

Have you experienced the transformational power of the right question at the right time? Questions can change people's lives. Curiosity and the ability to ask pertinent questions are fundamental to all helping professions.

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Innovative
Resources

Concept: Geoff Barker and Michelle Lane Jenner
Booklet author: Russell Deal
Design: Bradley Welsh

deepspeak

The world according to you

What is
deepspeak?
deepspeak!

deepspeak

The world according to you



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foreword

When thinking about this foreword for *Deep Speak* I was reminded of a quote from Polish youth pioneer, Janusz Korczak (*Reclaiming Youth at Risk* by Larry K. Brendro, Martin Brokenleg and Steve van Bockern, National Educational Service, Indiana, USA, 2002):

We fail to see the child, just as one time we were unable to see the woman, the peasant, the oppressed social strata and oppressed peoples. We have arranged things for ourselves, so that children should be in our way as little as possible ... A child's primary and irrefutable right is the right to voice his thoughts, to actively participate in our verdicts concerning him.

Korczak called for a deep respect for the dignity of children and education that would unleash motivation and intelligence, and the responsible involvement of youth in creating just and caring communities.

A resource such as *Deep Speak* that encourages young people to tell their stories, offer their opinions and listen to those of others, can play a part in challenging the invisibility of young people and creating the kind of education that Korczak is referring to.

I commend Innovative Resources for developing yet another creative resource that facilitates the opening up of conversations with older children and young people. As a parent of now adult children and as a worker in the human services field for over a decade I have increasingly learnt the value of creating opportunities for having meaningful conversations with young people.

One of the consistent complaints by youth is that adults do not listen to them—they don't mean passive hearing, but active listening and understanding. Youth discern very quickly whether people are genuine. If they are listened to and responded to with respect they develop a sense of dignity, of being valued as a person, and develop a sense of self-worth.

Youth are the experts in their own lives and we need to listen to them with respect. Young people often ignore or overlook their successes; astute listeners listen for these, however small. They listen to the way language is used and the values underlying statements, using these observations to create openings for reflection. By adapting a stance of active curiosity adults can encourage conversations with young people that allow them to reflect and articulate. These kinds of conversations assist young people to build the chapters of their life story, make links with significant people and events and navigate the feelings and emotions connected with these.

The way adults, indeed any person—young or old—interacts and communicates with young people can have a life-long impact on their experiences and development as they progress through to adulthood. The adult who is able to connect with a young person has a tremendous opportunity to influence the course of that young life. Adults have a role in enabling them to experience success.

Sometimes, this can involve challenging—with empathy and caring—their observations and interpretations of the world, and their own behaviour. We can assist them to learn to self-advocate through conversation.

Changes in the way an emerging and growing adolescent thinks are almost invisible, yet they are just as great as bodily changes. Guidance is needed, though it may not always be welcomed. An adolescent needs to test out their new thinking skills and learn how to make sense of a very complex world—a world of drugs, sex, conflict, job-search, unemployment, love, and a myriad of pressures and uncertainties—all while trying to establish independence. Underpinning this journey are the values and ideas passed on by their parents, carers and peers, and the search for their own ideas and values. To navigate this journey successfully, they need to author their own life story and be given opportunities to reflect on and articulate the events, thoughts and feelings that punctuate their lives. This kind of reflection and articulation gives meaning to their experiences.

Through active curiosity one can gain valuable information about what is important in young people's lives. In his book *From Surviving to Thriving—promoting mental health in young people* (ACER Press, 1998) Australian author Andrew Fuller notes:

It's surprising the amount of information that can be extracted out of a song lyric or favourite films. The art seems to be to use their own diversion strategies as an entrée to their world. Also, it allows them to educate you about something, which often places them in a different position from being misunderstood or not listened to.

Two of the most important things you can do to enhance your relationship with someone is to improve your communication and to create opportunities to connect. Within my field of residential care for 'at risk' youth, young people often write about their feelings in quite moving poems. This is encouraged by staff as the sharing of the poems opens up avenues for conversation with young people about their deeper feelings or frustrations. The young people's sense of self-worth is evident following these closer encounters with staff.

To really connect with a young person you need to share some good times with them; find some common interests, talk, share stories and do things together regularly—whether it is one-on-one or in a group. These cards will provide the opportunities to do just that. They will be a valuable tool for parents, youth workers and other carers of young people. But more importantly, they will be a great resource for young people themselves—giving them opportunities to tell their stories and share their thoughts, feelings and beliefs.

