

# KOALA COMPANY



## DIGITAL VERSION

**CONCEPT AND BOOKLET: RUSSELL DEAL**  
**ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN: MAT JONES**  
**EDITING: KAREN MASMAN**



St Luke's  
**Innovative**  
Resources

# Welcome to the Digital Version of



St Luke's Innovative Resources is delighted to bring you the interactive, versatile, digital version of this conversation-building resource, first published as a hard copy card set packaged in a polypropylene box.

You can:

- swipe through the digital cards, one at a time
- swipe through a row of thumbnail images at the bottom of the screen
- bookmark/tag images
- write, scribble or draw on the digital cards—you may want to circle a relevant statement or scribble notes as a card is discussed
  - add and drag notes anywhere on the images
  - highlight, draw and write in multiple colours

- take a screen shot and access the image in your photo gallery
- send the image to the person you are working with so they have a copy
- print the image and mail it to the person so they have a hard copy
- save the image in your files as a record of your conversation

### **How can I use this digital tool remotely with groups or individuals?**

If you are running groups or meetings using Skype, Zoom or other similar video conferencing tools, you can use our digital cards and tools in a number of different ways.

A good place to start is to give the group or person some time to get to know the cards:

- The facilitator can share their screen, and scroll through the images so everyone can see.
- Point out the different features of the card set including the types of images, the format of the words (if any), the suits (if relevant) and any other unique features.
  - Show them some of the features such as the scribble and text tools.

## **Deliberate Selection**

- As you scroll through the cards, invite the person or group to pick cards that jump out at them for any reason. Perhaps it is the image that catches their attention. Perhaps it is a word or a question, or some other quality of the card. It may be a card they are curious about, or would find most helpful to focus on, or think is very important, or it may be a card that matches something they are thinking about or experiencing at the moment, or even a card that expresses something they have never thought about before.
- As the facilitator, you may wish to choose one or two cards to prompt an activity or discussion.



## Random Selection

An alternate way of getting activities started is to select images randomly, for example:

- Ask each person to close their eyes and randomly say, 'Stop!' as the facilitator swipes through the images.
- Or ask each person to choose a number between 1 and X (X being the number of cards in the set). This is the number of their randomly selected card.
- Or use the timer on your phone set to a chosen interval—5 seconds, 10 seconds, etc. Stop on the image that is on screen when the timer dings.

Many videoconferencing tools allow you to put people into groups using 'breakout' rooms. So you may want to invite two or more people to discuss what a particular card means to them, and then come back to the whole group.



## **Some questions for reflection and conversation**

Whether you use a deliberate or random selection method, you can then build the conversation by inviting each person to read or comment on their card, if they wish.

Facilitators can then ask individuals or groups questions like:

- What does this card mean to you?
- Have you thought about the topic on the card before?
- On a scale of 1-10 how important is this to you?
- Can you think of a time when this card was particularly relevant? What happened?
- When this is happening, what is the effect?
- When this is not happening, what is the effect?
- Do you know anyone who is really good at this?
- What do they do?
- What is one simple thing you could do today or tomorrow that would make a difference?
- How will you notice the effects? (Some people ask for feedback, and others prefer to notice carefully how it feels inside themselves and what the effect is on others.)

In the booklet written especially for the card set you have chosen, you will find a lot more information. It includes the purpose of this card set, its origins and practice base, things you should take into consideration before using the cards, and many creative ideas for using the cards. Please adapt the suggestions to the digital environment.

***Don't hesitate to call us for support in using this digital resource.***



St Luke's  
**Innovative**  
Resources

**P: (03) 5446 0500**

**E: [info@innovativeresources.org](mailto:info@innovativeresources.org)**

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



# Contents

Portraits of the Whole Company ... 4	Your Team Gum Tree ..... 32
Green Shoots ..... 6	Your Personal Gum Tree ..... 33
Getting Started ..... 8	Random Choice Storytelling ..... 35
Adding Words ..... 10	Koala Cuddles ..... 37
Unpacking the Baggage ..... 12	Creative Writing ..... 38
The Smorgasbord ..... 14	In Drama ..... 39
Best, Worst, Funniest ..... 16	Feedback and Evaluation Tools .... 40
Creating an Audience ..... 18	The Publisher ..... 43
Inner and Outer Feelings ..... 19	The Illustrator ..... 45
Creating a Dichotomy ..... 22	The Author ..... 46
Your Relationship with the Problem ..... 26	Acknowledgements ..... 47
Pictures of the Future ..... 28	
Your Family Gum Tree ... 29	



# The Koala Company





## Green Shoots



Koalas might look all cute and cuddly and passive and even sleepy, but don't be fooled; koalas have personality! Koalas have moods and feelings, too. They have good days and bad days, and personal traits—both endearing and challenging. In fact, when you get to meet the members of

*Koala Company* you might be surprised to discover that they can be as different and diverse as people; they come with the same range of foibles and idiosyncrasies that humans demonstrate.

