

# Innovative Resources

## Stones ...have feelings too!

Concept: Russell Deal

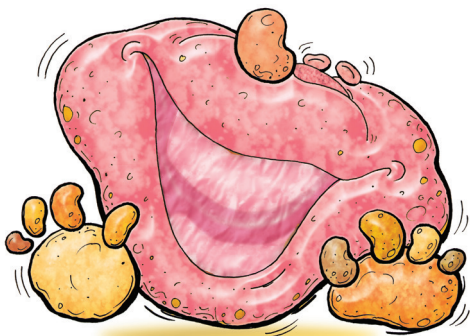
Booklet: Russell Deal and Karen Bedford

Illustration/Design: Ray Bowler





Stones  
...have feelings too!



First published in 2003. Reprinted 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2014, 2017, 2021 and 2022.

# Innovative Resources

62 Collins Street Kangaroo Flat  
Victoria 3550 Australia  
p: + 61 3 5446 0500  
e: [info@innovativeresources.org](mailto:info@innovativeresources.org)  
w: [innovativeresources.org](http://innovativeresources.org)  
ABN: 97 397 067 466

© St Luke's Innovative Resources & Ray Bowler 2003

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978-0-9578231-9-8



This document was produced from fibres that was sourced from endorsed certified well-managed plantations and is manufactured under the ISO 14001 Environmental Management System.

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.

Introduction	4
The complete list of cards	7
Using the cards	13
The significance of humour	18
Family sculpture	20
Unpacking residual feelings	22
Pictures of the future	23
Scaling	24
Discernment and emotional literacy	26
Reframing	29
Evaluation	32
Storytelling and imagination	33
About us	36



*‘There seems to be a great thirst among human service workers for materials that unlock the complexities of different feelings.’*

Over two decades ago Innovative Resources published *The Bear Family* as a ‘family sculpting tool’ to assist clients of family workers to talk about their experiences of ‘family’. As with many of our other publications it wasn’t long before the original intent of the cards was outstripped by numerous other creative applications.

### **The Bears**

After the initial print run *The Bear Family* became simply *The Bears* and while still regarded as an invaluable tool in family therapy, they quickly developed multi-faceted applications across many different professions. We heard stories of their use in classrooms, staff meetings, professional development seminars, prisons, parenting courses and in many different forms of counselling. They have also been used as an evaluation tool and in the training of child protection workers.

The magic of *The Bears* is that they simply represent feelings. These cards (now in a new edition) provide a means for people to communicate how they feel without the need for words. This ability to represent even deep or hidden feelings gives *The Bears* a potency that is uncluttered by the struggles we sometimes experience to find the right words. For this reason children and adults alike find *The Bears* profoundly effective in ensuring that their feelings are heard.

### **Exploring feelings and personalities**

With the popularity of *The Bears* came requests for more tools that explore feelings, body language and personalities. There appears to be a great thirst among human service workers for materials that unlock the complexities of different feelings.

However, it was not until we saw the illustrations that Ray Bowler had created for our picture book, *The Wrong Stone* (written by former creative director of Innovative Resources, Russell Deal) that we recognised that here was the basis for a completely new resource for talking about feelings.

*The Wrong Stone* is a simple tale that celebrates difference and highlights the increasing need for processes of inclusion in our society. It is a story about hope, optimism and social justice that challenges common notions of giftedness, elitism and 'colonising' practices.

### **Stones have feelings too!**

Ray Bowler's delightful illustrations depict stones with very recognisable human characteristics...and foibles. It was Ray's injection of an array of subtle personalities into the 'ragtag razzamadazzle' of the stone pile that suggested a very different way of portraying feelings.

In subsequent years several other tools for talking about feelings have been produced including *Funky Fish Feelings*, *Koalas* and *Kangas*.

Yes, bears, fish, kangaroos and koalas each have great ways of demonstrating human emotions...but stones have feelings too!