Jo Haythorpe

Residential Care Program Manager

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Thank you also to the newly youth consultancy group known at the time of writing as 'Third Eye'. Luke Peters and Brad O'Neil from this group offered us an invaluable look at the questions for *Deep Speak* through the eyes of young people. Their insightful comments enabled us to craft the questions in ways that make them more accessible and relevant to young people.

Jo Haythorpe, formerly the Residential Care Program Manager with Children, Youth and Family Services at St Luke's Anglicare, very generously found time to contribute a thoughtful foreword which provides a rich professional context for *Deep Speak*.

Graphic designer, Brad Welsh, was given the task of bringing the cards to life. His simple but evocative designs lift the questions off the cards and add meaning and resonance. Brad would like to thank Tim Lane for his wonderful creative assistance in illuminating the cards.

To the multi-talented team at Innovative Resources: only you know how much work goes into every publication. Thanks to Anne Morgan for word processing, Step Forbes for print production, John Holton and Karen Bedford for helping to hone and shape the questions, and for project management and editing.

Russell Deal

Michelle Lane Jenner

Geoff Barker

Central to the publishing vision of Innovative Resources is the creation of tools or prompts for building transformational conversations. Every human service worker is in the business of change—whether you are a social worker, a psychologist, a counsellor, a youth worker, a chaplain, a teacher, or working in any other profession that focuses on people—inevitably, change is important to you.

The change you hope to support in others might vary enormously; from learning a skill, to enhanced self-esteem, to increased insight, to altered behaviours, to making better decisions, and so on.

At Innovative Resources we hold an abiding fascination for the ways people construct their roles as facilitators of change. In particular (perhaps like the media and advertising industry) we have a curiosity for the ideas, skills and resources that ‘change agents’ use in their work.

Innovative Resources began life as the publishing initiative of St Luke’s Anglicare, a community service organisation with over 25 years experience in providing ‘strengths-based’ services to clients and communities throughout north central Victoria, Australia. The strengths approach is characterised by a focus on identifying, mobilising and celebrating people’s own strengths as the most powerful resources for change.

It follows that the ideas, skills and resources that interest us most are those that clients and communities can understand and use themselves. The tools we search for, and publish when possible, are those that anyone can pick up, enjoy and experience success in using. Hopefully, they are neither manipulative nor clothed in jargon. They do not require extensive pre-training, they do not have hidden meanings and do not reinforce labels and stereotypes.

We believe the conversation-building tools published by Innovative Resources are powerful and have great potential to generate change. Like any tools there are dangers—particularly if they are used in disrespectful and insensitive ways—ways that create ‘power-over’ rather than ‘power-with’. However, when used in accordance with the values of strengths-based approaches, our tools have the ability to encourage users to re-story their lives and create change that reflects the person they want to be.

Traditionally, the dominant tools in human service work have been words and questions. Every human service worker is a wordsmith who uses words and questions as pivotal in change processes.

While this is only right, perhaps over time we have forgotten just how powerful other means of communication can be. We all know the maxim 'a picture is worth a thousand words' but we have all too often opted for the thousand words and left the pictures to the canny advertisers.

In fact, we need multi-media to maximise our effectiveness as change agents. Words, stories, questions, activities, rituals, games, artefacts, music, symbols and metaphors can all be thought of as potential tools for change. What we have tried to do at Innovative Resources is to graft our own emergent understanding of visual metaphor onto the words and questions that have grown out of strengths-based social work practice. The result has been over two decades of production of original cards, stickers, books and posters that are used to build life-changing conversations.

Deep Speak is another offering in our growing catalogue of 'seriously optimistic' products. It combines some intriguing questions with original design to produce a set of 120 delightful cards that can be used by people of all ages.

Thank you for purchasing *Deep Speak*. We trust you will experience the transformational possibilities of these cards as you reflect on their meaning and introduce them to others.

origins of the cards

Prior to the publication of *Deep Speak*, members of the team at Innovative Resources had known Geoff Barker and his work with the Uniting Church and at Girton Grammar School in Bendigo, Victoria (Australia) for a number of years.

Geoff was a participant in the development of our *Signposts* cards (a photography-based set of cards designed to help build conversations about everyday spirituality). After they were published Geoff suggested that they could be launched at the Gospel Cafe, an informal Sunday night of gospel singing and discussion that Geoff convenes every month or so.

As we were planning the launch Geoff produced a prototype set of *Deep Speak* cards that he and a colleague, Michelle Lane Jenner, had created. The cards were intended to be used as a tool in discussion groups, particularly those involving young people.

