

REFLEXIONS

Second
Edition

*34 photomontage cards for building
conversations with young people about feelings,
goals and identity*

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Second edition published in 2018 and 2023 (first edition in 2000) by:



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ISBN: 9 781 920945 961

Innovative Resources acknowledges the Jaara people of Dja Dja Wurrung country, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our premises are located and where our resources are developed and published. We pay our respects to the elders—past, present and future—for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and other First Nations peoples. We must remember that underneath this earth, upon which we so firmly stand, this is, was and always will be, the traditional land of First Nations peoples.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Becoming an independent person is a complex and sometimes difficult journey for young people.

Who am I?

What am I feeling?

What is important to me?

Where am I at and where am I heading?

What choices do I have and what changes can I make?

The power of reflection and connection

Questions such as these are like quicksilver—they can be invaluable catalysts for development and growth throughout our whole lives. And they can also be quite overwhelming—especially for young people who may be thinking about these things for the first time. Many young people cannot find the words to express what they are feeling, wondering about or struggling with. They can feel very isolated as emotions and thoughts about their worth, purpose and relationships swirl and collide.

It is a life-long source of resilience to learn some skills for reflecting on what we are experiencing; taking time to get a handle on what is happening, and gaining perspective and connection by speaking with others. *Reflexions* is a tool designed to support young people in their personal reflection and communication with others. Solutions may not even be needed—simply letting others know what we are experiencing can help share the load.

Reflexions is a set of 34 full-colour photomontage cards designed for young people who are in the process of creating their own identities. The cards can help young people explore their lives, navigate their feelings and see themselves from different angles. They can also be used to reflect on how others—such as parents, teachers and friends—see them. These cards can also assist young people to challenge limiting ideas they may have about themselves. They encourage young people to make conscious choices about how they want their life to be.

Iconic tool for working with young people

If you are a youth worker, counsellor, mentor, teacher, family worker, chaplain or welfare coordinator in a school, chances are you've come across the *Reflexions* cards before.

Reflexions was first published in 2000, and was the inspiration of Russell Deal, the founder of St Luke's Innovative Resources and creative director at the time. Building on the success of earlier card sets for children and families, *Reflexions* was designed especially for having conversations with young people about their feelings, identity, relationships, successes, struggles and goals.

It is surprising how well the original photography has stood the test of time. Perhaps this is because emotions and the essence of what people want—happiness, acceptance, relationship, enjoyment, and the power to make choices and find a way through adversity—endures. But in the 20 years since first publication, there have been many changes in young people's social landscape, and this is what we wanted to represent in the cards in this second edition.

Indigenous young people from Eaglehawk Secondary School in Victoria, Australia participated in the original photoshoot for *Reflexions*. Some of these young people are now parents of young people themselves!

Features of the second edition

The photomontages for this second edition include some of the original photographs together with a substantial collection of new images.

Also, there are two additional cards in the second edition (34 cards instead of 32), and every card in the set has been updated with fresh visual elements. These updates include references to social media and other aspects of the digital landscape. You will also find recent terms such as 'fake news' embedded within the cards. Also present are images that more fully represent gender diversity and inclusiveness, refugees, disability, environmental issues, and other aspects of social justice. Exam and employment stress and other features of young people's experience have also been depicted.

The box and back of card images have been completely restyled for the second edition, and there is also a new 'Activities Card' for facilitators with some quick-grab ideas for using the cards. (There is an expanded range of ideas for using the cards on p 7 of this booklet).

The two additional 'Able to' cards

The two additional cards in the second edition are 'Able to Ask for Help' and 'Able to Start Over'; both essential resilience skills for anyone. These new cards join the other 'Able to' cards in the set, which are: 'Able to Change', 'Able to Work With Others', and 'Able to Make Decisions'. That makes a total of five 'Able to' cards in the new edition.

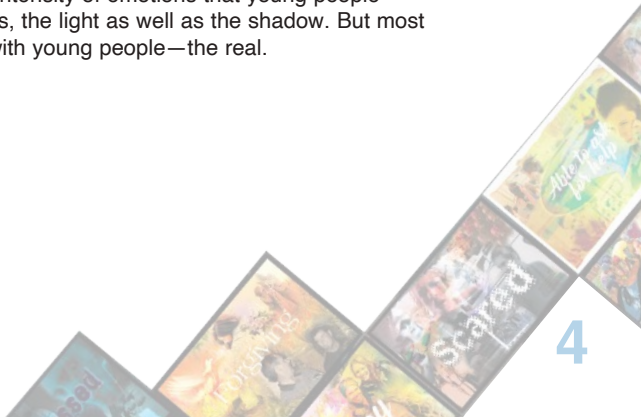
The purpose of the 'Able to' cards is to point the way to how change can happen. They name processes, skills or behaviours that support positive change. The rest of the cards name a range of emotions—from the highs to the lows.

