

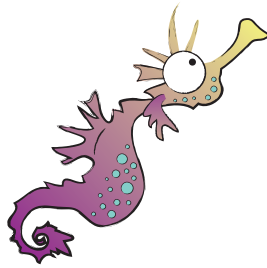


# FUNKY FISH FEELINGS

*Exploring Oceans of Emotions!*

Author: Russell Deal • Illustrator and Designer: Kate Northover

**Innovative  
Resources**



# Funky Fish Feelings

EXPLORING OCEANS  
OF EMOTIONS!



*Author:* Russell Deal

*Illustrator and Designer:* Kate Northover

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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, was and always will be, the traditional land of First Nations peoples.

*Welcome Funky Fish Feelings:  
48 delightfully different characters  
from the deep who just might bear an  
uncanny resemblance to people you  
know!*







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# *Hook, Line and Sinker:*

## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

***‘Opportunities, many times, are so small that we glimpse them not and yet they are often the seeds of great enterprises. Opportunities are also everywhere and so you must always let your hook be hanging. When you least expect it, a great fish will swim by.’***

Og Mandino

Picking up on Mandino’s words, it was a ‘great fish’ but not just one that caught our eye—and they weren’t swimming by; rather we were driving by looking for the house of play therapist, Josie Scott, at Baylys Beach—a holiday village on the wild West Coast of Northland, New Zealand. The weather was blowing a gale and my wife, Annie, and I were concentrating on Josie’s directions when we saw them; great fish, adorning the walls of the Funky Fish Cafe. Opportunities are everywhere and yes, they do arise at unexpected times.

As we chatted to Josie about publishing possibilities, we mentioned the ‘funky fish’. Josie happened to say that she was good friends with one of the café’s founders, Kate, who had created the wonderful array of fish characters on the café walls. So it came to pass that we made contact with illustrator, Kate Northover. When we met, we talked about the art Kate enjoyed and what sorts of illustrations she might be able to provide to bring alive some of the ideas on Innovative Resources’ list of possible card sets, and yes, we also talked about fish. Kate readily provided us with a handful of delightful samples which soon had our office team chuckling as they enjoyed the gentle humour in each picture.



However, before we could begin creating *Funky Fish Feelings* with Kate, dinosaurs intervened. That is, we required an illustrator for a card set designed to appeal to young children, entitled *Can-Do Dinosaurs*. We asked Kate to create some illustrations of dinosaurs for *Can-Do Dinosaurs*; they hit the spot and these took priority over *Funky Fish Feelings*. When the dinosaurs were in the bag, so to speak, the fish surfaced once again. (Be warned, this booklet is a veritable bouillabaisse of bad puns, some of which may leave you mentally shipwrecked.) As with most of the conversation-building card sets published by St Luke's Innovative Resources, *Funky Fish Feelings* took some 18 months to emerge, but here they are at last, up from the murky depths to delight and enchant.

Talking about our feelings can be difficult. The card sets created by Innovative Resources use a variety of visual metaphors to help give voice to those people, young and old, whose voices have been silenced or whose voices remain unheard. If our *Funky Fish Feelings* cards can help people to explore and describe some of the oceans of emotions experienced by us all from time to time, they will have done their job.

Discovering Kate's funky fish was a delightfully unexpected opportunity, and we have now fallen for her community of water-world characters—hook, line and sinker.

So grab your fins, mask and snorkel and dive into our aquatic treasure trove!

*Russell Deal*

*Creative Director (at time of first publication)  
Innovative Resources*



# Swimming with the Sharks:

## FEELINGS AND FISH

***‘When you fish for love,  
bait with your heart, not your brain.’***

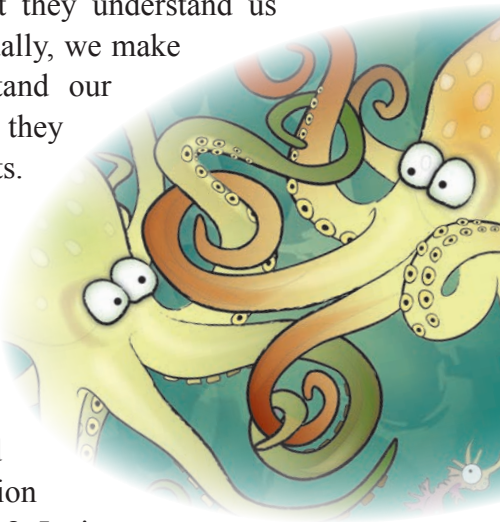
**Mark Twain**

Being able to identify and describe our feelings and communicate these clearly to others is a great challenge for many of us. All languages evolve over time and spoken language ebbs and flows in its ability to name particular emotional states. In English, some words have had a cultural relevance at a particular time and were able to pinpoint precise emotional states. Many of these words disappeared from everyday speech when their relevance to contemporary life was lost. Some such words appear only in dictionaries of historical linguistic oddities.