We loved the title and saw the potential for a larger set of cards featuring the sorts of questions about life, purpose, relationships, belief, values and identity that many young people (and older people!) struggle with. We thought that a wide range of pertinent questions coupled with quality design could result in a conversational tool that would resonate with young people and adults alike.

We engaged graphic artist Brad Welsh to mock up some prototypes and began the time-consuming task of extending and refining the questions. The prototypes were tested with a focus group made up of young people, youth workers and counsellors. The card set you see in front of you is the result of many hours of thinking and rethinking over a 12-month period.

Let us know what you think!

the list of questions



openers

What do you like most about where you live?

What's your favourite song or piece of music?

What's the best holiday you've ever had?

If you won a million dollars how would you spend it?

What was your favourite book as a child?

Have you ever cried in a movie?

What's been the best day of your life so far?

Can you describe a really embarrassing moment you've had?

What's your most precious possession?

What's your best quality?

What's your best, worst or funniest memory of school?

How do you relax?

What's your best, worst or funniest party experience?

What's the best, worst or funniest job you've ever had?

What really exciting thing would you like to do?

What's your favourite food?

What's your most memorable sporting achievement?

What would you like to do more of?

What type of car matches your personality?

What's the best surprise you've ever had?



identity

What book, movie or music has had the biggest impact on your life?

In what ways are you creative?

What's your biggest regret?

Have you ever come close to dying?

What's the most difficult decision you've ever had to make?

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?

What's the bravest thing you've ever done?

What do you like best about your body?

What's the hardest thing you've been able to forgive?

Have you ever experienced racism?

Who is the best teacher you've ever had?

Who has had the biggest influence on your life?

Have you ever been bullied?

Have you ever been lost?

What's the kindest thing you've ever done?

Do you have a favourite family story?

If you had a magic wand and could change something about yourself, what would it be?

What time of life are you most looking forward to?

What do you think is the best thing about being your gender?

What do you think would be the best thing about being the opposite gender?



relationships

How similar are your political beliefs to those of your family?

Which member of your family has influenced you the most?

What responsibilities come with having sex?

Have you ever been let down by a friend?

What makes a best friend?

Who would you most like to write to?

How important is family to you?

Who is your greatest hero?

Who would you most like to receive a compliment from?

What might you do if you wanted to get to know someone better?

Who would you not want as a next door neighbour?

What would your friends say were your strengths?

Is marriage important to you?

Do you think things are fair in your family?

How do you and your friends look out for each other?

What qualities would your ideal partner have?

How do you feel about your birth order?

What do you think is the hardest thing for young people today?

Do you prefer to have lots of friends or a few close friends?

Can you talk with your family about things like sex, drugs and feelings?



values

What do you think is your main purpose in life?

Do you think it's ever ok to lie?

What do you think about violence?

How do you feel about someone taking their own life?

How do you feel about abortion?

Why do you think people abuse drugs or alcohol?

What do you hope for?

How do your values differ from those of your family?

What does beauty mean to you?

What does freedom mean to you?

What do you think are the most important social issues today?

Are you concerned about the environment?

What would you most like to achieve in your life?

Who is the wisest person you know?

What makes a good life?

How do you make important decisions?

How rich do you want to be?

Which do you prefer—blending in or standing out?

If you had a magic wand and could change something about the world, what would it be?

What's the most important thing to you right now?



emotions

What makes you feel good about yourself?

What makes you laugh?

What is the most exciting moment you've ever had?

How do you feel about getting older?

Does dying scare you?

How do you deal with jealousy?

What makes you anxious or scared?

Have you ever felt things were out of control?

What is love?

What is stopping you?

When do you get bored?

Have you ever felt pressured into doing something you weren't comfortable with?

Is there anything you find irresistible?

Have you ever felt really alone?

What are you most proud of?

What's been the saddest time in your life and how did you get through it?

What cheers you up when you're down?

How do you control your anger?

What makes you happy?

How do you cope when things fall apart?



beliefs

What does it mean to believe in God?

Do you believe in the supernatural?

Do you believe in miracles?

Do you pray?

What does spirit mean to you?

Do you have a place that is special or sacred?

What does heaven mean to you?

Do you believe there is life after death?

Do you like to spend quiet time on your own?

Have you ever had something you'd call a spiritual experience?

Is any religious text important to you?

How do you think the world came to be?

Do you think things happen for a reason?

What beliefs do you have that you think will never change?

How are your beliefs different from those of your parents?

Has anyone ever put you down because of your beliefs?

Why do you think there is suffering in the world?