Visual elements add layers of meaning

Tim Lane is the designer for both editions of *Reflexions*. The photographs, illustrations, fonts and other design elements created by Tim add layers of meaning to the key word on each card. As you know, a single word can have many meanings and it can mean different things to different people. Each visual element on the card provides another interpretation or nuance of meaning to help young people get to know the varied landscape of their feelings.

Keeping it real

Sometimes gritty and brooding, as well as passionate and soulful, these cards don't shy away from the intensity of emotions that young people experience—the ups and downs, the light as well as the shadow. But most important of all when working with young people—the real.



THE COMPLETE LIST OF CARDS

able to ask for help

able to change

able to make decisions

able to start over

able to work with others

angry

anxious

assertive

brave

careful

caring

confident

confused

creative

different

depressed

determined

disgusted

easy going

enthusiastic

excited

forgiving

frustrated

fun

happy

honest

hopeful

independent

lonely

ok

responsible

sad

scared

thoughtful



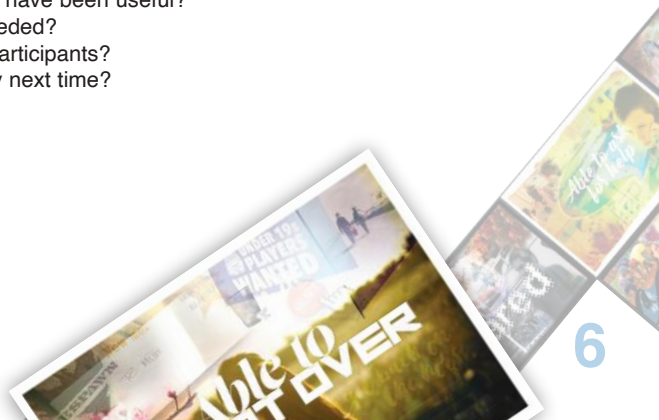
TAKING CARE BEFORE USING THE CARDS WITH OTHERS

Any hands-on tool can have unanticipated effects. Materials that use photographs and other images can be especially evocative of experiences, stories and memories. This is the very source of their usefulness, and at the same time, may give rise to surprisingly strong emotions and vulnerabilities. No matter how well a facilitator knows the person or group using the cards, people's reactions are not necessarily predictable. A word or an image that is benign for one person, may stir up powerful emotions or even negative meanings for another.

This is particularly so for a tool like *Reflexions* which is designed for opening up conversations about people's feelings and what is important to them. These topics can easily come very close to the bone. Once again, this is the power of this resource, and at the same time, such conversations need to be handled with care.

All this should be taken into account before any therapeutic tool or artifact is introduced, particularly if people using the cards are likely to be experiencing grief, loss, trauma or any other significant challenges. Here are some important questions for facilitators to consider before using *Reflexions* with others:

- How well do I know the cards? Am I familiar with all the images and words on each card?
- Have I tried using the cards myself first? What did I notice?
- Are the cards suitable for the literacy levels of the person or group?
- Are the cards culturally and developmentally appropriate?
- Is there anything in the set that might cause offence or be provocative for the person or group?
- Do I want to use all cards or will I make a selection?
- Is it the right time to introduce the cards?
- Will I formally introduce the cards using an activity, or will I simply leave them within reach for someone to pick up, if they wish?
- If I am using the cards in a group, how will people's privacy, confidentiality, dignity and safety be protected?
- How will people be given the option to pass or opt out of an activity?
- How can I help ensure that everyone in a group is listened to respectfully?
- Have I allowed enough time to work through any significant emotions and thoughts that may arise?
- Do I have a 'Plan B' to jump to, if needed?
- How will I know if the cards have been useful?
- Is any follow up support needed?
- Will I seek feedback from participants?
- Will I do anything differently next time?



SOME IDEAS FOR USING THE CARDS

While there are countless ways of using the cards with young people, they all fall into two broad methods—deliberate selection or random choice.