You see, the characters in *Koala Company* portray all the individuality, the temperaments, the emotions, and the personal styles we normally associate with people. Some of the koalas are zany and quirky, some are quiet and unassuming, and others are fiery, determined and argumentative.

By taking on human characteristics and looking a little like us *Koala Company* holds up a mirror that reflects who we are. In this mirror we can see not only ourselves but our family, our friends, our colleagues, and lots of other people we know.





These koalas are fun. We hope you manage at least a chuckle when you bump into them. But behind their gentle humour is a serious intent—perhaps *Koala Company* can help us to describe our feelings and the feelings of others more easily. Feelings can swirl around inside us as a confused jumble at times. It can be hard to find the right words to identify the confusing feelings we may have. It can be equally difficult to identify the feelings of others, especially when we have to interpret both their words and their body language.

*Koala Company* is designed to help us talk about the complicities of feelings; to help us understand and be understood. These cards can be used as a communication tool, an evaluation tool and as a reflective tool. They can be used as an icebreaker, a game, a way of making a personal statement...and much more.

Have fun with these koalas. Use your creativity and open yourself up to their invaluable lessons.

*Koala Company*—coming soon to a gum tree near you!

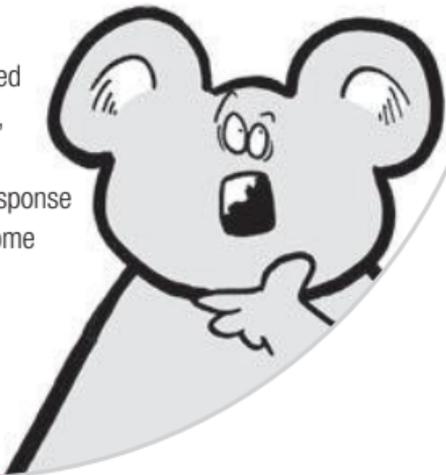
# Getting Started



Two of the most frequently asked questions about Innovative Resources' tools are, 'Which set of cards will be most useful in my situation?' and 'How do I know if it is an appropriate time to use them?'

Sadly, both questions are impossible to answer adequately. This is due to the very nature of the materials that Innovative Resources publishes. All our materials rely, inherently and inextricably, on the creativity of the person or persons using them. We do not publish materials that require preliminary training. There are no prescribed rules or recipes. We do not issue instructions but can only offer suggested uses.

The way our card sets and stickers are used depends entirely on YOU and your passion, purpose, respect, curiosity, creativity and imagination. All we can really say in response to both questions above is to ask some reciprocal questions:



- Which materials appeal to you the most?
- Which materials are most culturally relevant to your audience?
- Do you feel a need to introduce some hands-on materials to change the nature or direction of your conversation?
- Is it important that you acknowledge the different learning styles of your audience by taking a multimedia approach?
- How are you reading your audience? Do you think it is timely to introduce a different approach?
- No tool, verbal or otherwise, is guaranteed to always work. We do not publish panaceas. Are you prepared to take a risk and if it doesn't work, what is your 'Plan B'?



# Adding Words



*Koala Company* expresses a whole range of possible feelings, emotions and moods without using words.

Like an early and very popular resource published by Innovative Resources called *The Bears* we deliberately left words off the koala cards so that people could give their own interpretation of the feelings portrayed.

At the same time we are keenly aware of the need for tools that enhance our emotional vocabularies; tools that help us describe our feelings more clearly and accurately. This is especially true for children. Our expectations that they will somehow acquire the language skills to differentiate feelings are often unrealistic given the lack of quality tools that are appropriate for different developmental stages.

All too often, for children and adults alike, we make untested assumptions that the words we use to describe feelings are heard and understood.

Or indeed, it is easy to assume that we know what others mean when they describe their feelings.

The language skills required for differentiating and communicating the subtleties of emotions are very complex and sophisticated. We experience this very keenly when we try to express our feelings in a foreign language. This is why good translation is such a difficult art.