Karen Masman, Innovative Resources’ esteemed consulting editor, in her book, *The Uses of Sadness*, refers to the ‘lost’ word ‘unsoulclogged’, once used to mean ‘not weighed down in spirit’.

*The Word Museum* by Jeffrey Kacirk contains many other examples of words once deemed useful descriptors of feelings but rendered obsolete over time. The word ‘melancholy’, it could be argued, is a more modern word which might face the same fate. Indeed the singular popularity of telephone texting has seen the rise of ‘emoticons’ (symbols such as the smiley face) used to cover wide swathes of linguistic territory, and, of course, new words emerge as others die out.

We make huge assumptions at times in our conversations that we have a clear understanding of others and that they understand us when emotional descriptors are used. Equally, we make huge assumptions that children understand our vocabularies of feelings words and that they develop their own to match ours as adults. How do we test such assumptions? How do we know there is a commonality of meaning? How do any of us learn that it is possible to hold multiple feelings at any one time? Isn't it possible to have many, perhaps unlimited, combinations of feelings at once: excitement and anxiety, or anger and relief, apprehension and exhilaration, sadness and fulfilment? Is it possible to teach children about the everyday nature of this smorgasbord of different, conflicting, even contradictory feelings when the urge is to summarise and compact our feelings descriptors into simple, short word grabs?



The *Funky Fish Feelings* cards have a simple but vital task – to provide an alternative way of languaging our feelings. If we don't assume that it is easy to identify, name and describe our emotions, what is it that might help us achieve this? There are many possible answers, including body language, visual metaphors and tactile artifacts. Each of these will work in different ways and resonate with different people. If the theories surrounding multiple intelligences are correct, people will exhibit some very different preferences for how they go about this. Linguistic expression is one means but our approaches need to be truly multimedia lest we be guilty of colonising with our words.

At Innovative Resources, we hope *Funky Fish Feelings* can make a useful contribution to the ongoing challenge for all human services workers of ensuring that everyone is given a voice, especially those who, for whatever reasons, have traditionally been silenced.

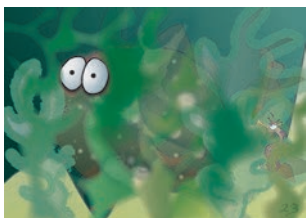
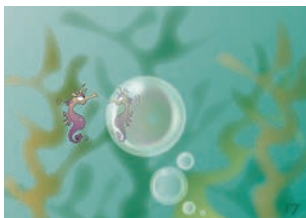
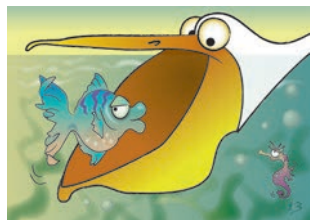
# Who's Who in the Fishbowl:

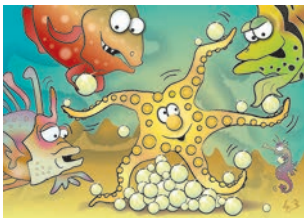
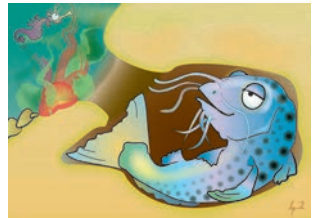
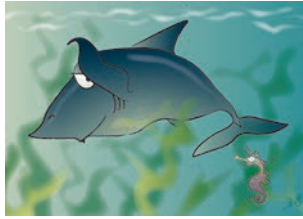
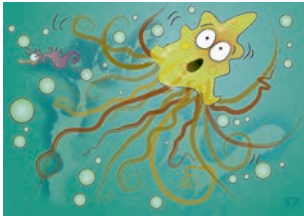
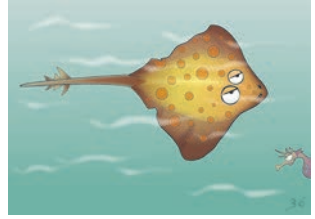
## THE 48 CARDS

*'Remember, a dead fish can float downstream  
but it takes a live one to swim upstream.'*

W.C. Fields







# Going Fishing for Feelings:

## CREATIVE WAYS OF USING THE CARDS

*‘No good fish goes anywhere without a porpoise.’*

Lewis Carroll

Being ‘porpoiseful’ in the use of any Innovative Resources’ card set is always important, even if you are starting from a position of ‘not knowing’ and your aim is to be purely exploratory and experimental. Do you know what you want to achieve? How will you know if the cards have been useful?