Deliberate selection

This method involves spreading the cards out on a table, inviting participants to look them over and select cards based on questions such as the following:

- Pick a card that represents how you are feeling at the moment.
- Pick a card that represents how you would like to be feeling.
- Pick 3 cards that represent feelings you have had quite a bit recently.
- Pick 2 cards for feelings you sometimes have at the same time—even if they are opposite feelings.

Spreading the cards out on the floor (illustration side facing up) is also an option. People get a bird's eye view of all the cards, and they can walk around them or follow a path of cards. (Make sure people are able to bend down safely if you want them to pick up a card.) Equally, the cards can be displayed on a wall, window or noticeboard.

Random choice

Random choice includes activities such as shuffling and dealing, playing games that involve hiding and finding cards, lucky dips, selecting a card from a fan or stack of cards, placing cards randomly on seats, and so on.

Time and again people see significance in 'their' randomly-picked card. And they tend to relax when an element of playfulness enters the room, so random selection can work very well as an ice-breaker, or for those 'stuck' moments.

Talking about Feelings

Reflexions is a very useful tool for help young people to develop a 'feelings' vocabulary and explore issues of personal responsibility. Spread the cards out on a table or on the floor, and then ask questions such as:

- Which of these cards show feelings/thoughts you do well?
- Which of these cards are feelings/thoughts that you feel you are in control of?
- Which ones push you around?
- Which ones would your parents (friends, grandparents, and so on) say that you do well?
- Do any feelings or thoughts particularly bother you?
- What help or extra resources might assist with these?
- Is there a particular thought or feeling you'd like to work on?
- Do some of the cards depict feelings that you think 'go together'?
- Which ones do you think are opposites?
- Do you ever feel any of these emotions at the same time?
- Can one feeling help with another feeling?
- What are some other words you would give to the feelings depicted on the cards?

Scripting, storytelling and creative writing

Storytelling can take place in groups, in pairs or in a solitary way via creative writing or journalling. Here are some ideas for activities:

- Invite students to use the cards to define the personalities and feelings of characters in a role play or dramatic script. Why does the character demonstrate that particular thought/feeling?
- How might particular thoughts or feelings influence a character's actions? What will the consequences be?
- What card represents a thought/feeling that could affect the outcome for the better—or make the situation worse?
- How will your character choose which feelings/thoughts/strengths to rely on? Would you make the same choices or different ones?
- Choose one card. Can you tell/write a story about a time when this emotion featured? (Perhaps you experienced someone else demonstrating this emotion, or you demonstrated it yourself.) Can you remember the first time/last time you experienced this emotion in a powerful way?
- Place the cards face down and randomly choose 3-6 cards. Or shuffle and deal the cards. Can you tell/write a story using all of these cards?
- A variation is to leave the ending open and randomly choose another card that will give you clues to the ending of the story.
- Do you think these cards are related? How was it to connect these emotions together in one story like this?
- Choose a card. Can you tell/write a story about what happens when this emotion seems to dominate an individual life, or the life of our family, community, workplace, or world?
- What would happen if a person, family or community never felt this emotion?
- Can you tell a story using the cards about your best, worst and funniest experiences today or this week?

Supporting families

The *Reflexions* cards can be used to explore a range of difficulties that families may be experiencing. Start by inviting family members to scan the cards and pick out those that seem most relevant:

- Looking at the cards, how do you as a family deal with these feelings/thoughts?
- Do you handle each of them constructively?
- Are there any which create confusion and upset?
- How do different family members enact each feelings/thought?
- What are the similarities and differences?
- When one family member is enacting one of these feelings/thoughts, how do other members react?
- Which of the cards would you as a family like to work on?
- What strengths do you have that you can use to work through these?
- Do you need extra help or resources?

Building empathy and peer support

Teachers, youth workers and others who work with young people can use *Reflexions* to structure discussions about peer support and responsibility:

- What feelings and thoughts does each group member think they may handle well or least well?
- How can friends help each other when someone is struggling with these feelings and thoughts?
- Do you feel under pressure from family, friends, peers or workmates to hide any of these feelings or thoughts?
- How might some of these feelings and thoughts lead to dangerous or self-destructive behaviour?
- How can this group encourage honest talk and feedback about these things?
- How can this group make sure that everyone in the group is heard and welcome to be themselves?