Any tool, therefore, that can extend emotional vocabularies is helping to build emotional literacy in our society.

A simple exercise to try with an individual student or client, or with a group of people is to ask them to list the words associated with each *Koala Company* card. The following questions may be useful:

- Which words spring to mind to describe the feelings displayed by each koala?
- How many words can you come up with that would accurately fit?
  - Which is the most appropriate single word to describe each koala's feelings?



# Unpacking the Baggage



We all carry feelings with us from one situation to another. This 'emotional baggage' can be positive or negative. Probably most of us are particularly aware of times when negative feelings carried over from one situation can interfere with another, particularly within relationships. This is basically a variation of the 'had a bad day in the office, came home and kicked the dog' scenario.

We all know the possible consequences of emotional baggage, having been on the giving and receiving ends countless times. Sometimes, however, it can be invaluable to 'clear the decks' or 'unpack the baggage' before this interference occurs.

Skilled teachers and school counsellors know that on Monday mornings they have to be alert to those children who have had intense weekends. On the one hand there may be the child who has had such a fantastic time they just have to tell all their friends. But there may also be the child who has experienced a huge disappointment or a trauma. Picking up on, and responding to, the needs of both these categories of children in a timely way can be crucial to avoid the subsequent 'acting out' of the issues.

Giving people the time and space to identify what has been happening for them and the feelings they have about it, is a way we can assist people to deal with their baggage—good and bad.

The koalas can play their part by providing handles with which people can come to grips with this baggage:

- Which koala (or koalas) are you today?
- What has been happening for you recently?
- Is this koala likely to get in the way of other things you have to do?

Being able to choose a koala to represent our present (or recently past) feelings can be a helpful way of coming to terms with strong or confusing feelings that may be difficult to describe in words alone.

But a gentle word of warning: sometimes we can accumulate a lot powerful baggage that we keep hidden. The koala cards use cute and lighthearted illustrations, however, when they put people in touch with suppressed feelings the simple exercise outlined above can unleash some strong feelings.

# The Smorgasbord



It is rare that one single feeling provides a complete description of our experience. While we often use single word labels as shorthand to describe our feelings (happy, sad, fine, cross, depressed, etc) this has all the risks of stereotyping and reductionism.

If only life was that simple.

At best, our feelings are often a jumble with multiple subtle variations, differing intensities and, at times, confusing and competing layers. In workshops I often ask people to describe the array of feelings they experienced on their first day at a job or during other significant events in their lives.

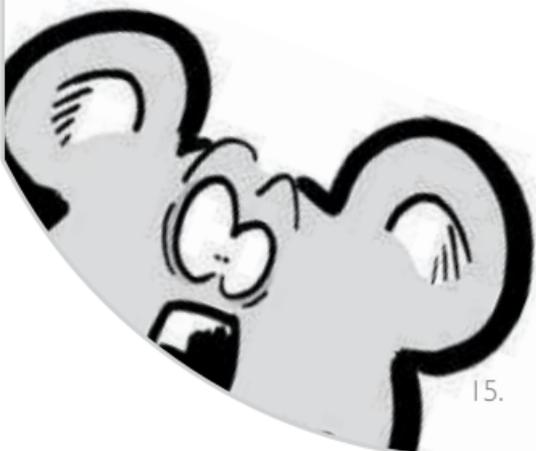
At times, this array of feelings is like a smorgasbord. Being able to differentiate and describe different emotions can be a real challenge for us as adults.

For children this is often even more challenging and yet so often as parents we persist in asking questions like, 'How was school today?' expecting a one word answer to sum up what might be a smorgasbord of very different feelings for them.

The *Koala Company* cards and stickers can be used to readily demonstrate how we can all hold a bundle of different feelings inside ourselves simultaneously:



- Think of a significant event in your life. As you scan the *Koala Company* cards can you pick out different cards that sum up how you were feeling at this time?



# Best, Worst, Funniest



A businessman of our acquaintance, Kevin Fitzgerald, created a little ritual which transformed the quality of his family conversations. Faced by prolonged silences, monosyllabic answers and unproductive attempts to build conversations around the dinner table, he and his family began a beguilingly simple family ritual. At the start of the evening meal each family member was invited to tell a story about the best, the worst and the funniest thing that had happened that day.

Kevin said that the family's meal-time discussions came alive and relationships improved as a result. Kevin now prints 'BWF' (best, worst, funniest) on his business cards and sometimes uses the same questions in meetings with his friends and colleagues.