*'People sometimes interpret feelings, expressions and behaviours quite differently. Sometimes we recognise a feeling but simply do not have a word for it.'*

There are 52 cards in the *Stones...have feelings too!* set. The front of each card features a quirky stone character depicting an emotion. There are no words on the front of the cards so users are free to interpret the emotion as they wish, without the defining nature of words.

### **Interpreting feelings**

The back of each card features three words which give possible interpretations of the feeling the stone character is expressing. In some trios all three words are very similar in meaning and in others you will find words that are quite different, and even opposite in meaning. This reflects the fact that people sometimes interpret feelings, expressions and behaviours quite differently.

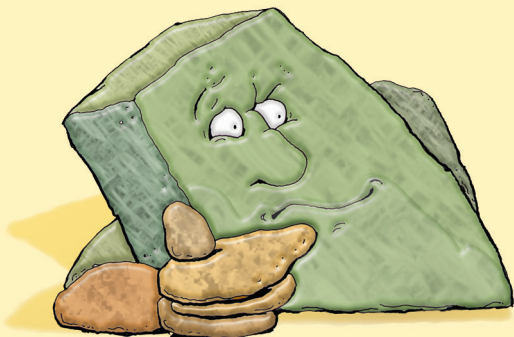
For example, is the stone 'purposeful' or 'bossy'?



## **Naming feelings**

Sometimes we recognise a feeling but simply do not have a word for it. Hopefully, the words on the back of the cards will help build a vocabulary for naming feelings as well as enabling conversations about how feelings are interpreted.

(Please see the sections on 'Reframing' and 'Discernment and emotional literacy' later in this booklet for further discussion of these points.)



Abandoned  
Left-out  
Surrounded...or?

Adventurous  
On-the-edge  
Rebellious...or?

Afraid  
Scared  
Frightened...or?

Angry  
Mad  
Disgusted...or?

Annoyed  
Grumpy  
Bad-tempered...or?

Assertive  
Dominating  
Proud...or?

Bitter  
Mean  
Critical...or?

Brave  
Fearless  
Reckless...or?

Bullied  
Harassed  
Picked-on...or?

Burnt-out  
Burdened  
Used-up...or?

Caring  
Nurturing  
Protective...or?

Clumsy  
Funny  
Off-balance...or?

Confident  
Sure  
Independent...or?

Contented  
Light-hearted  
Hopeful...or?

Curious  
Concerned  
Thoughtful...or?

Different  
Quirky  
Strange...or?

Defiant  
Tough  
Aggressive...or?

Depressed  
Discouraged  
Down...or?

Embarrassed  
Humiliated  
Silly...or?

Energetic  
Enthusiastic  
Over-the-top...or?

Exhausted  
Relaxed  
Flat...or?

Guilty  
Ashamed  
Caught-out...or?

Happy  
Joyful  
Carefree...or?

Hollow  
Empty  
Drained...or?

Hurt  
Wounded  
Offended...or?

Indignant  
Let-down  
Cheated...or?

Intelligent  
Wise  
Studios...or?

Invisible  
Insignificant  
Ignored...or?

Lost  
Aimless  
Alone...or?

Loveable  
Friendly  
Gullible...or?

Loving  
Warm  
Affectionate...or?

Nervous  
Edgy  
Tense...or?

Optimistic  
Eager  
Focused...or?

Resourceful  
Clever  
Resilient...or?

Organised  
Hardworking  
Fussy...or?

Sad  
Lonely  
Blue...or?

Outgoing  
Powerful  
Ambitious...or?

Settled  
Safe  
Secure...or?

Playful  
Crazy  
Cheeky...or?

Shattered  
Wild  
Out-of-control...or?

Powerless  
Useless  
Self-conscious...or?

Smug  
Satisfied  
Pleased...or?

Purposeful  
Determined  
Bossy...or?

Solid  
Steady  
Balanced...or?

Puzzled  
Unsure  
Confused...or?

Stuck  
Heavy  
Bogged-down...or?

