



Aspirational...? Inspirational...? Ready for a bear hug...?

Put your paws together for *The Bears*, the card set and the app! Still the absolute classic for talking about feelings.

Containing the Chaos

From Nashville, USA, comes a special interview with Matthew Ford, an expert crisis counsellor attached to the city's Police Department.



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Workshops

Why not stay the night in Bendigo? We're holding consecutive workshops in early May. See inside for discount details.



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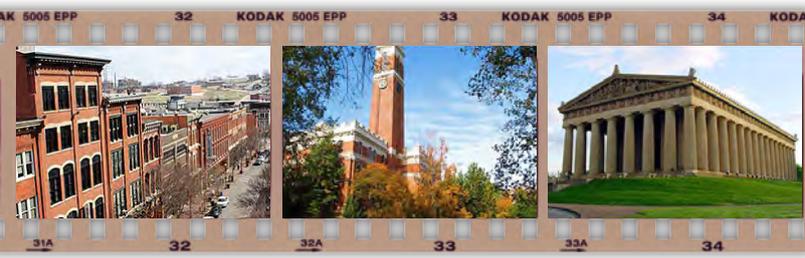
Card Sets Combined

Discover ideas for extending conversations by creating some unusual unions and playful partnerings with cards.



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In the Spotlight



Containing the Chaos

A thousand hours of clinical therapy, 200 supervision sessions, a national exam on practice and treatment models, and a state exam for professional ethics. That's what it takes to be a fully qualified Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist—so when Matthew Ford was asked to choose a *Shadows* card while completing his certification, it's no wonder he chose the desk full of messages and Post-it notes: 'Late, Past Due, Urgent, Reminder!'

Based in Tennessee in the south-eastern United States, Matthew first encountered Innovative Resources' *Shadows and Deeper Shadows* cards during one of those 200 hours of supervision. He was unexpectedly asked to choose a card representing where he was on his current journey—and a second showing where he thought he might be in six months' time.

'At that time,' he recalls, 'work was stressful, time was limited and so were funds. That first card, the desk full of messages, described my life being in chaos and always feeling behind in my work, my career, my love life—even behind where I thought my life would be at that point. The second card I chose was the runner bent over catching his breath. I interpreted it as being the runner pausing during a long and strenuous marathon, and about to resume once he regulated his breathing and refocused. It seemed to encapsulate the entirety of my stress, but I liked the idea of the runner still being in the race. It also provided hope that the difficulties were short term.'

Above: Marriage and Family Therapist Matthew Ford



Helping officers identify their emotional state is one reason why Matthew likes to use the *Shadows* cards. 'By selecting a card, they are typically able to explain how the image relates to their experience and labelling emotions almost happens without prompt.'

Matthew ran that marathon, achieved his goals, and now serves with the Nashville Police Department, where he's one of four Police Crisis Counsellors in the Department's Behavioural Health Services division. He facilitates the Police Advocacy Support Services (PASS) program, which provides therapeutic services for officers and their families. PASS is also responsible for trauma response, which sees Matthew attending the scene when a critical incident has occurred to provide crisis support for the officers involved.

Those incidents can include gruesome crime or accident scenes, hostage situations, and a range of scenarios when officers have been injured or discharged their weapons. After the incident has occurred, Matthew explains, 'We will often follow up with in-depth crisis debriefing to help an officer process the event and normalise their emotional and physical symptoms, as well as discuss or set up additional support services.' Away from the front line, however, PASS also sees Matthew spending time in the classroom, where he contributes to the psycho-education of Police Academy's trainees.

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Nashville, home to the Country Music Hall of Fame, and known as 'The Athens of the South' on account of a startling replica of the Parthenon, is a rapidly growing city of 1.7 million people. It has a Police Department scaled to match comprising 1400 police officers, 300 civilian employees, another 800 officers attached to the Davidson County Sheriff's Department, plus 100 emergency dispatch personnel. In the past, Matthew has worked in community mental health, providing counselling for struggling families and the homeless. But though the work was rewarding, it was, he acknowledges, 'not my niche'.