Do you or your family have any special celebrations or traditions?

Do you follow a religious tradition?

Do you believe in the existence of evil?

using the cards

There are 120 cards in the *Deep Speak* set. This may be too many to spread out and scan all at once, as you may be accustomed to doing with other card sets published by Innovative Resources. The *Deep Speak* cards have been divided into six suits of 20 cards.



The suits are identified by different colours with the name of the suit appearing in small print on the card. Facilitators can use the colour coding to make a quick selection of cards if they wish to focus the discussion on a particular theme.

For example, if the cards are being used with a new group, it may be helpful to concentrate on the *openers* cards to begin with. This may help to establish trust and create a group synergy before taking the conversation deeper. Some groups may want to go directly to one of the other themes, for example, church groups may want to concentrate on some of the *beliefs* and *values* questions. Many of the questions could well be placed in several of the suits and facilitators will certainly see overlap between the themes. For this reason the suits are not strongly emphasised graphically, and of course, facilitators are free to mix and match between the suits as they choose.

Another approach to the cards is to make a random selection of cards. These can then be spread out and participants invited to choose one or more cards according to strategically chosen questions such as:

- *Which question would you most like the group to discuss?*
- *Which question do you find most intriguing?*
- *Are there any cards with questions you would like to ask but never have?*
- *Which question do you think others in your group would find most difficult to answer?*

the game

Another option is to build the cards into an activity that allows a group to deal with all the cards sequentially. This section describes how such an activity can be developed as a simulation or a game that can be fun and enjoyable, but illuminating too, if taken seriously.

The *Deep Speak* game can be as simple as inviting participants to choose a card and answer the question that's on it. The purpose of the game is to encourage meaningful conversation in a non-competitive manner. We believe that it is inappropriate for conversation-building activities to be structured around winners and losers. For this reason, the basic game and its variations as described below do not use scoring systems, points, ratings or penalties.

The ground rules can be negotiated according to the group itself; how familiar members are with each other, the level of ease and comfort between them, and their maturity level. The game can be varied to add interest, with ground rules being negotiated to ensure no one is embarrassed or otherwise hurt.



Apart from stating that the purpose of the game is to encourage frank and honest sharing, other ground rules that we believe should be made explicit at the start include:

- a prohibition on ridicule, put downs or interruptions
- the ability for any player to 'pass' without explanation
- avoidance of information that may cause embarrassment
- the agreed duration of the game
- the right of the leader to end the game if they believe it to be necessary
- the need for respectful listening
- the need for confidentiality to be respected.

1. The basics

As a conversation-building activity in its simplest form the *Deep Speak* game allows members of a group to choose any card at random and give their responses to the question on the card. The cards can be shuffled and placed face down in the centre of a small group (ideally, 6-8 people).

Someone begins with their answer and then, moving clockwise or anticlockwise, each person takes their turn. Alternatively, the sequence of turns can be voluntary. Depending on the group, there may be no need for further instructions as the aim of the game is simply to encourage participants to answer as honestly and as comprehensively as they feel comfortable.

The game has both light-hearted and serious elements. The facilitator needs to allow for the humour to emerge but not let it overtake the purpose of the activity. On the other hand, the facilitator may need to intervene if a participant begins to disclose personal information that they may later regret or that may be the cause of embarrassment to themselves or others.



2. Time variations

For some groups having a set time within which each participant is required to give their answer can provide encouragement for quieter members.

Time limits of one, two or three minutes work for most groups and these can be measured by miniature sand glasses that are readily available from many toy shops. If required, participants can fill their allotted time by allowing questions from group members.

3. Multiple card selection

Instead of each participant choosing a single card at random and answering that question, each participant could choose three cards and on each turn choose which of the three questions they will answer.

A ground rule may need to be established about participants swapping unwanted cards for others—perhaps a ceiling can be placed on the number of unanswered swaps.

4. Multiple question variations

To encourage active listening and maximum participation each person may be given an initial time period to answer the question on their card and then each other group member can be required to ask a subsequent question that can build a more comprehensive answer.

5. Choosing questions for others

Rather than each participant answering the question on the card they have randomly selected, another variation is to invite each participant to nominate someone else in the group to answer that question.

Ground rules about non-embarrassment, the ability to pass and equity need to be established so that no one feels inappropriately singled out.

6. Big bang questions

Some questions may be particularly pertinent for the whole group. While each question that is turned up could be answered by all group members before moving on to the next question, it might be useful if a whole-group response was reserved for a few especially resonant questions.