Quiet  
Calm  
Peaceful...or?

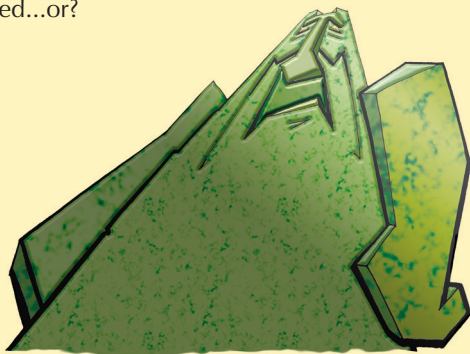
Surprised  
Amazed  
Stunned...or?

Tired  
Worn-out  
Bored...or?

Trapped  
Crushed  
Dominated...or?

Vague  
Dreamy  
Distracted...or?

Worried  
Anxious  
Stressed...or?

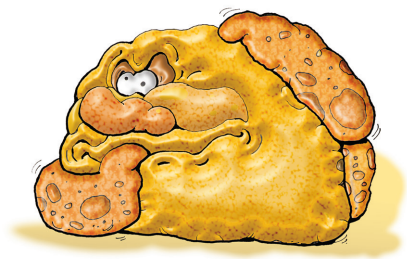


***‘This booklet offers suggestions and hopefully, gems of inspiration for using the cards rather than instructions that must be followed.’***

The ‘seriously optimistic’ card sets and books published by Innovative Resources have a large array of possible applications.

*Stones...have feelings too!* is no exception.

We hope this tool will enhance workers’ own creativity, curiosity, respect, purpose and passion. So, in this booklet we offer suggestions and, hopefully, gems of inspiration rather than instructions that must be followed.



## **Learnings about using tools**

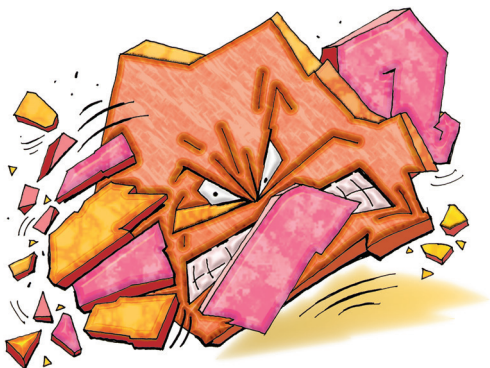
1. No tool is a panacea. No tool is guaranteed to be always successful.
2. To use any tool requires a certain degree of risk and courage on the part of the user.
3. Respectful practice suggests that knowing and respecting the culture and learning preferences of the client is an important way to minimise this risk.
4. No single metaphor will appeal to everyone. If the tool or metaphor isn't helpful, move on.
5. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk about why something hasn't worked to gain insight into other possibilities for exploration.
6. The extent to which the worker is comfortable with the tool seems to be a key factor in the successful introduction and contextualisation of the resource.
7. The best metaphors are often the ones clients create themselves. Listening for the client's own metaphors can be more helpful than waiting for the right moment to introduce a predetermined conversational prompt. Nevertheless, having a range of prompts can allow for a matching of tools to the client's needs and interests.



8. Sometimes clients can experience the joy of discovery when they 'bump into' tools that might be sitting unannounced on the worker's desk or as part of a travelling toolbox.
9. Tools do not have to be complete or comprehensive to work effectively. Facilitators may wish to make a selection of cards rather than using the full set.
10. Cards can be stuck on noticeboards or fridge doors. They can be selected deliberately or randomly. They can be shuffled and dealt. Whatever enhances the conversation!
11. Visual materials can amplify the power of words and can be used in ways that celebrate multiple intelligences and different learning styles. And it can certainly be of great long-term value to work with clients to create their own materials that explore and celebrate their learning, growth and curiosity.

All Innovative Resources' materials rely on the creativity and sensitivity of the user. They do not require prior training to use them.