Working towards change using the 'Able To' cards

Place the 'Able to' cards to one side and spread out the rest of the *Reflexions* cards. Invite a young person to pick a card for how they are feeling about something right now (such as school, family, friends, work). Ask them to place the card in front of them on the left. Then ask them to pick a card for how they would like to be feeling. This card is placed on the right. Then introduce the five 'Able to' cards and ask them to pick one or more that they think will help them most in getting from 'here' to 'there', and creating the future they want. These cards are placed in the middle. The discussion can then focus on mobilising the 'Able to' behaviours by asking questions such as:

- What will we see you doing?
- What are the first steps?
- Do you need anything to get started?
- What is one thing you can do today?
- Would you like anyone's help?
- What will help you most to keep on track?
- What do you think will be the milestones along the way?
- Is there someone you'd like to tell about the changes you want to make?

Creating your own card

It can be very powerful when people create their own cards. Facilitators, counsellors and teachers may wish to supply blank cards or pages and invite young people to draw, paint or collage their own cards. They may want to make up different words, or take existing words from the cards and create their own images.

You can spark their imagination with questions such as:

- Is there a feeling you are experiencing quite often in your life right now?
- What images and other words would you put with this feeling? As well as other words for this emotion, there may be associated objects, animals or an aspect of nature such as a storm, the sea, a tree, the night sky or a mountain.
- What graphic style will you use to show this image? For example, is it something you would make or photograph or draw?

STORIES ABOUT USING REFLEXIONS

The Power of Naming Our Deepest Feelings

By Damien Vahlis, student teacher

I work as a student teacher in 'special needs' for four hours a week at a private catholic college in South Australia. Since the start of this year I have worked with a Year 8 boy, who has trouble understanding 'social norms'. For example, when a child brushed past him in class one day, he felt attacked so reacted by punching him back. Most of my work with him takes place in the classroom but once a week we go to a LAP (specialist learning) room.

One particular day, the student (who we'll call John) was very upset about me helping him. He was displaying anger, frustration, confusion and I wasn't sure if this was because of me or if other stuff was going on. We made our way to the room, and I said we need to talk about this. He said he didn't want to, that he was just 'not happy'. On our way through, I found the packet of *Reflexions* cards that had been recently purchased by the school's LAP coordinator. I brought these out onto the balcony and sitting together I opened them up and asked John to go through the cards and pick out all of the ones that represented how he was feeling. I was thinking 'Gosh, he's going to have so many that he picks. I'm sure he'll pick angry, frustrated, disappointed, confused, sad, lonely, and so on. To my surprise, he picked out only one card. It read 'Different'.

For thirty minutes we talked about the crux of his feelings. He hated feeling different to everyone else. I was both touched and amazed at how just these simple cards had allowed John to convey his deepest feelings. It also opened up for us a space in which we could tackle some of the issues surrounding difference. I would never have suggested that he would be feeling that way, but on reflection it makes perfect sense. This also seems like an opportunity we may not have had otherwise.



When A Family Reconnects

An interview with Steve Phillis, social work practitioner and educator

Reconnect program

The importance of creating pathways for young people to reconnect is reflected in the title of an early intervention to homelessness program offered by St Luke's (now part of Anglicare Victoria) in Bendigo, Australia. Called the 'Reconnect Program', it targets young people (Year levels 7-9) at risk of becoming disconnected from school or family. Some of these risk factors are non-attendance, truancy, low self-esteem, and poor connections. Sometimes family issues may be impacting upon a young person's capacity to connect with school life in a positive way.

'The Reconnect Program uses a solution-focused approach, which respects the young person's uniqueness and complements the skills of that particular individual and their school, family and community,' said Steve Phillis who was the senior Reconnect worker at the time.

Reflexions cards

During the program Steve has been working with *Reflexions* cards. He said that he had been carrying a pack of the cards around with him so that he could experiment spontaneously with them as the opportunity arose.

'I had been working with a young person who was refusing to attend school, had low self-esteem, had few friends and who had been falling behind in her work. Our second visit occurred in her family home, together with her mum, dad and sister. I scattered the cards on the floor of the lounge room and my first question was: 'Would you like to pick out three to five cards which may reflect how school is for you at the moment?'

OK Dad, pick a card!

'The client's father showed a lot of interest in the cards, so I said; 'OK Dad, pick out some cards that reflect how you feel at work!' This stimulated lots of discussion, broke down boundaries and really loosened us all up. Very soon the sister also picked out some cards. It was so great when this happened because it helped to normalise what the young person was going through.