*Koala Company* provides another way of adding meaning to this delightfully simple ritual:

- Think of three situations or events (best, worst, and funniest) you choose to talk about. How did each of these three events make you feel? Choose koala cards that best represent your feelings.



This is a great little activity for starting lots of conversations in groups, in individual counselling and around the dining room table!

# Creating an Audience



When people come to counselling hoping for change to occur it can sometimes be particularly useful to have them reflect on who they would want to notice the change. It might be a partner or family members or work colleagues or teachers or other significant adults. Or it could be a special person, even someone no longer alive. Or it could be someone in authority.

The idea of nominating those you would like to witness your change adds another layer of potency to your conversation. It creates an audience, real or imaginary, who can be invited to participate in the conversation and celebrate change when it occurs.

*Koala Company* can be used to identify this selected audience:

- List the persons you would most want to notice your change. Can you find a koala that represents how they might feel about you (or about your issue) now?
  - Once they have noticed how you have changed do you think they will resemble a different koala?

# Inner and Outer Feelings



The fact that what we are feeling on the inside might be unrecognisable to others is a simple but profound reality we all face. We know that facial expressions and body language can be certain giveaways for what we are feeling. But, at times, our outer appearance may only be a faint echo of what we are actually experiencing.

Some people are much more naturally adept or practised at hiding their feelings than others. When we factor in cultural differences in how people physically express emotions, the whole business of interpreting other people's feelings can indeed be complex.

*Koala Company* can play an important educational role in demonstrating that what you see in someone may or may not resemble their actual emotional experience.

This is often an important lesson for children as they develop emotional literacy. However, it has a different (but equally profound) relevance for human service workers.



One of the conversations we sometimes introduce into our workshops is to invite participants to tell a story about a situation in their professional life when it was crucial that their outward appearance did not betray what they were feeling inside. The stories that emerge can be very profound.

Such as a first child protection investigation, discovering a body, treating a gruesome injury, facing the media, running a staff meeting or addressing a conference. Many of the participants telling these stories are able to choose very different and contrasting cards to represent their inner and outer selves.

How do we make decisions about what to reveal about ourselves? This, in itself, is a challenging question; part of any human service role is learning how and when to choose an appropriate professional mask.

But the other side of this coin includes the assumptions and stereotypical responses we make in our perception of others.



A male client might appear to be very angry because of his red face, loud voice and clenched fists, and he can easily be pigeon-holed because of this. Perhaps, however, as well as being angry (or instead of being angry) he may simply be very scared as he approaches someone in authority who may be in a position to have a significant impact on his life.



A classic example of the importance of working through these complexities might be an inexperienced child protection worker approaching a father about the alleged abuse of his child. Here the rapid checking and testing of assumptions rather than taking them at face value can be of crucial importance.

Of course, this checking of assumptions is of crucial importance in many other professional settings. For this reason *Koala Company* has found a place, not only in the training of social workers, but also in many service industries such as hospitality, hotel management, hospitals and personnel.

# Creating a Dichotomy



Creating a dichotomy (the setting up of two interrelated polarities) can be a great tool for noticing and measuring change. Because the koalas can so succinctly describe our changing emotions, they have innumerable applications for building conversations about change:

- Can you choose a koala that represents how you were feeling last week?
- Which of the koalas represents how you are feeling now?
- What is different? What has changed?

The dichotomy used in the above exercise is created by naming two different events at two different times—then and now, now and the future, when you were well and when you were ill—and so on. The key discussion is about the changes and making sure they do not go unnoticed. *Koala Company* can play a very useful role by literally providing a picture of the two different states. This can help both the naming and the noticing of differences.



Everybody has ups and downs. Feelings never stay constant for long. Our relationships with others are in constant flux and our relationships with our problems also fluctuate. But sometimes, because the changes are small or we are preoccupied and looking elsewhere, we may not notice the changes that are occurring. One of our key sayings at St Luke's is, 'Change only happens when it is noticed'. Naming, describing and picturing separate events or times in the process of creating dichotomies can be a useful way of making sure that important aspects of change and growth are noticed.



Having established a dichotomy and an expectation of noticing change using *Koala Company*, you can add layers to the conversation by identifying the strengths, skills and strategies you used (or need to use) to create change.

*Strength Cards*, *Strength Cards for Kids* and the *I Can Monsters* are other materials from Innovative Resources that have been designed specifically to help identify and mobilise strengths, skills and strategies for achieving change.