However, there are factors that need to be considered to ensure the materials are used purposefully and respectfully. The cards work best when the timing and circumstances are conducive to opening up respectful, safe and honest communication. Judging the right moment to introduce the cards relies on the skill, creativity and sense of timing of the facilitator.



## Before using the cards - useful questions

The following questions may be useful to consider before deciding to introduce the set:

- What is your purpose for introducing the cards?  
How do you think they might help?
- Is it the right time to introduce the cards?
- Will the cards get in the way of the conversation and learning that is already occurring?
- Is there a trusting, respectful relationship between those who will be using the tool?
- Have issues of confidentiality been considered?
- What is the energy level of the group or individual?
- Is there sufficient time and is this the right forum to work through the insights, issues and vulnerabilities that may be raised?
- Are the cards culturally relevant to the user?

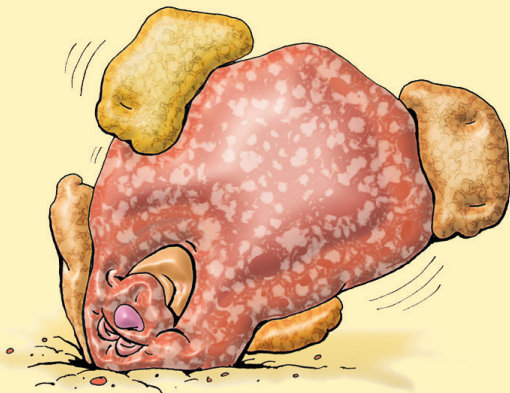
Used carefully and respectfully, the cards may generate lots of questions and emotions. As a powerful conversational prompt, they can assist conversations to evolve in different, even unexpected ways.

**‘Humour can be transformational. However, it has to be handled carefully and with respect for the journeys of those with whom we travel.’**

Humour is a powerful catalyst for change. There is a famous quote from Ludwig Wittgenstein, ‘If people did not sometimes do silly things nothing intelligent would ever get done.’

Humour can be transformational. It can transport us out of the dominant stories of oppression, of being controlled by sadness, depression, inadequacy, hurt and failure. Humour can be a great means of restoring our lives particularly when problems have the upper hand, allowing us to see only gloom and doom.

However, humour can also be used as a tool of oppression and ‘colonisation’. Humour has to be handled carefully and with respect for the journeys of those with whom we travel. Even gentle humour can be inappropriate at times and so we recommend caution and care when introducing visual materials that contain light-hearted elements.



A gentle humour has been built into *Stones...* *have feelings too!* The stones are very human, with very human foibles and eccentricities. We hope the humour in the stone characters makes them recognisable, appealing and inviting to use and discuss.

However, no single metaphor fits everyone. Some people will be caught in significant pain which deserves to be heard and responded to in ways that may fall outside the use of these cards.

We trust that the ways facilitators contextualise and introduce this tool will start with an acute sensitivity to the needs of those using the cards.

## **‘Family sculpting can provide insights into how we experience families.’**

Family sculpting was where it all began with *The Bears*. As a family therapy technique family sculpting can be practised in different ways. Using figures or characters to represent family members is one of the easiest. An individual can be invited to sculpt their family of origin, their family of procreation, their family of cohabitation or their family of choice.

*Stones...have feelings too!* can be used to represent family members:

- Which stones remind you most of your parents and siblings?
- Which stone would you choose for yourself?
- Can you arrange the stones like a family tree?
- Where do you fit?
- Who is closest to whom?
- Has this changed over time?
- Are there others who should be included as part of this picture?
- Are family members multidimensional?  
Have they changed and do you need different stones to describe them as they have grown older?

- Which stones might be your mother (or father or siblings) on a good day? Which stone are they when they are at their best? What about at their worst?
- Which of the stones represents how you would like to remember them?
- Which stone represents how *you* would like to be remembered?