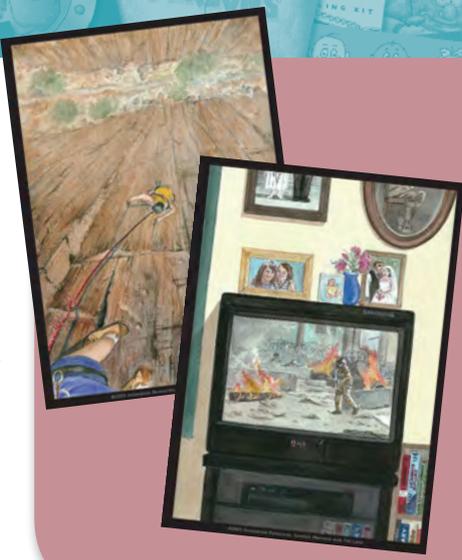
Instead, his real passion lies in working with the men and women who operate within strict chains of command. 'Growing up, my father was in the US Army and I was surrounded by soldiers and veterans. I grew to admire the sacrifices these men and women made for their country, and was able to see firsthand the impact those sacrifices had on families and relationships.' His father retired from the Army when Matthew was midway through his psychology degree. By then, 'I knew that I wanted to learn as much as I could about mental illness and distress,' he remembers, 'especially within the military population.'

That interest was cemented during a brief stint with an organisation that provided free counselling for active duty soldiers, veterans and their families. Later, when the opportunity to work with the Nashville Police Department arose, Matthew jumped at the chance because 'between 20-30% of the police officers in Nashville have prior military service.'

Many stressors and situational experiences are very similar for police officers and military personnel, he explains. 'The most common issues we encounter are marital distress for couples due to the major strain put on relationships; trauma from past or recent experiences; anxiety and stress that inevitably accompany the law enforcement profession, and burnout due either from lack of stimulation or the "hyper-vigilance rollercoaster".'

Labelling emotions can be also particularly difficult for some police officers, operating as they do in a profession that requires them to maintain an image of strength or toughness. 'Suppressing emotion because "it gets in the way" or prolonged exposure to recurring chaos and trauma can desensitize some officers,' Matthew acknowledges, 'which makes processing emotional experiences very difficult.'

Helping officers identify their emotional state is one reason why Matthew likes to use the *Shadows* cards. 'By selecting a card, they are typically able to explain how the image relates to their experience and labelling emotions almost happens without prompt.' The cards are also 'exceptionally useful' for marital therapy and couple counselling. In one exercise he often introduces, Matthew invites each partner to choose a card that they think represents their partner's view of the relationship. 'It's a very engaging and insightful activity because it allows each partner to share and describe their image, their reasoning for choosing the card for their partner, and to listen to their partner describing their card in turn.' Plus, he adds,



In the discussion that ensued, Matthew and the couple explored the television as a powerful metaphor for efforts to 'contain the chaos' by 'changing the channel' or turning the television off.

it 'allows me as a therapist to observe how the couple interacts, communicates and works together on a task.'

He remembers an occasion when one partner chose the *Shadows* card depicting destruction and fire on a television set, while around the television are pictures of children, a wedding photo, flowers and a newborn. 'The [relationship] is chaos, pure chaos,' the person said. 'We are trying to work through this major tragedy, but we don't want to let anyone else know about what is happening. It's too shameful and embarrassing, so we "turn it off" around everyone else and put on the front of being a happy family.' In the discussion that ensued, Matthew and the couple explored the television as a powerful metaphor for efforts to 'contain the chaos' by 'changing the channel' or turning the television off. It helped them all to understand the behaviours that were exacerbating dysfunction within the relationship.

Like many other professionals who use *Shadows* in their work, Matthew is endlessly fascinated by how his own interpretation of the images changes according to mood. 'I find myself viewing a lot of the cards on a spectrum of coming or going, up or down, and resting or quitting. For example, at one time I was drawn to the image of two rock climbers connected by a red rope that appears to be splitting in half. When I looked at the image a lot of hypothetical scenarios came into my mind—'Are they ascending or descending? What is the impact of the splitting rope? If they are continuing to climb, how much trust does each person have in themselves and their climbing partner? What would I do if the rope "split" in a major area of my life or career?'

Having recently added *Two Worlds* to his toolkit, Matthew is determined to expand his repertoire of activities using therapeutic tools. 'I also work with a lot of families that are going through divorce, or adjusting to remarriages and blended families. I haven't introduced *Two Worlds* into a session yet,' he speculates, 'but plan to do so very soon!'