As with all conversation-building materials published by Innovative Resources, we cannot predict how conversations initiated by the cards will unfold, or what learning or changes may take place. What we do know is that we don’t prescribe outcomes, hence we don’t provide instructions. There are no set ways of using the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards and certainly no compulsory training is required.

Innovative Resources attempts to produce materials that just about anyone can pick up, enjoy and find their own meanings within. How the cards are introduced by facilitators, the questions that are asked, the timing and pace of the activity, and even the physical layout of the room, may all shape people’s experiences when using the cards. All Innovative Resources’ card sets depend on the creativity of the user or facilitator in these respects.

At workshops, we often hear people say, ‘I love your cards and use them, but I don’t think I ever make the best possible use of them.’ Responding to this can be difficult, except to ask questions such as, ‘What was your purpose?’, ‘Which questions did you ask?’ and ‘Did these questions take your conversation to “the important stuff”?’ Ultimately, the unique creativity which every human service worker brings to their role will determine the success of using any visual metaphor or artifact.

In general, there are two ways in which to use the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards and other cards from the Innovative Resources' feelings range.

Firstly, there are the three 'Ss' – spread, scan and select. That is, the cards, as a whole set or any part thereof, can be spread on a flat surface and participants asked to scan the cards and make a selection. Sometimes spreading the cards on the floor creates a different dynamic. Walking around the cards, and seeing them from a different and possibly more distant angle, can provide a different experience from 'sitting with' the cards at a table. The amount of time allowed for scanning the cards can vary enormously. The more complex the cards and the more reflective the use, the more time is generally needed. As always though, it is preferable to move at a pace that the users are comfortable with. As in any therapeutic conversation, managing the available time well is, in itself, a real skill.

*Funky Fish Feelings*, as with other cards sets published by Innovative Resources such as *The Bears*, *Stones ... have feelings too!* and *Koala Company*, can be used in multiple ways. The purpose of the activity and the questions asked by the facilitator will help guide participants in selecting cards. Facilitators and other users of the cards are invited to generate their own questions, but here are a few suggestions:

## *Unpacking the Baggage*

- Which fish sums up how you are feeling now?
- Which fish sums up how you were feeling last week or last month?
- Which fish represents you at your best time in the past week?
- Which fish represents you at your worst?
- What was happening on each of these occasions?
- Which fish depicts how your year is going so far?
- Which fish represent your highlights and lowlights, joys and challenges during the past few months?



## *Best, Worst, Funniest*

- Would you like to tell a story using the fish cards about your best, worst and funniest experiences today or this week?

## *Picture of the Future*

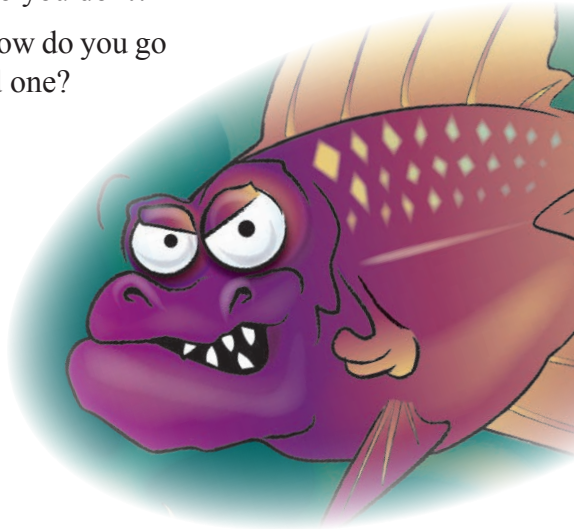
- Which fish represents how you would like to be feeling by the end of the year or the end of this conversation/meeting?
- What do you imagine you will be doing, thinking and feeling when you achieve this?

## *Transitions*

- Can you think of a time when you were going through a significant change in your life?
- You may have experienced many different emotions in a sequence or at the one time. Can you use the fish cards to help tell your story about how your change occurred?
- When you want to change, how do you do it?
- If you start out as a grumpy fish, how do you go about becoming a more contented one?