Family sculpting using *The Bears* or *Stones*...*have feelings too!* can provide insights into how we experience families. In family sculpting all family members can be invited to collaborate on building one family sculpture. Alternatively, individuals can be invited sequentially to produce their own version. Either strategy may well produce fertile discussion.



**‘This is a useful exercise for demonstrating that we approach all situations with a residue of feelings from previous events.’**

Here is an icebreaker exercise with both a light-hearted and a serious intent that has many applications in groups and workshops.

Participants working in small groups of between three and six are asked to choose the ‘stone’ that best represents how they were feeling coming to the workshop or group session:

- What was happening in the time leading up to the start of the group?
- What was your morning like? How were you feeling? What were the events that occurred and what effect did they have on you?
- Which stone or stones best fit how you were feeling?
- How might these feelings affect your experience of the group or workshop?
- If the emotions you are bringing with you are challenging or uncomfortable, how have you dealt with such feelings previously?
- Is there anything you want help with before we start?

This is a useful exercise for demonstrating that we approach all situations with a residue of feelings from previous events. We never start as blank slates. Recognising this and allowing for it to be processed can play an important part in opening up to new learning and giving ourselves permission to move on to a more hopeful future.



## **‘Choosing a stone card to represent how we want to be is a great way of reinforcing purposefulness and enhancing optimistic anticipation.’**

Just as the stones can be used to unpack residual feelings from past experiences, so too can they help to build optimism and create pictures of the future.

Choosing a stone to represent how we want to be is a great way of reinforcing purposefulness and enhancing anticipation. It can describe what we are looking forward to and suggest strategies for growth and change.

The choice of a stone to portray the feelings we want or hope to achieve can make these feelings and associated outcomes more concrete and obtainable:

- Can you choose the stone you would like to become, or the stone you would like to be (at the end of an event or process)?
- Can you describe how you will be feeling?
- What will you be thinking and what will you be doing?
- How will it be different to what you are feeling, thinking and doing right now?
- What differences will other people see?
- What effect do you think these differences may have on them?
- How do you think you might hang on to, or capture, or control these feelings and make them last?

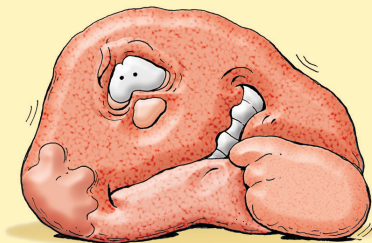
**‘Being aware of the incremental nature of change makes us conscious of the small steps that often link one feeling to another.’**

The use of the stone characters to describe two contrasting feeling states (for example, ‘happy and sad’, ‘brave and frightened’, ‘joyful and lonely’) can create a useful dichotomy for identifying the ‘degrees of intensity’ of a feeling. That is, when we identify two feeling states that are at different ends of the spectrum, a range of useful comparisons can be made.

When someone is stuck in a negative situation and feeling overwhelmed by a problem, being able to picture an alternative, more positive, state immediately establishes possibilities for change.

Having established such a dichotomy of feelings, the point can be made that change is not often ‘all or nothing’; rarely do we jump straight from one strong feeling to another. Instead, in most cases, change is gradual and incremental. Being aware of the incremental nature of change makes us conscious of the small steps that often link one feeling to another.

Noticing these small steps can be assisted by a useful therapeutic tool known as 'Scaling'. Scaling acts as a measure by allowing us to notice the small components of change that might otherwise be missed. Being able to notice these changes creates an opportunity to influence and take control over these change processes. Noticing we are cold suggests we put on a jumper. Noticing we are becoming tense might suggest using strategies for relaxation that we can recall have been successful on previous occasions.



**‘The question is not so much, “What constitutes a good or a bad feeling?” but rather, “What is the difference between being in control of that feeling and being controlled by it?” ’**

*Stones...have feelings too!* is a useful tool for distinguishing between different feelings. Some feeling states have obvious accompanying body language that helps us discriminate between and describe different feeling states. *Stones* can assist with this as well as building a more extensive vocabulary to describe even subtle differences.



