

WOULD YOU EVER ...

- share information about a client without their permission?

WOULD YOU EVER ...

- enter a personal relationship with a client or former client?

lengths of an Organisation

What works?

good practice

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VISION  
For  
SUPERVISION

Looking ahead

A  
VISION  
For  
SUPERVISION

Professional experience

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# Practice Reflection

Building habits of openness to learning, feedback and discussion about practice brings clarity, passion and depth to our work—qualities that result in better services for clients.

### The 'Use and Grow' Approach

Meet Murray Fletcher, a strengths-based narrative coach, who also draws down on a little Appreciative Inquiry!



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### Signing off from SOON

It's *auf wiedersehen* with reminiscences of tiger fish as our SOON editor, Caitlyn Lehmann, bows out.



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### In the Mailbag

Wayne McCashen's *The Strengths Approach* is 10 years old and still inspiring customers. Strengths are still our greatest resources!



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## In the Spotlight

# The ‘Use and Grow’ Approach to Coaching

Murray Fletcher, a Kiwi from New Zealand’s South Island, describes himself as a ‘strengths-based narrative coach’. While he works with professionals across a range of organisations, much of Murray’s coaching practice is with individuals and teams in primary and secondary schools.

‘I take a strengths-based approach with an Appreciative Inquiry lens in partnering leaders as they share their stories,’ Murray explains. ‘My role is to listen, to understand, to clarify, to reflect and to talk through what I hear in their stories, which have the personal and professional intertwined.’

Murray came across the tools published by Innovative Resources when looking online for resources that could help enrich and transform the thinking and learning of educators in schools. What he found was a bunch of resources very well suited to his approach to practice.

### To SWOT or SOAR?

Over the years, Murray’s thinking and research into facilitating learning has led him away from conventional deficit-based models of organisational planning such as SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) towards solution-focused approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry’s SOAR model (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) developed from the work of David Cooperider and Jacqueline Stavros, among others. Solution-focused practice is based on the understanding that sustained focus on problems (such as weaknesses and threats) can cancel out the forward momentum that comes from focusing primarily on hopeful possibilities.

In the SOAR model, by contrast, weaknesses and threats are not ignored, but reframed as exciting opportunities.

‘I find it is so much more powerful to “discover what gives life” and to build on this, than to just explore strengths to grow and weaknesses to fix. I take a “we-all-have-capabilities-to-use-and-grow” approach!’

‘My role is to listen, to understand, to clarify, to reflect and to talk through what I hear in their stories, which have the personal and professional intertwined.’

Murray Fletcher  
Strengths-based  
narrative coach



### Putting things emotional and spiritual on the table

Like many coaches and facilitators, Murray likes to have card sets such as *Change by Design*, *Respect and Justice*, and *What Works?* in his stash of ready-to-go activities. But he also enjoys using *Signposts* to help people focus on their values and beliefs. ‘I always provoke a reaction when using *Signposts*,’ Murray observes, ‘I find the cards invaluable for starting conversations. Occasionally people will question what the cards have to do with my role, and this starts a powerful discussion. Their response is usually one of surprise that we are placing feelings, beliefs—things emotional and spiritual—on the table.’

*A Vision for Supervision* is an extra card set that Murray added to his collection recently. ‘I purchased the cards to aid my conversations when supervising those coaching others, and have found the set sits really well with my strengths-based approach. The cards help people shift their thinking from a technical or surface level to a deeper, more thought-provoking level of understanding.’

### Green, green grass of home

Tapping more deeply into understandings of learning and coaching is also on Murray’s own agenda—he is currently midway through a PhD on educational leadership. His respite from a busy schedule of travel, work and study is his two-hectare property on the outskirts of cool, green Dunedin: ‘Cutting grass is a nice way to re-balance and re-energise life after partnering people in coaching and facilitating learning for others.’ He also continues to keep an eye on the Innovative Resources’ catalogue, ready to test any future card sets that will help facilitators on ‘the journey for a more socially-just, equitable world.’

The time has come for SOON to farewell its intrepid editor—Caitlyn Lehmann. Caitlyn has been part of the Innovative Resources team for over ten years and has made a magnificent contribution in countless ways. Caitlyn’s roles have included helping to develop resources, purchase and review books and other publications, write copy, and help design and administer our website. It has been a joy to share a love of language, storytelling, illustration, colour and design with her. Caitlyn’s warmth, humour and skill in ‘catching’ the stories of practitioners working all over the world to bring about social justice and the very best outcomes for clients, is inspirational. Thank you, Caitlyn— not good bye—just see you SOON.

## Signing Off from SOON

From the outgoing editor of SOON,  
CAITLYN LEHMANN

From *The Bears* in Mongolia to *Picture This* in Arnhem Land, from *Cars ‘R’ Us* in New York to *Mates Traits* in Malaysia—these are just some of the stories it’s been my pleasure to bring you as the editor of SOON.