Workshops and Training

Stay the Night



Why not stay the night? Register for May's back-to-back 'Strengths Approach to Practice' and 'Tools of the Trade' workshops (May 9th and 10th) for the special price of \$375.00. **Save \$60.00.**

Strengths Approach to Practice

Everyone has strengths. Our qualities, capacities, relationships, values, stories, experiences, skills and material resources can all be strengths. But 'The Problem' can easily be experienced as all-consuming, keeping clients and services alike stuck and creating barriers to change. Strengths-based practice focusses squarely on identifying, mobilising and celebrating clients' strengths.

Social workers, counsellors, managers, educators—and anyone who works with others—can become a catalyst for building cultures where strengths and connectedness flourish, so that clients build resilience, capacity for lasting change and genuine 'agency' in their own lives. This highly engaging and practical training facilitates participants' learning of strengths-based principles, skills and resources that can be applied immediately in their work.

DATE: 9th May, 2016
VENUE: IR Training Room, 62 Collins Street, Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)
COST: \$217.80 inc. GST

Tools of the Trade

In this highly interactive workshop participants will experiment with a wide range of original, Australian-made resources for opening up meaningful conversations with children, youth, families and adults. With a unique mix of playfulness and soulfulness, this workshop aims to deliver a hands-on experience of the role of artifacts and visual metaphors in adding potency to conversations about strengths, hopes, goals, values, relationships, feelings and the changes people want to make in their families, organisations and lives. Topics include:

- Creative ways to use resources to identify, mobilise and celebrate strengths
- The importance of building emotional vocabularies
- Storytelling as the fabric of counselling, therapy, team and community building
- The latent power of visual metaphors to enhance conversations
- Different learning styles and questioning techniques to invite curiosity, reflection and conversation
- Elements for creating respectful, inclusive, safe environments for conversations and groups

DATE: 10th May, 2016
VENUE: IR Training Room, 62 Collins Street, Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)
COST: \$217.80 inc. GST

Strengths Approaches to Supervision (2 days)

This workshop is designed for anyone who gives or receives supervision, from managers and educators, to team leaders present or future. Using group discussion, exercises, demonstrations and hands-on tools, participants will learn to apply a strengths approach to supervision conversations, with the aim of building reflective, creative and effective supervision agreements and relationships. Such relationships play a major role in building organisational culture and worker satisfaction, and ultimately create better outcomes for clients. The workshop will explore:

- The principles and skills of strengths approaches to practice
- 'Traditional' supervision compared to strengths approaches to supervision
- How our values intersect with supervision
- The functions of supervision
- Supervision practice and building supervision goals
- Your 'Vision for Supervision'
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Supervision agreements

DATE: Wednesday 15th & Thursday 16th June, 2016
VENUE: IR Training Room, 62 Collins Street, Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)
COST: \$435.60 inc. GST

Head to the **Innovative Resources website** to find out more about these events and to register.
www.innovativeresources.org

Become a Member of Innovative Resources

We really value our relationships with the teachers, trainers and dedicated human service professionals who use our products, and we'd like to reward our loyal customers with the opportunity to join a new membership scheme.

Here is what you'll receive for your free membership:

- 10% discount on all purchases
- Exclusive specials throughout the year
- Discounts on training and workshop registrations
- Invitations to exclusive member engagement events
- Additional rewards for signing up new members
- Our monthly online newsletter
- The opportunity to test out new resources and provide feedback

To join, simply fill out the **membership form** on our website. By joining you'll agree to:

- receive discounts and special offers
- receive invitations to attend special events
- receive regular updates about our products (but we won't spam you!)
- participate in product development surveys

Interested? Visit our website and go to the **'Members'** page.



In the Spotlight

Card Sets Combined

Innovative Resources has published a lot of cards sets—almost 60, in fact. Some feature images and some rely on words alone. Their illustrative styles range from cartoons to photographs, montages and line drawings. Some are for talking about feelings or giving names to people's strengths. Some are designed with children in mind; others are for youth, organisations and community groups.

But when it comes to using our resources, you're encouraged to unleash your creativity! Play around, because no single card set can do it all. With some unusual unions and pictorial partnerships, even very different card sets can be combined to create a mosaic of conversation built on the interconnections of concepts, images and ideas.

Here are some simple ideas to begin with—you'll discover many more!

Using Strengths Cards:
Pick a card for a strength you would like to call on in your life.