'The client then selected four cards that represented how she felt about school. She selected 'Frustrated', 'Different', 'Lonely' and 'Sad'. We placed these to one side in a column and then I asked her to think about the exceptions to these. Was there anything good or even a bit OK about school? She then selected four more cards that reflected more positive moments (or even seconds!) at school. These were 'Easy Going', 'Excited', 'OK' and 'Brave'. We placed these in a column and talked about each of these little positive glimpses. We then returned to the first set of cards she had selected and explored these 'negatives' for a while.

Moving towards solutions

'I then asked her to select cards that represent how she would like school to be. These cards frame the goal for our work together; they represent where we are heading. The three cards she selected were 'Happy', 'Hopeful' and 'Fun'. We placed these in a column also and then I asked her, 'Can you see a card that will help you make a transition from here (indicating the first column) to here (the last column)?' The client selected the 'Able to Change' card.

We then looked at concrete things that we could work on together to address the present frustrations, to foster more of the positive moments and to build towards the final goals.

'I really enjoyed the sense of connection with the whole family that arose through the process of working with the cards. And speaking of connection, there was an extra sense of fun too when the young person in question recognised some of the faces shown on the *Reflexions* cards!'

Journeys of Potential: a life skills program for adolescents

By Jeanette Pritchard, high school teacher

High school teacher, Jeanette Pritchard, writes about a program she is developing to support emotional health and wellbeing among adolescent students in her school.

Am I normal?

Do I belong?

Will I make it?

For many young people in our society adolescence is a minefield. After 25 years' exposure to adolescents as a teacher, I am convinced that there is much we can do to help them traverse the difficult terrain they travel. The education system delivers a curriculum based on 'key learning areas'; its stated aim being the preparation of young people for adult life. Whilst many students do make it safely into adulthood without too many mishaps, there is, due to our fractured society, a growing number who find the journey more difficult and so stumble on the path. This is reflected in rising statistics in clinical depression and other areas such as substance abuse and attempted suicides.

Michael Carr Gregg, a leading adolescent psychologist, told a conference of Queensland principals that today's teenagers are more prone to depression and have less support than in any other generation. This is the only age group in Australia whose health status has not markedly improved over the last 40 years.

Skills that empower and enrich

In an attempt to address these issues I introduced a pilot life skills program for Year 10 at Baimbridge College in Hamilton, Australia. I called the program 'Journeys of Potential'. I based it on the premise that students can be taught skills that will empower them, give them greater understanding of themselves and consequently, a greater sense of control of their lives. These skills are:

- ability to understand oneself and the way one reacts to a new situation
- awareness of emotions and an ability to manage negative emotions
- understanding one's values
- understanding one's beliefs about oneself
- ability to communicate in an assertive manner.

The period of adolescence provides a wonderful opportunity for teaching these skills. By this stage of development young people have reached a point of maturity where they can be self-reflective and, consequently, can learn new ways of thinking and responding to the world around them. It could be called a 'second chance'. Given this help, rather than being passive victims, they can start to take more control of their lives.

Coaching approach

In developing my program I took what I called a 'coaching' approach to the students. I assumed that participants already had many strengths and coping strategies, so the aim of the sessions was to uncover untapped potential for developing new skills. I regarded them as having challenges rather than problems.

The aim of the process was to empower the students through a greater knowledge of themselves. They could learn how and why they behaved and reacted in certain circumstances and become aware they had choices.

Today many students come from situations where there is not a predictable means of support from their families. Others, perhaps from more stable backgrounds, experience problems in communicating and not feeling heard. Much current research shows that boys, particularly, feel a sense of alienation and many present with a wide range of problems in the system.

Before starting the program, each student completed a simple survey form in which they were able to identify the following areas of concern for them:

- difficulty in identifying and expressing emotions
- lack of self-confidence in new situations
- difficulty in knowing how to deal with stress
- difficulty in making decisions.

Adolescents, particularly boys, have great difficulty in speaking openly about their lives and their true emotions. To help them explore their lives in a different way I used methods I had learnt in a course on expressive therapies with Mark Pearson and Helen Wilson from Turnaround Queensland. Mark and Helen are both qualified therapists and trainers who have worked extensively with adolescents and have published several books through The Australian Council for Education Research (ACER). The methods come from the Jungian, Gestalt and Reichian schools of psychology.