You might also want to consider how to enlist the support of others around you to add to your own strengths. *Angels with Attitude* and *Strength in Teams* are two tools that help us think about who we can call on to support us.

Finally, having some tools to measure the change that has been achieved (or is yet to be achieved) can be a key component of noticing. 'Scaling' is a well-known, simple, yet powerful technique for doing this. It looks at the two events or times identified as dichotomies and, rather than seeing change as all or nothing, helps break the change process down into small achievable steps. Being able to measure change and monitor progress are essential to any therapeutic practice or learning program.

*Scales* and *Scales II* (published by Innovative Resources) are sets of pads with tear-off sheets. Each page is printed with a simple line drawing that represents the graduated nature of change (for example, a ladder, pathway, graph, water tank, pendulum, etc).



Scaling can be combined with the *Koala Company* cards to create a highly accessible way for people to measure and communicate moods, emotions, progress and wellbeing over a period of time:



- Using this picture of a temperature scale (or some other image, possibly from *Scales*) mark a point on the scale that measures...(you decide what you are measuring) for each day of the coming week. Choose a card or sticker from *Koala Company* that shows how you felt each day.

# Your Relationship with the Problem



At times in counselling it can be very useful to help people separate themselves from their problem. Sometimes when problems boss us around or overwhelm us we can believe we are the problem rather than seeing the problem as something that temporarily interferes with our normal living.

Separating the problem from the person is called 'externalising' and can be a very powerful tool for change. If the problem can be seen as something external that descends on us and can make life miserable, we can develop some tactics to keep the problem at bay or under control. Thus, it can be useful to talk about the relationship one has with one's problems:

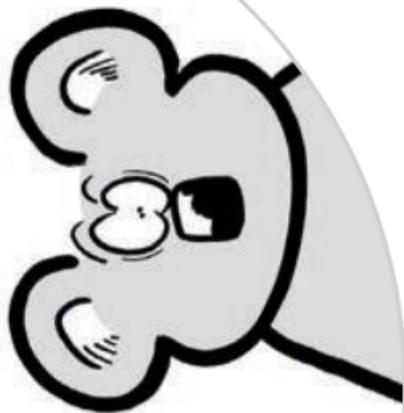
- Are you in control of your problem or is your problem pushing you around?
  - How has your relationship with your problem changed since I saw you last?



- Do you feel more or less confident about gaining the upper hand?
- Are you more relaxed with your problem or more stressed?

The koalas can help build this conversation by providing additional ways to investigate this relationship:

- Which koala represents how you feel about your problem now?
- Which koala were you last week, last month or at your last appointment?
- Which koala are you when the problem is at its most oppressive or destructive?
- Which koala are you when you feel most in control over your problem?
  - Which koala do you think you will be when the problem disappears or no longer reoccurs?



# Pictures of the Future



Knowing where we are heading, and what our aims, goals and objectives are can be a useful early step towards finding solutions to issues. The phrase we like to use is 'Developing our pictures of the future' because this implies hope and change.

Establishing a picture of the future early in a conversation can help avoid the seduction of the problem. Sometimes the solution has nothing to do with the problem and establishing a positive picture of the future can help balance the need to assess and understand the nature of the problem.

The miracle question, 'If you go to bed tonight and discover when you wake up that the problem has disappeared, what will be different?' is a great question for developing an optimistic future picture. Or you might ask, 'What will you be doing differently when the problem is not pushing you around?'

*Koala Company* might help with developing a picture of the future:

- Can you find the koala that you think you will be like when the problem is no longer an issue for you?
  - What will this koala be doing, thinking and feeling, that is different from what you are doing, thinking and feeling now?

# Your Family Gum Tree



*Koala Company* is another fun way of describing your family by creating a genogram or family tree. You can use the *Koala Company* cards or stickers to describe and discuss the personality of each family member. Choose a koala that matches each family member as you know them or as you or others remember them and create your own 'family gum tree' of parents, siblings, children, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and so on. The koalas are a great way of getting everyone in the family involved in a discussion of who is who and who has what traits and idiosyncrasies.

Counsellors and family workers will also recognise that *Koala Company* is a great resource for family sculpting.



Family sculping uses a simple family tree to develop insights into significant relationships within the family through such questions as:

- Who is closest to you in your family?
- Who is the most distant?
- Which relationships are the strongest and most positive?
- Which are the most conflictual?
- Who is similar to other family members?
- Which traits are common between siblings or across generations?
- Who would you most want to be similar to?

