

# Cultural diversity in resources for generating conversations with young people

Working with  
Skills, Values and Story Cards

1<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Ola El-Hassan and Lobna Yassine

# Acknowledgement of Country

*We would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, live and study. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people present. We acknowledge that we are living on stolen lands and that sovereignty has never been ceded. This is and always will be Aboriginal land.*

# Overview

Where it all began

'Strength's' cards and narrative therapy

Examples of how the cards are being used

Q&A

Where did  
it all begin?

Tree of Life

Birrong Boys High School

Miller Technology High  
School



# Tree of Life

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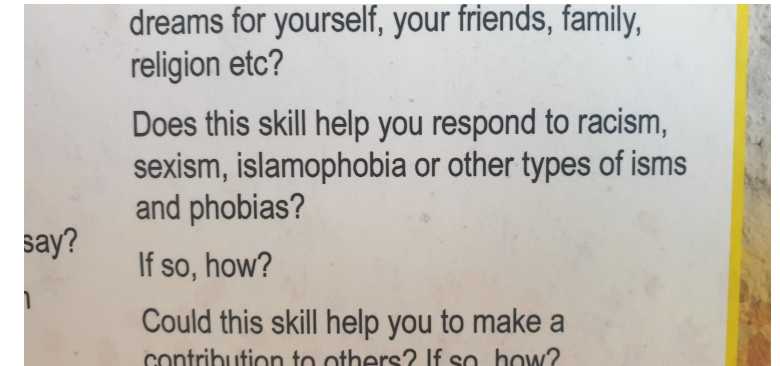
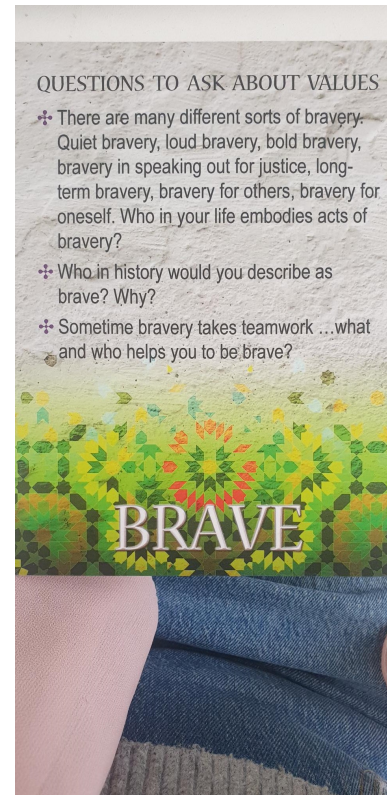
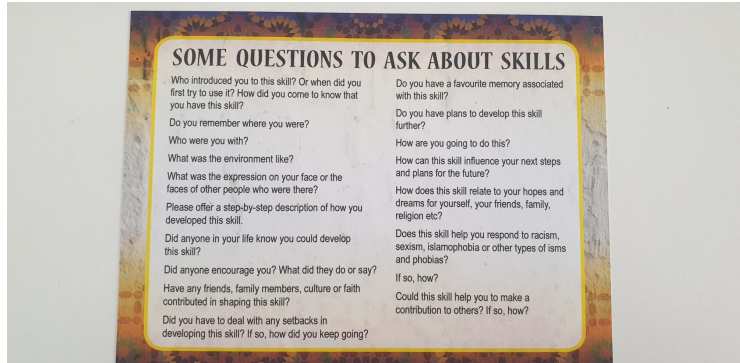
- **Developed cards with Miller Technology HS and Birrong Boys HS Students**
- **Multimedia artist worked with students to develop the cards**
- **Words used on cards were collected from the students' trunks**
- **Launch of cards – community event**

# Aren't these just strength cards?

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Ingamells, K., & Epston, D. (2012). Placing strengths into storylines-building bridges between strengths-based and narrative approaches. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, (3), 50-61.

Elhassan, O., & Yassine, L. (2017). Tree of Life with young Muslim women in Australia. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, (3), 27-45.



# Moving beyond strengths

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# Narrative Therapy

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“the narrative of strengths”

“In narrative terms this could be called a ‘thickening’ of a life story”

Ingamells, K., & Epston, D. (2012, p56).

# Narrative Therapy

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“stories of strengths’ are “intended to feature the perceived impact of wider influences such as poverty, gender, and culture”.

Ingamells, K., & Epston, D. (2012, p56).

# Narrative Therapy

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“a strength can be seen as a possible starting-point for excavation of a story, and this story of strength could be seen as a **counterstory** or at the very least as the beginnings of one”.

Ingamells, K., & Epston, D. (2012, p58).

# Narrative Therapy

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Reauthoring Muslim youth as first and foremost **charitable**, deeply **troubled by injustice**, and as advocates for **peace**, beyond just themselves.

# Narrative Therapy

“We were also conscious that although the current political climate is no fault of their own, they were responsible for responding to it, addressing it, and being each other’s protectors and caretakers” (Coates, 2015). (ElHassan and Yassine 2017, p41).



