recently, masking fluid, are her preferred tools of trade. 'The illustration is pretty much self-taught,' she acknowledges—but it keeps her fully occupied. Just this year her picture book *Rivertime* has been published by Allen and Unwin, and she is already working on another.

However, it's the way human stories weave into art and creative expression that fascinates Trace, leading her from art into the field of art therapy. As 'a human who does art,' Trace describes art therapy as a natural extension of her creative work. 'I've always been interested in it and reading about it,' she says, but the catalyst to explore it seriously began with doll-making.

Trace was intrigued by the significance of dolls in traditional cultures and was teaching doll-making to adults when she was struck by the reactions it elicited. 'People were having these experiences that were quite deep. It wasn't just 'light craft', so I thought, "I need to study this a bit so I can hold these groups together better and understand."' One woman Trace remembers was very quiet throughout the session. 'She sat in the corner, busily making this doll for a long time. And it turned into this sort of opera-singing doll. She said it was her inner diva and it made her feel like she could bring her voice out more now.' Another participant made a doll using scraps of fabric from the clothing of a close family member who had recently passed away.

While declining to call herself an art therapist proper, Trace's forays into art therapy have provided insights for her own creative practice. It is, fundamentally, 'very powerful', Trace asserts and 'a good way to tap into things without using words.' One of the most beautiful aspects of Trace's illustrative work is her ability to distil life's big emotions into highly evocative, yet seemingly simple images. She has created several picture books in response to her own grieving and the grief of loved ones, including a book about her father's childhood—made at his request when he was dying—and the stunning, night-blue *Shine*, originally created following the death of her sister's husband, and soon to be published by Allen and Unwin.

Continued next page.

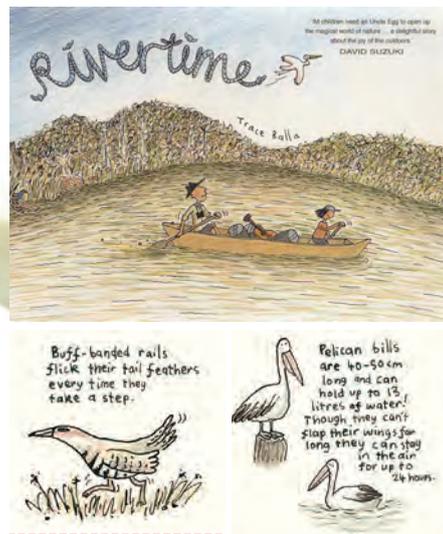


From previous page.

It's her awakesness to the human experience, its highs and lows, and Trace's skill at capturing the significance of small things that made her the ideal artist to bring the ordinary people—the everyday angels—of *Angels* to life. 'I feel that my life is surrounded by friends and strangers who are my everyday angels so I really believed in the project,' she says quietly. And what was it like to creating the illustrations? 'I LOVED that job!' Trace exclaims. Many of the *Angels* illustrations are Trace's spontaneous responses to words she was given. 'There was the occasional one that was challenging,' she remembers, but brainstorming with Russell and Karen quickly resolved odd difficulties.

Naturally, there are glimpses of Trace's own life experiences among the cards. 'There are definitely people I know,' she smiles. 'Contentment is a certain friend of mine who I always find so... content. It doesn't particularly look like her, but for me that her.' Other characters she recognised later. Her step-dad, she realised, is the man dabbling his toes in the water on the Insight card. 'I had a very close relationship with him,' she says fondly, 'That's how he was. It was really weird to find that picture of him.' And does Trace identify herself with one of the cards? You bet! 'The girl on the bike, seeking Adventure, is definitely me!' she laughs.

Of course, the real beauty of *Angels* is that every person who picks up the cards will recognise their own everyday angels and tell their own stories. Other people's interpretations are an endless source of wonder



to the artist herself, who admits that she 'would love to be a fly on the wall to see people's responses.' Now in the process of being translated into Finnish, the *Angels* cards remain close to Trace's heart. 'I felt very blessed to get such a beautiful job to work on,' she avows modestly. What a blessing it was for Innovative Resources to find this insightful artist willing to share her everyday angels with the world.

THE USES OF ANGELS

The *Angels* cards use the metaphor of an everyday, very human angel as a way of focusing on people's strengths, capacities, skills, qualities and goals. The cards are based on the understanding that by strengthening our capacity to notice and name the strengths and blessings that come into our lives, we strengthen our own capacity to develop and communicate them.

Trace has gifted one set of *Angels* to a close friend, who uses them regularly for personal contemplation and creative activities. Her friend 'loves using them,' Trace notes, and has tried several of the activities suggested in the *Angels* booklet.