The cards can be readily moved around to represent different relationships within the family. Additional layers of conversation can also be built through such questions as:

- Which koala represents each family member at their best?
  - What about at their worst?

- Are there family members whose personalities have changed over time?
- Why do you think this is?
- Which koalas represent these changes?



Workers who adopt a solution-focused or strengths-based approach might also commonly ask:

- Having identified and created a picture of your family, can you also name the strengths of each family member? At times Innovative Resources' *Strength Cards* will provide a useful prompt for the listing of strengths.

Family trees and family sculptures can be created by family members working individually so that comparisons can be made between perceptions.

Alternatively, a family group might create a family tree or sculpture cooperatively in which case the discussion and negotiation regarding the choice of representative koalas provides the means of comparing perceptions.

# Your Team Gum Tree



Similar in nature to your 'family gum tree', your 'team gum tree' is a way of picturing and describing the members of your team, group, community or organisation.

As a team-building exercise each group member can be invited to choose the koala that they think best represents them and then they list the key strengths they bring to the team. (Consider using *Strength Cards* as a prompt). Group members can also be asked to list their particular skills, interests and passions as a way of providing a rich inventory of the resources the group has at its immediate disposal.

An alternative for a team with a high level of trust is for each group member to choose a koala that represents their picture of how they see all other members. The end result is a composite picture of how every group member is seen by their colleagues. Do you imagine your team or organisation is ready for such an activity?



# Your Personal Gum Tree

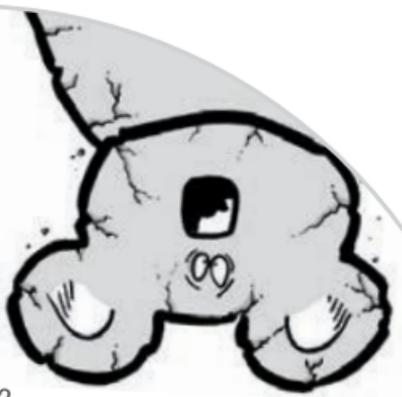


People are complex. While we may choose a single koala to represent our feelings at a particular time, a single image never adequately describes our nature. There are many aspects to our personalities or, if you like, we have many different personalities rolled into one.

Creating our own personal gum tree is an activity that explores the different selves covered by our skin. Scan the *Koala Company* cards and begin to pick out some of the different 'personalities' that make up who you are. See what different koalas you choose according to the following questions.

- Which koala do most people see most of the time?
- Is this the koala that is really in control or that drives your life?
- Are there times when other koalas take over and assert control? When does this happen?
  - Do other people sometimes see these koalas?





- Which of these koalas are you comfortable with?
- Which make you uncomfortable?
- Which would you prefer to do without?
- Can you give all your component koalas a name?
- Are there any koalas you would like to be most of the time or some of the time?
- What is stopping you being these koalas?
- If you could, would you replace the lead koala? Would you rather have a different koala in the 'driving seat'? Why?

# Random Choice Storytelling



A simple, fun way to start any group or meeting is to use the koalas to invite participants to tell stories about themselves. This connects people with each other and with their own feelings, and in the appropriate circumstances, can give rise to great good humour.

There are 50 *Koala Company* cards so with just one pack you can do this activity with a group of up to 50 people. Groups of more than eight or ten people can be divided into small groups to allow more time for each story and to make the conversation more comfortable. Alternatively, each small group (four to ten people) can be given a separate pack of koalas.

Spread the cards out face down. Each group member is invited to select a card randomly and then share a story with the group about a time they felt like the koala on the card they selected. What were they doing, thinking and feeling at the time?

Because of the power of cards like *Koala Company* to evoke strong feelings, it is always respectful to allow participants to make an alternative choice if, for any reason, they are uncomfortable with their initial choice.

A couple of minutes for each participant to tell a story is usually sufficient. Other group members can also add their own responses to this story or briefly tell a story of their own about the particular koala card that is featured. This simple storytelling exercise can be repeated by simply shuffling the pack and starting over.



# Koala Cuddles



Koalas, like us humans, know what it's like to have a 'bad hair day' (more accurately, koalas probably have 'bad fur days', but never mind). Kids especially can struggle with all sorts of issues that may make them anxious or sad or lonely. Everything from feeling physically unwell to friendship breakups to worries about their appearance or school tests...the list can be huge.

The *Koala Company* cards (as we discovered with *The Bears* and *Stones...Have Feelings Too!*) can be a wonderful way that parents and other adults can remind children that they love them and are thinking of them.