The methods I used were:

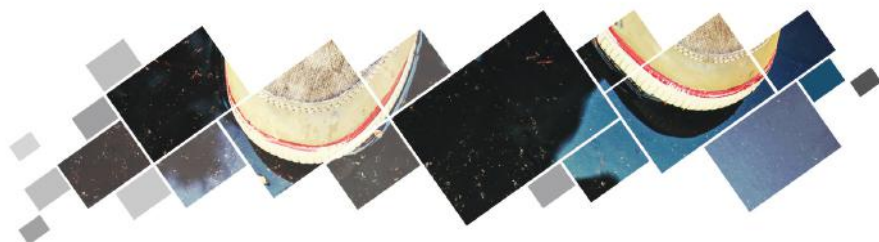
- Body awareness activities—identification of feelings within the body
- Identification of values—enabling students to identify what is important to them in the area of values
- Symbol work—exploration of symbols to self-reflect and look at issues
- Relaxation and creative visualisation techniques—focus on thoughts and beliefs about the self and looking at inner strengths
- Discussions—to verbalise and share feelings; the exploration of vocabulary for communicating feelings.

Outside traditional therapeutic settings

Although these modalities are usually applied in a therapeutic setting, I wanted to test whether they could be used in a different way, namely, helping students to become more self-aware and develop the life skills that I had identified as desirable and beneficial.

The first two sessions were one-to-one with the students and the third and fourth were in small groups. In these sessions I found the resources from St Luke's to be invaluable. I use:

- *The Bears* cards to establish feelings
- *Angels* cards to establish values
- *Reflexions* cards to explore feelings
- *Strength Cards* to establish self-esteem.



Young people have stories

The students responded very positively to these resources. Over the term of working with the students, it emerged that each of them had a 'story'. I discovered a wide range of pressures which beset them. Among external pressures were family breakdowns, financial stresses within the family, parents suffering from depression and responsibility for younger siblings before and after school. Internal pressures included self-doubt, confusion, poor self-image and a general sense of powerlessness.

At the end of the pilot program the students completed another survey which included asking if the program had been of value to them. Feedback was most encouraging. Students reported experiences such as: increased self-confidence; ability to identify strengths and weaknesses; awareness of how to improve communication; greater understanding of negative emotions and how to deal with them; and, awareness of the power to make choices around responses to situations. All of these are extremely beneficial and valuable life skills for young people—for anyone—to acquire.

The pilot program was accepted by the school and I have continued to work with it. The project work is a richly rewarding experience and I believe that it continues to make a positive contribution to the lives of the students with whom that I have worked.



ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

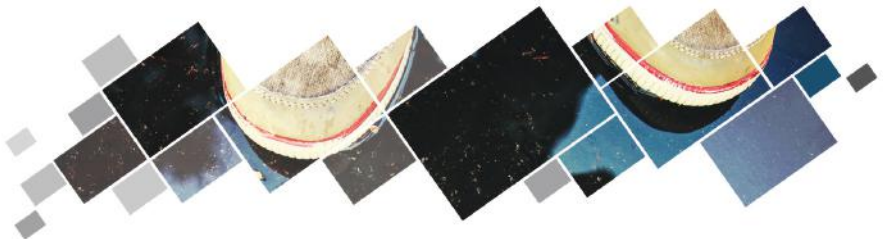
Innovative Resources is part of Anglicare Victoria, a community services organisation providing child, youth and family services in Victoria and New South Wales, Australia. We publish card sets, stickers, books, and digital and tactile materials to enrich conversations about feelings, strengths, relationships, values and goals. Our resources are for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, ability or age. They are used by counsellors, educators, social workers, mentors, managers and parents.

We also offer 'strengths approach' training and 'tools' workshops, both online and in-person. For information about our training please email:

training@innovativeresources.org

Innovative Resources is a not-for-profit social enterprise. All sales support the children, youth, family, and community services of Anglicare Victoria.

www.innovativeresources.org



REFLEXIONS

Second
Edition

TWO ADDITIONAL CARDS, NEW IMAGES AND ENHANCED DESIGN FOR THIS ICONIC RESOURCE.

A set of 34 stunning, full-colour cards for anyone who works with youth.

Using key words and montages of photographs, fonts and other design elements, these cards will

GET YOUNG PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS, GOALS AND IDENTITY.

Real conversations—about the hard stuff as well as the good stuff.

- » Who am I?
- » What am I feeling?
- » What's important to me?
- » How do I make choices and changes?
- » Where am I at and where am I heading?

Youth workers, teachers, counsellors, family workers, mentors and anyone who works with adolescents: These cards belong in your kit bag of resources. Use them with individuals or groups. Place them on a table, pass them around, put one on every chair. Invite young people to choose one deliberately or randomly ... and watch the conversations unfold.

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