This month’s edition is my last, wrapping up four years as newsletter editor and an earlier period as erratic contributor. In that time the newsletter’s circulation has grown to 12,450, and I’ve learned that beneath the skin of every sober, committed human services worker lurks a cheerful quiz lover bursting for some fun. We promised prizes and enticements, offered opportunities to strut your creativity across our pages, but one SOON giveaway got you excited above all others: the great ‘name-that-flag’ competition of February 2015!

Of course, being SOON’s editor is one thing—setting it loose to hurtle down the fibre optics to your inboxes is another, and a hearty thanks go to Chris Cain, our warehouse manager and resident Mailchimp wrangler. To Karen Bedford, a clink of champers glasses for all those editions swiftly, yet meticulously proofread as the minutes ticked down to five o’clock. And to Mat Jones, newsletter designer and bail-outer when ideas were running short, a bag of carrots: his family has recently acquired a rabbit.

Of course, writing for SOON is partly a marketing exercise, but it’s also been a genuine privilege too. The experiences of those who use Innovative Resources’ tools have been a constant fuel for my curiosity, and I would especially like to acknowledge the generosity of very many women and men who have contributed their time—and infectious enthusiasm!—to the business of presenting their stories in the newsletter.

I wonder if readers might particularly remember the stories we covered featuring Matthew Ford (police counsellor in Nashville, USA), Joyce Vernon (Sooka Community School in Zambia) and Nicole Rotaru (aid worker in South Sudan)? All three are especially memorable for their passion. Joyce took *Strengths to the Max* out fishing on the Zambezi River and sent me jaw-dropping photos of uber-ferocious tiger fish; Matthew provided a rare glimpse into the heavily glamorised yet closed world of police operations, and Nicole...? Well, Nicole let me read excerpts from her journal, written as bombs were falling around her in Sudan’s warzone. She is an

evocative writer, and I do hope she leaves a copy in our public archives someday.

Now, before leaving, there’s another change afoot to report. We’ve had lots of discussions and the ball is finally rolling: SOON is morphing into a fresh web-based format! Watch out for the new look later this year and, in the meantime, keep those in-the-field stories and practice musings coming in. Send them along to **info@innovativeresources.org** or to Karen Bedford who is taking over the reins: **karen@innovativeresources.org**.

On that note, it’s time to make like the family von Trapp and sing you: ‘So long, farewell, auf wiedersehen, goodbye!’



## In the Mailbag

### A letter from Veronica Robertson

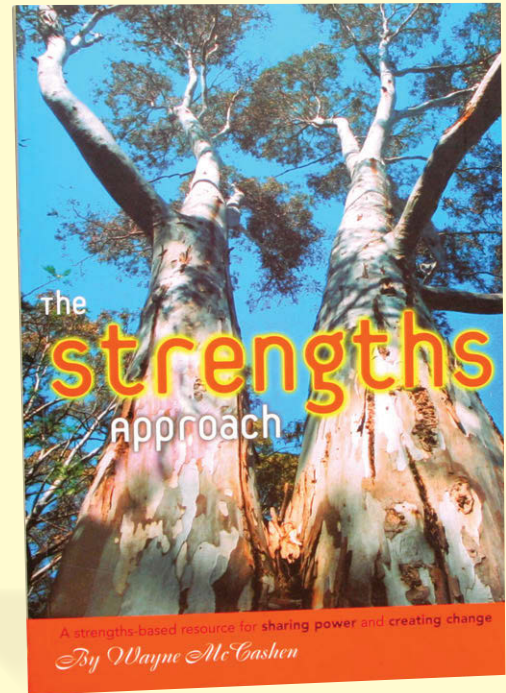
Having been a part of the helping profession for fifteen years, and being fortunate to have trainers, mentors and supervisors who were adept in strengths-based practices, my own work practices and ethics have been shaped by the philosophy of the person being the expert in their own lives. The first book I read on this was Wayne McCashen's *The Strengths Approach*, which I've lent to someone and now I need another copy! I also have three posters 'Labelling: Handle with Care', 'Reminders for Doing Hope', and 'Reminders for Doing Respect and Justice' (formerly produced by Innovative Resources) that I always keep on my workspace walls.

More recently, I have begun a university degree in social work and I'm delighted to feel myself struggling with analyses and labelling according to the standard deficit models. I say 'delighted' because this struggle indicates to me that the strengths way of working is 'in my bones' and my hope is to hold on to those values and principles whilst I navigate my way through the degree.

I've seen firsthand the results of focussing on solutions rather than problems, and believing that the answers for people are within. Thus far, it has been satisfying to be a small part of people's journeys and a privilege to be one of the many lights that illuminate their solutions.