Gifting one's children who are down in the dumps with a happy, positive koala card or sticker can send a message of love, support, concern or hope. Many parents have discovered that a card or a sticker placed in a school lunch box or on the fridge door with a note can be a great affirmation. Teachers, childcare workers and anyone who cares for children know that giving such a simple, inexpensive artifact can provide a powerful reminder of the appreciation they have for the child and of the positive possibilities they see in the child.

And yes, big people as well as little people have bad hair days. Most people like to receive letters or other affirmative messages.

The koalas can be a delightfully different way of saying, 'I love you' or, 'I think you are OK'.

# Creative Writing



While *Koala Company* was primarily designed as a conversation-building tool it can also work as a great prompt or catalyst for creative writing. A koala card can be chosen randomly or according to a particular theme or instruction, for example:

- Which koala would you most like to be?
- Which koala would other people most likely say was you?
- Which koala is an aspect of you that others rarely see?
- Which koala are you feeling most like now?
- Which koala represents you in your biggest adventure?

Participants are then invited to use the card or cards they have chosen to write a short story. The story can be autobiographical or fictional. You can suggest a word length or a time limit.

While there are no particular rules about how to set a creative writing activity like this in motion, such an exercise provides the opportunity to explore how visual metaphors or images can help us to get us in touch with our feelings and express our creativity.

# In Drama



*Koala Company*, like many of our card sets, has a range of applications for drama classes, including role playing and acting out feelings and moods. Participants can be invited to choose a koala character to act out.

Alternatively, cards can be chosen randomly or according to the perception of which koala most resembles the character in a play. Participants then attempt to take on the characteristics of that koala and act out the associated traits, foibles and idiosyncrasies.

This activity can provide a simple and quick stimulus to help actors get into character. It can demonstrate the significance of facial expression and body language to communicate feelings and it can also provide an effective way of releasing feelings.

Role plays are commonly used in the professional education of human service workers and the koalas can help by quickly setting up the characters and emotions in the situation to be played out. Workers familiar with psychodrama or who use role enactment in their practice, may find the koala characters useful as a way of easing participants into the scenarios to be acted out.



# Feedback and Evaluation Tools



The koalas provide a quick, gently humorous and unusual resource for gathering feedback, making evaluations and checking feelings.

Like *The Bears* they can be placed prominently on an office door, a computer monitor, a notice board or a refrigerator to let your intended audience know which koala mood you are in today! They can be slipped into lots of conversations to provide a different and unexpected audit of how other people are traveling:

- How are you feeling at present?
- Which koala are you right now?
- How is your energy level?
- Is there a koala that looks like you are feeling inside?

You can use *Koala Company* as a feelings check whenever you are unsure about whether you are being understood, or if people's attention or interest is waning or if you are uncertain about a particular group dynamic.

The koalas are a great way of obtaining feedback on the effectiveness of a communication, an activity, a service, or an event. This could be an interview, a seminar, a staff meeting or tonight's dinner that you cooked!



- Is the event or situation what you expected?
- Which koala sums up how you are feeling about it?

Even for more formal evaluations the koalas can play a novel and distinctive role. Using *The Bears*, a colleague once conducted an evaluation of a disability service by users of that service. The group of consumers all had severe physical disabilities (cerebral palsy) so, in this instance, oral or written responses to key evaluation questions were clearly not viable. So this colleague developed a schedule of carefully worded questions that the consumers could answer by pointing (with assistance as needed) to the card that best summarised their feelings. This evaluation proved to be a powerful experience for all concerned.

We imagine that *Koala Company* could be used in exactly the same way and could certainly complement other language-based evaluation tools.

Generally, it is helpful to incorporate evaluation (formal or informal) into any activity. For many people it forms an important part of closure or at least a significant means of providing punctuation or pauses between events. Using koalas can provide a simple but different way of honouring this need for closure.

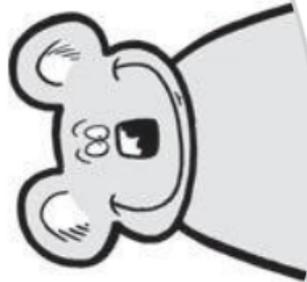


# The Publisher



Unlike koalas Innovative Resources may not have the status of being an Australian icon (yet!). However, as the publishers of conversation-building tools for human service workers we attempt to be distinctly Australian, but with growing international recognition.

All of our materials are produced and printed in Australia, using graphic artists and printers from Central Victoria, whenever possible. It is important for us to be part of our local community and to build citizenship in a number of ways including in our own gum tree.