# Narrative Therapy

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“Practitioners may have gleaned lists of strengths backed up by multiple examples, yet no matter how colourful these examples may be, strengths based practice does not invite practitioners to **harvest the stories that sit within the strengths that they find**”.

Ingamells, K., & Epston, D. (2012, p57).

# Tips

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Use the questions to scaffold stories of strength

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Don't have to be used in exact order

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Re-word if necessary

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"how did you come to know that you have this skill?" ..... "did anyone encourage you? What did they do or say?"

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Slow down and give attention to the stories behind the skill/value.

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Don't hesitate to take a stroll through history or be curious about the future. We can do this while still avoiding a deficit-orientated approach.

# Examples of uses

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Examples from Ola and Lobna.

# Feedback: addiction

- "These cards are an awesome resource, not only for visual learners but also for conversation starting points. As you would already be aware, addiction is a diverse subject with many different discourses. I have found this style of presentation very powerful to evoke Narrative curiosity around skills and values. There are 8 value cards that I have on hand at work and 12 skill cards. These have similar things raised by my clients and I have found them very helpful as a tool. Please let the makers know that I really appreciate these cards and the thoughts behind making them"- counsellor

# Feedback: higher education

- “Up until now, I have used the cards in my MSW classes in an exercise that involves students identifying 1-2 of their most important values. Once they identify the values, they then discuss how these values motivate them and/or shape the choices they make. **This is meant to highlight the importance of values in our own lives in order to understand how to support clients in connecting to their values.** I teach Foundations to Social Work practice, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and Narrative Practices. I find this exercise useful in all three classes. Attached is some of the feedback I got from students in the Foundations course”.

# Feedback: young people

“I have used the cards to create a specific module in my young men's program to help them discover what their own skills and values are or help them identify what areas they would like to improve. It works well as it gives the young people relevant visual prompts when we are encouraging them to dig deeper beyond the surface level of them discovering themselves”- School based facilitator.

“The cards are a great way to facilitate a restorative mediation when students don't have the literacy skills or initial motivation to verbally describe how they feel”. Youth facilitator from an NGO .

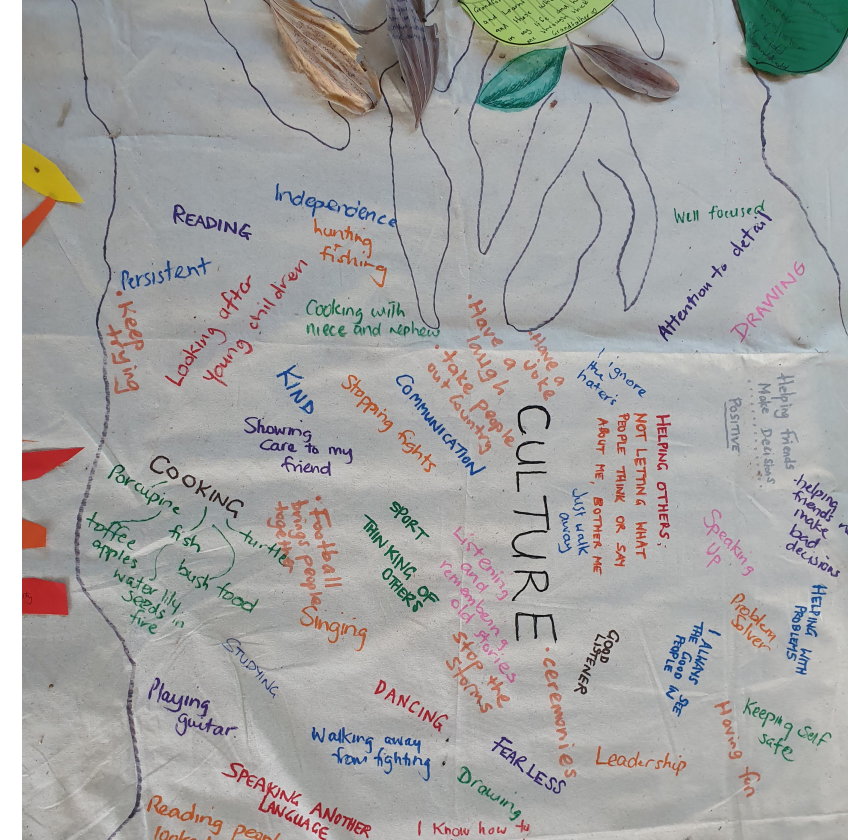
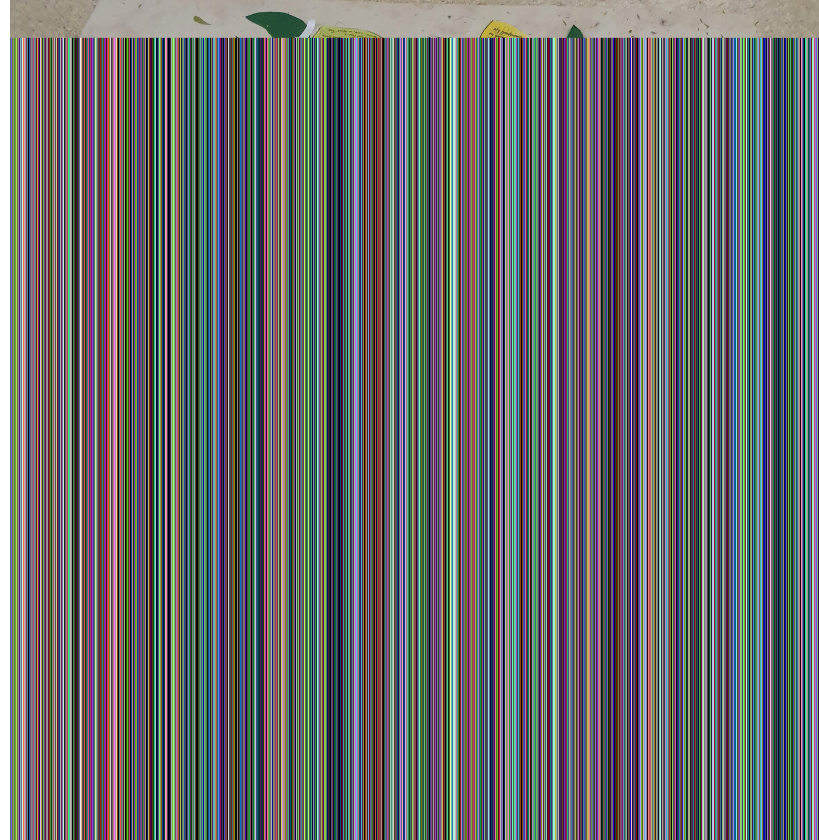
# Feedback: family therapy