At the book launch of *Rivertime*, Trace took along *Angels* as the perfect gift to thank the members of her local choir who sang at the event. 'I split a pack of *Angels* cards...and spread them all on the floor upside down. Everyone came in and picked one to take home.' With up to thirty people to thank, it made for 'a really beautiful experience' and Trace was astonished by the flow of stories and conversations after people picked up their cards—'The room was sighing with them!'

Donna McGrory, life coach and author of the forthcoming *Life Tweaking* cards, has used *Angels* specifically for storytelling. She used them with a group of six people who were long-term unemployed to help them explore how they wanted to feel and what they wanted in life. The group had been together for three weeks and 'were working really well together. They felt really safe,' she recalls.

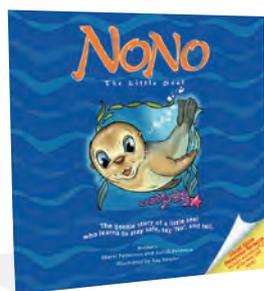
She asked the members of the group to each pick an *Angels* card representing their 'happily ever after' and then write a story starting from 'once upon a time...' and finishing with that 'perfect' ending. The participants were allowed to tell the story as themselves or as fictitious characters. The activity, Donna says, had an amazing impact, with some of the participants in tears of joy at the end. 'It was so powerful. I never in my wildest dreams would've expected it to have such an effect. After that it was quite different ... the class was a lot lighter.'

For more great tips on using *Angels* check out this **Ideas Bank** or peruse the **Angels booklet**. And if you've observed *Angels* make a special impact on someone's life, we'd love to hear your story!



Retiring
Soon

NoNo the Little Seal picture book



Ten years ago Innovative Resources published a picture book and CD called *NoNo the Little Seal*. This was one of the most challenging—and rewarding—publishing projects we have ever undertaken. This picture book tells the story of a little seal who learns how to stay safe after experiencing sexual abuse.

NoNo first came to life in 1982 in the United States. At the time, there were virtually no sexual abuse prevention tools for very young children, so Sherri Patterson developed the story as part of an outreach program for children. In 1984 Judith Feldman joined Sherri to further develop the idea, introducing original songs and additions to the text. Random House subsequently published the first edition of the book which sold over 55,000 copies in the USA!

In January 2003 NoNo's journey led to Innovative Resources where the first Australian edition of the book was published with brand new illustrations by Ray Bowler, a Melbourne-based illustrator and designer. Ray did a superb job in bringing the world of the sea and the characters alive on every page in a way that never trivialises the abuse but engages the reader in finding new and hopeful possibilities. Accompanying the book was Judith Feldman's vibrant new, dramatised version of the story and songs on CD.

And now, after such great service to the safety of children in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres, the time is drawing near for NoNo to retire. Once existing stock is gone, Innovative Resources will not be reprinting this classic. Heart-felt thanks to NoNo—and to his creators and supporters!

Cat No: 6052 AU\$24.50

Circling Your STRENGTHS

Sue Roffey is a leading psychologist, author and academic in the field of social and emotional learning. She is best known for her development of Circle Solutions, an evidence-based philosophy and pedagogy that encourages students of all ages to take responsibility for how safe, connected and engaged everyone feels in their school and community.

One of the principles of Circle Solutions is positivity, recognising that children and young people need emotionally supportive learning environments and positive messages to build personal resilience.

Strengths-based language with a solution focus is key to promoting positivity, and Sue recently wrote about using *Choosing Strengths* to foster positive emotions.

If you're using Circle Solutions in your school, team or youth group, nippity-click to Sue's blog and discover how she uses *Choosing Strengths* in Circle work with young people:

Circle Principles: Positivity—Strengths, Solutions and Promoting Positive Emotions

To find out more about Sue's work and Circle Solutions, head to www.sueroffey.com



The Arbitrators have mediated...
The Adjudicators have judged...
And the Referees have ruled that...

THE BEARS ARE THE RESOURCE OF THE YEAR!

Our 48 bears are jumping for joy and throwing their honey pots skywards after you voted them your favourite resource. They're cheering in Dutch and giggling in Hindi, and breaking down the language barriers to share the moment with their admirers around the world. Even our grumpiest, grumbliest bear is smiling on the inside. And what's this? Rumours of an oh-so sticky, runny honey fountain at the bears' celebrations? Heck!

Watch out for the July edition of SOON, where we'll reel off the stats and reveal the name of our online ballot winner. One lucky person will be taking home 3 free card sets—stay tuned!