Like *Koala Company* we can be cute and cuddly—sometimes. We can also be odd, bewildered, grumpy and all the other emotions you will find in the *Koala Company* cards. But if nothing else, Innovative Resources is made up of an immensely talented, creative and hardworking team. We set high standards on everything we do and we love publishing materials that we know can make a difference in people's lives.



Innovative Resources is the publishing arm of St Luke's Anglicare—one of Australia's leading community service organisations. Publishing 'seriously optimistic' books and materials is one way St Luke's enacts its commitment to building a fairer and more just society. Innovative Resources is a totally self-supporting enterprise and profits made are returned to St Luke's to support other community-building initiatives.

People from the Innovative Resources team are available to provide training and workshops that demonstrate creative ways of using our materials. We also love to hear your creative ideas for using the materials, including stories about what worked and what didn't and suggestions for improvements. We also appreciate ideas for new resources and publications.

Visitors are most welcome to browse in our bookshop  
(137 McCrae Street, Bendigo Victoria 3550) and on our  
website [www.innovativeresources.org](http://www.innovativeresources.org)

## The Illustrator



Any opportunity to produce art for the terminally lovely people at St Luke's Innovative Resources is a privilege and a pleasure. The always brimming pool of ideas, sound advice and enthusiasm make working with Russell, Karen and company more fun than a barrel of monkeys (or, come to think of it, koalas).

From go to whoa, the *Koala Company* has been one highly entertaining, laugh-out-loud caper to produce, and thanks again to Russell for a rather nifty concept that has evolved into the colourful, furry little critters on cards. A good many thanks also go out to the fine lady Jacqueline, Ron, Jill, Natalie, Meagan and Graeme, and anyone else who offered their wisdom and support.



# The Author



Anne, my partner of over 30 years, and I live in a stone house on a bush property in Central Victoria (Australia) totally surrounded by national heritage park. A number of native animals have made it their home over the years— possums, a tawny frogmouth, sugar gliders, blue wrens, orphaned kangaroos and Wally the emu—but no koalas.

This is just as well because looking at *Koala Company* makes me think of my extended family, community and work colleagues—although I love them all dearly, I don't particularly want them cohabiting my house.

Mat Jones: your illustration and design work is brilliant. I hope others will also recognise their friends, colleagues, relatives—and themselves—amongst the *Koala Company*.

And when this happens, I hope they all laugh as much as I do.



# Acknowledgements



Publishing is a team sport and many people in and around Innovative resources deserve credit for helping bring *Koala Company* to life.

We all love working with Mat Jones whose art is fresh, vibrant and full of humour.

Nothing is too much trouble for Mat.

The simplicity of his koala characters belies the painstaking hours he put into shaping and reshaping each expression. We already have Mat signed up for at least another five years of projects.

To Karen Masman, our managing editor, I owe another bottle of champagne. Karen willingly jumps into every project with energy, ideas and a pedantic disposition (in the nicest possible sense) that steadfastly refuses to compromise quality or let any imperfections through.



John Holton always provides great feedback and promotional work and Step Forbes' technical and production skills cut swathes through all the potential obstacles that can befall any publishing project.

To Keith Hall and our dedicated team of collators and packers, thanks for all your assembly and warehousing work.

Thanks to David Gibson who sourced and printed the tins and to Mulqueen Printers who printed the cards and booklet.

Finally, thanks to Cath Holton, Cristina Gay, Tina Perry, Anne Morgan and Kaylene Dowd for ensuring that all orders are filled with great care and efficiency.

Russell Deal  
*Managing Director*



Published 2004. Reprinted 2010 by:



St Luke's  
**Innovative**  
Resources

62 Collins Street Kangaroo Flat  
Victoria 3555 Australia  
p: + 61 3 5446 0500 f: +61 3 5447 2099  
e: [info@innovativeresources.org](mailto:info@innovativeresources.org)  
w: [innovativeresources.org](http://innovativeresources.org)

ABN: 97 397 067 466

Text: © St Luke's Innovative Resources 2005

Illustration: © Mat Jones 2005

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: I 920945 05 9

St Luke's 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.

Yes, koalas look cute, cuddly and positively passive but they can also be grumpy, determined, thrilled, joyous, scared and angry.

This delightful set of 50 zany koala characters demonstrates how koalas can mirror the complex emotions experienced by us humans. Use them to talk about feelings.



St Luke's  
**Innovative**  
Resources

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