- The **skills cards** can be used in family therapy sessions to talk about the skills family members see in each other that they admire. **The cards can be spread out on the floor or table and each family member can chose a skill for a family member.** If time permits they can chose a card/skill for every family member. The therapist can unpack and deepen the conversations using the cards as a tool to do this. For families that are problem saturated, this activity can be a nice way of getting them to connect positively and strength connections and relationships.
- The **values cards** can be a tool for families to discuss 'the values important to us as a family.' Questions such as 'what are the values we want to focus on?', 'what has got in the way of us practicing certain values?', 'why are these particular values important to our family?' can be helpful to unpack what is important in a family and help a family become more connected.
- The **values cards** can also be a tool to identify strengths in each other as well as strengthen connections between family members. Questions such as 'what is a quality you admire in (name family member)?' and 'what strengths do you see in (name family member)?' can be asked to unpack, explore and strengthen connections.
- As a family therapist, I often **set homework tasks for families** asking them to spend time together. These cards with the accompanying questions can be great to use during family dinners or other family connecting times! They can be a great conversation starter and help families to build knowledge of each other.

# Aboriginal Communities

- This resource has been very valuable in supporting my group work, especially helping participants consider their skills and abilities when completing the 'trunk' on their 'Tree of Life'. My work is primarily in remote Communities working alongside First Nation women. Naming up skills can be a challenge for participants as 'Mr Shame' tends to loom over everyone and tries to hijack the 'naming and claiming' of skills.
- We sat with a group of young women on a beach and as we read out the cards we asked if anyone would like to 'claim' the skill, or could 'name that skill/value in others' sitting around the circle. The girls initially only 'named it for others'- we asked for a story when they saw that skill in action, and then enquired deeper into story to 'thicken' the telling. The young woman was then asked if she would like to accept that card. As the 'naming and claiming' continued in the session, the girls began to 'claim' the cards for themselves. This use of the cards in this way 'scaffolded' the naming and claiming of skills and also provided an opportunity for outside witnessing of skills and values.
- The second time I used the cards in a similar way. Prior to the workshop, I met with two local women and showed them the cards and we brainstormed some 'experience near' skills which they had witnessed in the women of the community as they went along in their daily lives.
- A rich collection of experience near cards **were generated to add to the pack including " feeding big mobs of people", " filling out government forms", "finding bush honey" , " painting my family stories" to name a few.**
- When I returned home I read through the collective documents I had compiled from previous community Tree of Life workshops in Aboriginal Communities, and generated some further skill and ability cards.
- We have a group of narrative practitioners from the north who work alongside First Nation people and meet regularly on zoom.
- I have asked them to join me in speaking to those whom they work with to grow the 'experience near cards' and add to the pack. The pack will hopefully be a living document which will continue to grow.
- The cards have been a really valuable resource to generate rich conversations. THANKYOU





## Aboriginal Communities

- Tree of Life
- Cross-culturally, cross-disciplinary.



Questions

# References

- Elhassan, O., & Yassine, L. (2017). Tree of Life with young Muslim women in Australia. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, (3), 27-45.
- Ingamells, K., & Epston, D. (2012). Placing strengths into storylines-building bridges between strengths-based and narrative approaches. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, (3), 50-61.