SOON

Workshops and Conferences

Strengths to the Max

Date: Tuesday 15 July, 2014

Cost: \$88 (GST inclusive)

Time: 9.30 am – 4.00 pm

Venue: St Luke's Youth Central,
10 Mundy Street, Bendigo

Register by emailing training@stukes.org.au
or phone (03) 5442 0521 or (03) 5444 8138

- How can we mobilise strengths to build hope and create positive change?
- What is a 'strengths culture' and how might we help build one?
- How might we become more skilful at accessing our own strengths and those of others?

Join Russell Deal and Andrew Shirres to explore the key understandings and skills of strengths-based practice using a range of tools, resources and highly interactive conversations.

This 1-day workshop will explore topics including:

- Power-over and power-with
- Pictures of the Future
- The column approach
- Building strengths vocabularies
- Client owned/client-directed recording
- Appreciative Inquiry perspectives on strengths-based practice
- Strengths-based supervision
- Metaphors, stories, tactile resources and picture books
- Multiple intelligences
- Creative and therapeutic writing techniques

Please note: Morning and afternoon tea will be provided, lunch will NOT be provided. BYO or purchase from nearby eateries.



Russell Deal, Innovative Resources' Creative Director, leads a workshop for the Bendigo Writers Group—with the *Angels* cards liberally scattered over the tables!

BRIEF Solution Focused Workshop with Chris Iveson

Date: Tuesday 5 August, 2014

Cost: \$140 - Morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea provided.

Time: 9.00am – 4.30pm

Venue: Big Hill Winery Corner Calder Hwy & Belvoir Park Rd. Big Hill, VIC, 3453

For more information or to register:
training@stlukes.org.au or call (03) 5444 8138

This workshop is intended to provide skills that will begin to transform conversations in whatever form or place they occur.

The core elements have been successfully used by counsellors, social workers, foster parents, family support workers, teachers, youth workers, drug and alcohol workers, mental health practitioners, nurses, doctors and police officers. They have also been adapted to supervision, coaching, leadership and organisational development—anywhere that enabling conversations have a place.

This will be a skills-based workshop with most of the work being done in small groups. It will be hard work, good fun and most of all it will make a difference to what you do the next day. The Solution Focused content will include:

- Creating a common purpose
- Opening a way
- Reviewing histories
- Creating and building on successful histories
- Recognising progress

Chris Iveson founded BRIEF in 1989 with Harvey Ratner and Evan George and they have since trained almost 100,000 people around the world. BRIEF is the world's leading centre for solution focused practice in therapy and counselling as well as in coaching, leadership, team building and conflict resolution. Its training programme is extensive, providing inspiration to front-line workers in health, education and social care as well as to senior executives in both public and private enterprise.



SOON

Workshops and Conferences



Innovative Resources warmly invites you to:

Life Tweaking WORKSHOP

Tools and techniques for **CREATING HOPE AND INVITING CHANGE**

Looking for fresh ways to let the light shine in your work with others?

Looking for resources and ideas that sparkle with creativity?

This one-day workshop explores the transformative power of resources and techniques for life coaches, mentors, counsellors, facilitators, social workers...and anyone who works therapeutically with others.

In this highly-interactive workshop we will explore:

- a range of tools and techniques for creating conversations that sparkle with meaning and possibility
- a new resource to arrive on the conversation-building scene—the *Life Tweaking* cards!
- other resources featuring photos, cartoons, paintings and other visual styles that open doors words alone may not
- strengths-based, solution-focussed questioning styles including Audience, Video, Hero, Exceptions, Externalising, Kaizen and Blink questions
- storytelling and narrative techniques for inviting the healing power of stories to tumble out
- visioning and goal-setting conversations for building cultures of strengths in teams and individuals
- therapeutic creative writing techniques to light the creative spark—you've heard people say, 'But I'm not creative!'...now watch them write a 6-word story that somehow lets the light shine in.

For more about Innovative Resources and *Life Tweaking*:
www.innovativeresources.org (search for *Life Tweaking*)

When: 9.30am—4.00pm; Wednesday 24 September 2014

Where: Academic Centre, University College,
40 College Crescent, Parkville VIC 3052

Cost: \$190 Includes morning and afternoon tea, lunch, a set of *Life Tweaking* 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 *Life Tweaking* Workshop)

For more information email: info@innovativeresources.org

The Facilitators

DONNA MCGRORY

Donna has a Diploma of Management and gained her coaching qualification from the Coaching Institute in Melbourne. She is also a workplace development trainer and facilitator, having worked with individuals, groups and organisations in a wide variety of settings including IGA supermarkets, Tarrengower Prison and Mazda. She has trained and coached people experiencing long-term unemployment and has recently written training and assessment tools for a Certificate I in Work Education for people with a disability. Donna is an author of the *Life Tweaking* card set.

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*. She recently facilitated a series of therapeutic creative writing programs resulting in a book called *The Treasure Trove*.