## *The Smorgasbord*

- It is probably very unusual that we ever only experience a single emotion. Can you think of a time when you were aware of experiencing a number of different feelings at once?
- Which fish resemble this mix of feelings?



# Family Sculpting

- Can you use the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards to explain who is in your family?
- Who are the members of your family and which fish do they most resemble?
- Which fish remind you of, say, your partner or son or daughter, or another family member, on a good day?
- Which fish represents them on a bad day?

The second general way of using the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards is the fourth ‘S’– serendipity. Sometimes interesting learning occurs when a touch of random choice is introduced into a conversation using cards or other prompts.

- If you choose a card purely at random, what meaning might you interpret from that card?
- Can you tell a story about a time when you felt like the fish on the card that you turned up?
- What was happening for you at this time?
- Were you comfortable?
- How long did this feeling last?
- How or why did you change?
- Why do you think the universe might have dealt you that particular card?



# *The Observer:* INTRODUCING FARR LAPP, THE SEAHORSE

*‘Two things make a story: the net  
and the air that falls through the net.’*

Pablo Neruda

Keen observers of the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards will have noticed that a seahorse manages to make an appearance on every card. This is Farr Lapp, the seahorse, so named because he:

- is a New Zealand seahorse
- likes to be associated with the larger variety of horses
- likes to swim lapps [sic].

Farr Lapp doesn't appear on each card because he has a rampant ego. Rather, Farr Lapp has a very important role; he is 'The Observer'. Having an observer can be very useful. An observer can scan action and events; an observer is in the picture in one sense but also has an arm's-length (fin's-length!) relationship with the subject. An observer can observe, reflect on, ponder and evaluate the scene before them.

Observers are not neutral, what they observe has an impact on them. Farr Lapp often looks quizzical and bemused as he studies the fish in question. At other times Farr Lapp can be seen to mirror the emotions of other fish or to react to the feelings of the fish depicted in other ways.

Having an observer as a witness creates different ways of building conversations, and can turn a two-person dialogue into a 'trialogue'.

One can thus ask such questions as:

- What do you think the seahorse is seeing?
- Do you think the seahorse could have a different perspective from yours?
- If the seahorse knows the fish well, do you think he might have a different opinion of the fish from those meeting the fish for the first time?
- Can you imagine Farr Lapp using different words to describe the emotions of the fish? If so, what words might he use?

Using an observer is a longstanding tradition in social work and counselling. Sometimes it can be very useful to ask questions that an observer might ask, and to consider what an observer's answers might be. Sometimes the observer can be a special person who might have a particular relationship to the subject, such as a parent, grandparent, special friend or even a favourite teacher. We each have a special person in our life; a person who sees us differently to the way acquaintances or strangers might see us. Hopefully, our special person values us and perhaps sees that our positives outweigh our negatives.

Observers or complete strangers can be special people because:

- they can notice change
- they can give praise
- they can ask difficult questions.

Of course, Farr Lapp observes himself, as we all do from time-to-time, especially as we develop the capacity to reflect on our feelings, attitudes and behaviour, and this is why he gets his very own card! Don't be surprised if Farr Lapp looks into the mirror of self-reflection and is, by and large, at peace with what is reflected back. If we feel so inclined, we can ponder what it is that may have led Farr Lapp to this treasure of wellbeing within himself?

# *In Case of Floundering:* BEING MINDFUL

*'If today were a fish I'd throw it back.'*

Anonymous

We all have some days we would want to throw back. On these days best laid plans can go astray. Our intentions can be thwarted. We can be misinterpreted, and what has worked successfully for us in the past can instead feel like a resounding failure. Of course, it is not possible to throw back days, but it is certainly possible to throw back fish, and one of the good things about card sets such as *Funky Fish Feelings* is that they can be thrown back, or put away, if they don't work on any particular day or in any particular situation.

At Innovative Resources we go to significant lengths to try to ensure that our materials don't inadvertently cause offence. We interrogate the cards from all angles right up until we go to press; even then it is not uncommon for changes to be made at reprinting. However, guaranteeing that any of our materials will work successfully on all occasions is obviously not possible. No hands-on conversational prompt or visual metaphor is a panacea. They will not appeal to everyone, nor will they always be useful, just as the words we use may not be the right words at the right time. Ultimately, if the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards do flounder in their appeal or usefulness, simply throw them back and bait your 'conversational hook' with something different. If that doesn't work, please try something else.