Using Symbols:
Pick a card that can symbolise this strength for you. Why? Draw this symbol in your own way, and keep it in your pocket or on your desk.



Using Reflexions:
Pick two cards—one that shows how you are feeling at school and one that shows how you want to be feeling.



Using Strength Cards:
Pick two strengths that you think could help you get there.

Using Shadows:
Pick a card that says something about a challenge you are facing.

Using Choosing Strengths:
Pick a card that is an important strength to draw on while you are facing this challenge.

Using Optimism Boosters:
Pick a question that feels like it could be a way forward, or a useful perspective in relation to your challenge.



Using A Patchwork Life:
Pick cards to tell your story and lay them out as though creating a patchwork quilt.

Using Words or Symbols:
Pick cards to extend the quilt and complement its dream-like imagery.



Using The Nature of Strengths:
Pick a card for an animal, plant or insect you like

Using Strength Cards:
Pick another strength you see in this creature. How could you practice this strength?



Using Strength in Teams:
Pick strengths you think are present in your group or team.

Using What Works:
Pick a card that you would like your team to practice more. Can your team agree on how to do that?



Using Cars 'R' Us:
Pick a car that represents how you are feeling about something.

Using The Bears:
Pick a Bear that represents you as the driver of that car. What would change if you picked a different Bear to drive your car?



Using Signposts or Angels:
Pick a card that says what you would like to be doing more of.

Using Note to Self:
Pick a card that you think would help you do that.



Using The Bears:
Pick a card that represents someone or something you care about.

Using Angels:
Pick a card you would wish to offer as a blessing for them.



Using Storycatching:
Pick a card at random.

Using Words:
Pick a card at random. Tell a story that combines these two cards.



No metaphor or graphic style works for everyone. Some people like cartoons, others prefer watercolour illustrations or word-based resources. You can't always predict what will appeal to someone. That's why a combination of resources with different styles can be very effective. Mixed, mused, swapped and overlaid—when it comes to combining card sets, be prepared for unexpected insights and new directions for discussion as metaphors and ideas collide!

Karen Bedford

SOON



International Women's Day



International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. This year, the day also marks a call to action to accelerate gender parity.

On March 8, why not use the *Gender Fairness* cards to have a conversation with your class, family or colleagues about what gender parity looks like?

- How can we increase the visibility of women's expertise and wisdom?
- What does shared power look like at home and at work?
- What unfair social messages undermine women as leaders?



UN WATER

WORLD WATER DAY

22 MARCH 2016 - WATER AND JOBS

United Nation's World Water Day is held on 22 March to celebrate water and to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

This year, take along your *Talking ecoLogical* cards to reflect on the importance of freshwater and its connectedness to all life. What does water mean to you? Go on, make a splash!



In the Mailbag

We love getting bear hugs and here's one from a Teacher Librarian in South Australia. Make sure you're rumbling into 2016 'pre-beared' with *The Bears App!*

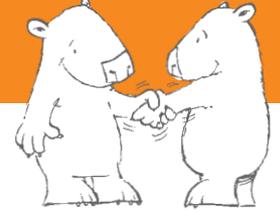
I wanted to let you know that I have been a fan of *The Bears* for many years, using them in a LAP programme. They have been a great icebreaker and conversation starter.

Recently I was really excited to find *The Bears App*. My nephew, aged 8, has not been very positive about school for a while and we have been sending a bear to each other on a daily basis, writing a short message to explain why we chose that particular furry friend. Although only doing this for a couple of weeks, he seems to be making deliberate choices and having a really good try with his writing.

Thanks for a great resource!



MARCH Special



Look through the round window with *Circles!*

It's the world's first hands-on tool that names the values and ground rules for building cultures of respectful communication!

Strengths in Circles is a set of 42 cards based on the key principles of the Circles approach: Agency, Safety, Positivity, Inclusion, Respect and Equality (ASPIRE). Use these cards to invite people to reflect on how they are working together and what they might do to maximise the effectiveness of their team or classroom group.

Ideal for school classrooms, dispute resolution, mediation, juvenile justice and reconciliation, *Strengths in Circles* belongs in the toolkit of any teacher or group facilitator. These cards are powerful reminders of how groups can build connection ... and find creative, collaborative solutions together!



Strengths in Circles

CAT NO. 4932
Regular price: \$49.50

Now \$39.60

until 31/3/2016