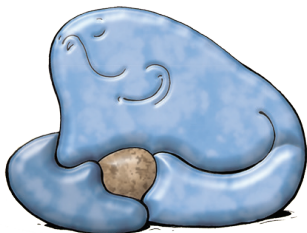
However, one of the paradoxes in considering feelings and building conversations around them is recognising that the appropriateness of any single feeling is situational. No single feeling can be considered to be good or bad outside of the context in which it occurs.

Some feelings that we could name as 'anger', 'disgust', 'depression' or 'fear' might at first glance have negative overtones. However, all these negative feelings have a place and are, at times, appropriate and even essential parts of our emotional repertoire. There are times when it may be very important to express anger or sadness. For example, when confronted by injustice or loss. Fear obviously can lead to caution and even depression may have a role in identifying changes that need to be made to our lives, opening doorways for deeper perception of our life's purpose.

Using anger when confronting injustice in the form of bullying or racism can be very different from succumbing to road-rage. The question is not so much, 'What constitutes a good or a bad feeling?' but rather, 'What is the difference between being in control of that feeling and being controlled by it?'

Thinking about how we identify and discuss this concept of 'locus of control' provides the cards with the opportunity to be used to build discernment and emotional literacy:

- Choose any of the *Stones...have feelings too!* cards. Can you name a feeling that can match the stone you have chosen?
- Think about times when you have had this feeling. Can you identify times when you have been very comfortable with this feeling and it has been a very appropriate feeling to express?
- Have there been other times however when this feeling or a similar one have been a problem; when on reflection your expression of the feeling was not appropriate? Did it create difficulties for you or others? Do you regret what happened?
- Have you had experiences when this feeling was in control and pushed you around; when it became like the boss of your life? How was it different to the times you felt in control?
- Have you learned to take control back when you sense a feeling is starting to push you around?



**‘There are always alternative ways of looking at any situation, if only we are able to look for them.’**

Reframing is a very useful and powerful idea that has grown out of narrative approaches to working with people. Essentially reframing says that any event can be framed or storied in many different ways. It maintains that we are always actively interpreting the world around and within us. The way we understand any event will be a function of a huge array of possible variables. While it may not be possible to be fully conscious of this enormous range of influences on our perceptions, through reflection we can better understand (and change) the choices we make.

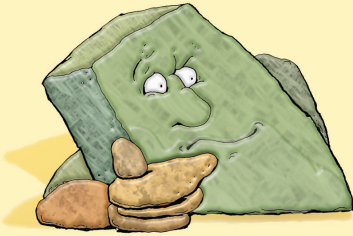
So, through reflecting on an event that causes us to feel say, anger, we may reinterpret it, leading us to see the event differently and so change our reaction to it. For example, we could interpret (or frame) an adolescent lying in bed all day reading and listening to music as being lazy. But there may be many other ways of accounting for this behaviour - illness, exhaustion, time-out, relaxation or study - all of which cast the behaviour in a different light.

In counselling, reframing is often used to challenge prevailing negative, hurtful or destructive ways of looking at ourselves or others. The message of reframing as a therapeutic technique is that there are always alternative ways of looking at any situation, if only we are able to look for them.

*Stones...have feelings too!* is one of the few hands-on tools that is designed to allow for, and to build on, possibilities of reframing.

The stone characters have a certain ambiguity. They all express feelings through body language (or if you prefer, stone language!). We can interpret the expressions, posture, shape and perhaps even texture as the portrayal of a particular emotion. But these interpretations will differ. To demonstrate this, on the back of each card are three words that could be associated with the feeling being portrayed on the front. The three words are followed by a question mark. This is because all or none of the words might match your interpretation.





Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- Which of these three words do you think best fits the stone's expression?
- Which comes closest to the words you would have chosen?
- Can you think of other words that might more accurately describe this feeling?
- What was your first impression of that stone's feeling? Has this changed since you considered the different words on the back?
- Could all these words fit or are there subtle differences suggested by each of the words?