Veronica Robertson

*Ed—Thanks so much for your comments, Veronica. Wayne McCashen's book called The Strengths Approach really has forged a place for itself as a key articulation of strengths-based human service practice. This book is celebrating its 10th anniversary and is as current as ever. I also wanted to give you a heads up that a series of new practice-oriented posters are currently being developed here at Innovative Resources. As your letter demonstrates, Veronica, posters are great tools for putting up on noticeboards and walls in offices, workplace kitchens, meeting rooms and reception areas. The simple messages contained in posters help communicate the culture of an organisation and keep core values at the forefront of our attention.*



### Happy 10th Birthday to The Strengths Approach!

*The Strengths Approach*, written by Wayne McCashen, describes the distinctive style of human service delivery known as strengths-based practice. Pivotal to the strengths approach is the principle of equal partnership between people—'power with'. This principle is as current as ever, and has far-reaching implications for practice. It acknowledges that people are the experts in their own lives; that the 'driver's seat' of change belongs to them and arises out of their dynamic strengths, goals, stories, feelings and next steps. This book is filled with the most practical skills, examples and resources for applying the strengths approach in any area of practice.

**10th Birthday Celebration Reduced Price:  
AU\$39.50 Cat No: 8007**

15 May 2016

## International Day of Families

Families are the basic core of our society—we are born into them and for most of us, the most important developing years of our lives are spent growing up within our families.

But every family is different. Just as we have lots of different cultures, we have many ways of defining family and interacting with each other.

The International Day of Families provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families and to increase knowledge of the social, economic and demographic processes affecting families. This year's theme is the role of families and family policies in promoting healthy lives for a sustainable future.

On May 15, take a moment to reflect on your family's relationship with the environment around you. What changes, what policies, would you like to see to help your family live in harmony with natural systems?



INTERNATIONAL  
DAY OF FAMILIES  
15 MAY 2016

## Workshops and Training

### Girloptia

#### spark-ling conversations and activities for real girls

A two-hour live webinar for teachers, counsellors, youth workers, health practitioners and parents

Join author Jane Bennett for a practical and lively exploration of how to use the *Girloptia* cards to trigger thoughtful reflections, stories, games, questions, curiosity and learning with girls and young women.

**DATE:** Wednesday 8 June, 2.00pm—4.00pm  
**COST:** \$35

For enquiries and bookings please contact:  
[jane@janebennett.com.au](mailto:jane@janebennett.com.au)

*'I want to flick through each card and allow myself to day-dream into the images as I ponder questions we all share in life as we grow and mature. These questions still exist for me...and I'm way past puberty!'*

*Shushann Movsession, Puberty Girl*

### Strengths Approach 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 15 & Thursday 16 June, 2016

**VENUE:** IR Training Room, 62 Collins Street,  
Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)

**COST:** \$435.60 inc. GST

### 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:** Wednesday 6 July, 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:** Thursday 7 July, 2016

**VENUE:** IR Training Room, 62 Collins Street,  
Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)

**COST:** \$217.80 inc. GST

**\* Register for both *Strengths Approach to Practice* and *Tools of the Trade* for only  
**\$375 - A saving of over \$60****



## Workshops and Training

### The Literary Therapist, 2-day workshop

It's on again! The Literary Therapist is our popular interactive workshop that uncovers the potential of creative writing to refresh our spirits, open doorways for clients and be part of our repertoire of self-care strategies. Join us to explore the importance and power of creative writing as a tool for engaging with clients in counselling and in group work, with colleagues in supervision and strategic planning, with communities in training and social justice advocacy, and with ourselves through our own critical reflection and self-care. The workshop covers a wide range of practical, readily-useable ideas, skills and prompts to bring writing alive in some very novel ways, from moon writing to stretched listing. Perfect for anyone who works with people and is passionate about writing ... or would like to be more so!

**DATE:** Monday 12 and Tuesday 13 September, 2016  
**VENUE:** Buda Historic Homestead, Castlemaine, Victoria  
**COST:** \$385.00 incl GST

### Economic Participation and Social Inclusion: Hidden Key to Client Outcomes

Community service clients are over-represented amongst the long-term unemployed and under-represented amongst those receiving training and education. This leads to increasing economic and social exclusion. Whilst some services support vocational outcomes—like education, training, paid and unpaid work—most agencies face barriers to embracing this role. Funding bodies and programs are often constrained to focus on one particular issue, rather than having the flexibility to respond holistically. This workshop will explore the significance of social inclusion in enabling better outcomes for clients. Join John Bonnice and discover the actions that workers and agencies can take to move from responding solely to the client's presented need to a more holistic mode of service delivery.

**DATE:** Tuesday 18 October, 2016  
**VENUE:** IR Training Room, 62 Collins Street, Kangaroo Flat (Bendigo)  
**COST:** \$217.80 incl. GST

Head to the Innovative Resources website to find out more about these events and to register.  
[www.innovativeresources.org](http://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.



## Training Voucher *Now Available*



### Prepay Your Training for Next Year!

Looking to spend your training budget before the end of the financial year? With less than seven weeks remaining, there is not much time left to purchase training. So, how about prepaying for training to be delivered in the next financial year? Innovative Resources, the home of strengths-based training and publishing, can supply you and your organisation with prepaid vouchers for training to be delivered post 30 June. You don't have to be specific about the form or content of the training you require, and you will have twelve months to redeem your vouchers.

For more information, phone: 03 5446 0500  
or email: [training@innovativeresources.org](mailto:training@innovativeresources.org)