Perhaps each group member could have the ability to declare up to two questions as *big bang* questions. These are questions that all group members are invited to answer.

creative writing

While *Deep Speak* is primarily designed as a conversation-building tool it also lends itself to a number of reflective activities such as creative writing. For example, the questions on the cards can work as valuable prompts for journalling.

Journalling is a powerful reflective tool that builds an ongoing written record of one's thoughts and feelings. People journal for different reasons and in different ways. Avid journalers may have little need for imposed structure or prompts but at times even very experienced journalers enjoy the challenge of journalling to a theme and appreciate the suggestion of a focus.

The *Deep Speak* cards pose interesting and soulful questions that some people will enjoy responding to via writing rather than discussion. This writing can take a range of creative forms:

- Can you use a *Deep Speak* card to form the basis for a short story or a 'micro' story?
- Can you write this story as humour, drama, tragedy or romance?
- Does a particular *Deep Speak* question remind you of someone you know?
- Can you use this question to write their biography?
- Pick a question and imagine two characters—perhaps they are two characters within you. What do they have to say to each other in response to the question?
- Pick a question and write the answer you think you might give many years from now.
- Or perhaps you might answer the *Deep Speak* question by writing a poem? (Poetry does not have to rhyme but it can free us up to express our emotions and innermost thought in ways that structured prose may not.)

respectful listening

Listening well to someone tell a story—without interrupting or asking questions—can sometimes be harder than we expect! *Deep Speak* can be used in group activities to practise listening carefully and responding respectfully.

Invite participants to form pairs and ask each person to choose a question they feel comfortable answering. Each person has two minutes to talk about their answer to the question. Listeners may only interrupt to affirm what has been said or ask a relevant question. At the end of the two minutes, listeners and speakers swap roles.

At the end of the exercise, invite the group to reflect on their listening capacities. Was the experience of listening quietly simple or challenging? How much could listeners remember? How did participants decide when to interrupt to continue listening?

cards for the journey

The *Deep Speak* cards are fantastic for long trips by car, bus or train. Be surprised and intrigued by the answers of the people you already know best. The cards are ideal for inspiring rich discussions between parents and adolescents, partners and colleagues—just remember, no put downs and everyone has the right to pass on any card without explanation.

the art of asking questions

While the questions on the *Deep Speak* cards invite answers, they can also be used to explore how and when we chose to ask questions in different situations. Counsellors, teachers, carers and facilitators can use *Deep Speak* to reflect on the importance of cultural sensitivity, respectful relationships and personal values. Questions to explore might include:

- Which questions do you feel comfortable asking? Which ones feel more challenging?
- How might you go about asking difficult or challenging questions?
- What factors affect how comfortable you feel asking someone a challenging question?
- How do other members of your group decide what questions they are willing to ask? What roles do people's personal values and beliefs play?
- Can you choose a card(s) that you might be unwilling to answer in some situations? In what circumstances would you be willing/unwilling to answer the question? What factors would influence how you felt?

about Innovative Resources

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

our publishing

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

our training

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

www.innovativeresources.org

about the creators at the time of writing...

Geoff Barker

Geoff is a Uniting Church minister who works part-time with Bendigo UnitingCare Outreach. This work has given him scope to explore ways of nourishing people's spirituality outside of a regular church setting. Geoff believes people long to be able to connect with other people about the significant things in their lives and is excited that *Deep Speak* may help them do that. Geoff also runs a music store in Bendigo, and has recently become a young and over-proud grandfather.

Michelle Lane Jenner

Michelle considers life, with all its nuances, a gift and spends most of her time taking care of family and supporting her friends. Her work in the community has always been guided by her strong sense of social justice. She has worked with Geoff Barker on developing a social support and activity program that aims to empower people in the community who may otherwise feel isolated. She is confident that given the right tools and environment, we all have the ability to make a positive difference in each other's lives.

Russell Deal

Russell has been a social worker and teacher for over 30 years. Being one of the few social work publishers in the known universe, he gets lots of opportunities to indulge his passion for using creative arts to expand the transformational possibilities open to human service workers.

Brad Welsh

Brad has been a graphic designer for over ten years (and a person for over thirty) and thoroughly enjoys the creative challenges that Innovative Resources throws his way. The creative process undertaken to create each card in the *Deep Speak* set became quite a cathartic experience. It began with each question being type-set and output. Then textas, pens, Liquid Paper, sweat, spit, scrunching, piffing, ripping, and even sliding across the studio floor were some of the tools and methods used to bring life to each card. Don't even ask what card number 13 went through!