It is the fact that feelings are so interpretable that underlies reframing. We can choose one interpretation over another according to our experiences, our emotional state, our facility with language, as well as the opportunity we give ourselves for reflection.

Any event or facial expression can be storied in many different ways.

*Stones...have feelings too!* can also be used in innovative ways to provide fresh, new windows into evaluation.

Beginning with those issues which arouse our curiosity, questions can be constructed that seek a response in terms of our feelings:

- Which of the stones best represents how you feel (about a particular event or process)?
- Which stones correspond with different parts of the activity?
- Which stones describe your experience of key milestones in the project?
- Which stone represents how you would describe the program or activity to others?

A sequence of questions can be built to work through different aspects of an event, with the participant selecting cards that match their perceptions. Of course, it is the conversation around the selected cards that provides rich insights into the ways an event has been experienced.

The *Stones* can also be used in supervision sessions to obtain quick feedback or to monitor how any activity is being experienced. Asking participants to select a card that matches their feelings can provide a novel way to check that an activity is understood, is being enjoyed or is being experienced in the way it was designed.

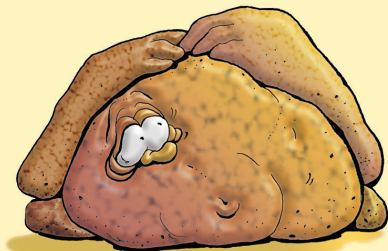
This tool can also be used in sticker form in school reports, for marking and evaluating assignments and for journalling.

**‘The conscious construction of characters, choice of how these characters communicate and the ability to differentiate between feeling states can all lead us to assume more control over the feelings that shape the way we view the world.’**

As well as working as prompts for conversations, the cards in this set can also work as prompts for imagination; especially in relation to storytelling. There is no scripted storyline for any of the stones characters. Instead, their openness to interpretation can act as a catalyst for building vivid and unique stories.

The stones cards can be used as a prompt for creative writing:

- Choose a stone you would like to write about.
- What do you think this stone’s story might be?
- What experiences might this stone have had?
- How might this stone be similar to you?
- How might it be different?

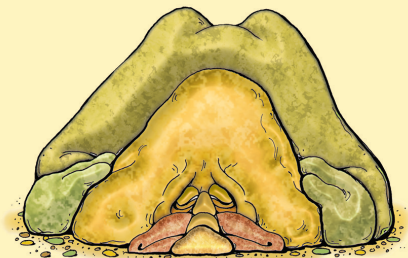


Or alternatively,

- Choose a number of cards (perhaps five or six) to be characters in a story or play. Can you build a story around them?
- What would they say to each other?
- How would they sound?
- What adventures would the different characters get up to?

Another option as a pathway into creative writing or storytelling is to read a short account of an event such as an encounter between people. This could be a short story, poetry, a newspaper article or a photograph. Participants could choose or be given a *Stones...have feelings too!* card and asked to re-write the story as seen through the eyes of the stone character.

- How would this character interpret this event?
- How would they describe what happened?
- How might their view of what occurred be different from those of other stone characters?



A number of Innovative Resources' publications have also been used to stimulate creative expression in drama classes. *Stones...have feelings too!* could certainly be used in this way:

- Here is a character for you to act out. What sort of a personality goes with this stone?
- How do you imagine they would move or talk?
- What would they be thinking and feeling?
- Can you and the others in your group devise a scenario in which you act out your stone character? For example, imagine a scene in a supermarket where your stone characters are doing their weekly grocery shopping, or perhaps a group of people stranded in a lift, or at a dinner party.

Narrative work has created many rich and interesting connections between storytelling and creation of identity; building optimism and healing. The conscious construction of characters, choice of how these characters communicate and the ability to differentiate between feeling states can all lead us to assume more control over the feelings that shape the way we view the world.

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.

## **Our Publishing**

Innovative Resources publishes card sets, stickers, 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.



# Innovative Resources

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