In using any conversational prompt it is always important to be mindful of its potential impact. At times, the most light-hearted or innocuous-looking visual prompt can contain huge potency for people and cause all sorts of powerful emotions to tumble out.

Everyone flounders at times and we can all be caught by unexpected revelations in our conversations, but adopting a position of mindfulness often requires that thought be given to:

- the counsellor or facilitator's own comfort with the metaphor or artifact. Does it work for you? Are you comfortable using it yourself or with family and friends who you know well?
- your knowledge of the materials. Are you familiar with the cards? Do you need to use all of the cards or are there some you can leave out? Have you used the cards before?
- your knowledge of your clients. Does your knowledge of the culture of those you are working with suggest that they will understand the metaphor? Are you comfortable taking the risk, however slight, that the cards may not work as you anticipate?
- the safety of the setting. Do you believe you have created a 'safe space' for people to talk openly and honestly? Is there respect in the group? Is the timing right? Have rules such as listening and confidentiality been established?
- your expectations. How do you imagine conversations will flow? What if something different happens? What constitutes 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' use of the cards? Do you have an alternative plan if something isn't working? What if the cards elicit strong emotions?
- setting the context. Have you thought about how to best introduce the cards? Will you introduce them with a particular question which you have considered or will you simply leave the cards where clients can find them themselves, as in 'bump-into therapy'?

Being mindful suggests the need to balance carefulness with risk-taking in the use of any conversation-building materials.

On the one hand, caution is essential:

***‘Caution is the most valuable asset in fishing  
– especially if you are the fish.’***

Anonymous

On the other hand, great results are often achieved by stepping out of our comfort zones and trying something different, even something seemingly silly:

***‘If you want to catch a trout,  
don’t fish in a herring barrel.’***

Anonymous

There is another question: is it possible to over-do a particular metaphor or artifact? Benjamin Franklin once famously said, ‘Fish and visitors smell in three days’! So yes, any metaphor can exceed its use-by date. Listening to and hearing feelings is a vital part of many conversations. In addition to using the *Funky Fish Feelings* cards, you may like to consider using other Innovative Resources’ card sets such as *The Bears*, *Stones... have feelings too!*, *Koala Company* or any other materials from Innovative Resources’ range of ‘feelings’ cards.



# *The Publishers Aquarium*

## **About Innovative Resources**

Innovative Resources is part of Anglicare Victoria, one of Australia's leading community service organisations. Anglicare Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation providing a range of child, youth, family and community services throughout Victoria and New South Wales.

## **our publishing**

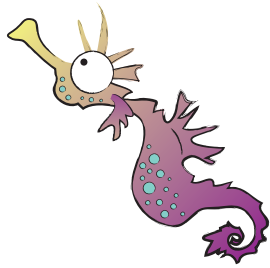
Innovative Resources publishes card sets, stickers, books, picture books, digital and tactile materials to enrich conversations about feelings, strengths, relationships, stories and goals. Our resources bring colour and creativity to therapeutic and educational settings all over the world. They are used by counsellors, teachers, trainers, social workers, managers, mentors, parents, teams, supervisors ... and anyone who works with people to create positive change.

## **our training**

Innovative Resources also offers highly-engaging training in 'strengths-based' approaches to working with people where change arises out of a focus on strengths, respect and hopeful possibilities. We also offer 'tools' workshops on ways of using our resources to invigorate human service work. Our workshops honour different learning styles and the power of visual images to open up storytelling and other ways to truly connect with children and adults alike.

**[www.innovativeresources.org](http://www.innovativeresources.org)**





# Funky Fish Feelings

Most of us use words to tell stories. But when it comes to talking about and describing our feelings all of us can struggle to find the right words.



Feelings can be elusive, confusing and hard to pin down. Sometimes it can feel like we use words to circle in on a particular feeling as we try to describe its essence. Sometimes a particular feeling escapes our linguistic grasp.

For this reason visual metaphors can be very helpful. Sometimes a picture can be worth more than a thousand 'not quite right' words. Visual metaphors can work as shortcuts to meaning and represent our feelings with an accuracy that words alone may not possess.

The 48 *Funky Fish Feelings* cards provide a rich panorama of emotions. We can actually see ourselves in certain fish characters as well as recognising others!

The *Funky Fish Feelings* cards are quirky and humorous, but they do have an important task to fulfill. People of all ages can feel that their voices are unheard or have been silenced. If the funky fish allow anyone to describe their feelings and discover their voice, the experience might well be liberating and transformational.



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