

# **SoulCollage®: Cross Cultural Applications for Treating Depression And Other Behavioral Health Challenges<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Introduction**

In a process unique to SoulCollage® (See Appendix) (Frost, 2001) clients use recycled magazine imagery to process experiences and feelings that are challenging to express in words. For clients struggling to express themselves in English, SoulCollage® becomes not only an expressive tool, but also a systematic method to help clients understand and manage depression and other challenging conditions.

For therapists working with first or second generation immigrants, language and cultural interpretations of words and actions can create barriers for a lively therapeutic alliance. Imagery used in SoulCollage® shortens the bridge between language differences and the desire to communicate meaning. It lends itself to cross-cultural practice, by providing the beginning of a universal and shared language that can lay the foundation for verbal communication.

Clients from a non-dominant culture who need help with depression, anxiety, or PTSD symptoms may lack the language to describe their pain, or process their challenges. SoulCollage® offers a simple and easy method for describing the problem in the early stages of change (Prochaska, Norcross & Norcross Carlo DiClemente, 1995). It also gives clients a vivid road map to reach their goals in the later stages of change.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfer, S. (2015). SoulCollage®: Cross-Cultural applications for treating depression and other behavioral health challenges in Brooke, S. L. and Myers, C. E. (2015). *Therapists creating a cultural tapestry*. London: Charles C. Thomas Pub. Ltd.

This chapter will introduce educators, therapists and social workers to a practical and effective tool to work with clients from other than the dominant culture. Because SoulCollage® works effectively in groups as well as with individuals and couples, it can be implemented in various settings with minimal investment yielding powerful results. Using SoulCollage® the client becomes the expert in his or her own story, in-depth training is not required to facilitate the process. SoulCollage® cards made during treatment also serve as transitional objects after discharge to help remind them of their successes as well as assist them to continue work on their own.,

People reading this chapter will understand:

1. How SoulCollage® cards are created, using principles of SoulCollage®
2. How SoulCollage® cards can be used by speaking from the card in first person, even with clients not fluent in English
3. How SoulCollage® can help clients from other cultures identify and use externalizing questions (Freedman & Combs, 1996) (White 1987) to help separate the person from the problem (Amundson, Webber, & Stewart, 2000) such as depression and anxiety
4. How SoulCollage® helps clients move through the stages of change (Prochaska, Norcross & Norcross Carlo DiClemente, 1995) and increase motivation for change

### **What is SoulCollage®**

The SoulCollage® is simple, and yet it creates profound results. Clients select magazine images from recycled periodical that catch their attention. They cut them out and let their hands move them around until the group of images look or feel right. Next they use a glue stick to

attach the images to a five inch by eight inch piece of mat board. This simple yet powerful process externalizes what is felt or intuited but may not yet be identified or named. “Once we see it externalized, we can name this part of ourselves. In the naming, we claim it. This process of rediscovery and reintegration is very healing” (Frost 2001).

To draw on the power of the collages, the images are consulted by speaking or writing from the cards in first person using the phrase, “I am One who . . .” Speaking from the images on the cards not only opens doors of insight, but actively engages the client in the stages of change (See Appendix).

### **Principles of SoulCollage®**

SoulCollage® is a trademarked process offered by trained SoulCollage® Facilitators who provide recycled magazine images and other materials and tools so that clients can focus on their own inner process. Once cards are made, they are never bartered, sold or traded, and thus are used only for self-exploration and self-acceptance. The cards are arranged in four suits, that illuminate four areas: (1) Committee, or the client’s inner parts such as the Critic or Happy Child; (2) Council or the larger forces such as archetypal patterns; (3) Companion or animal guides that help clients connect with intuition and instinct; (4) Community including teachers, family, and friends who support the client. The cards contain no words, so that the images on the cards do the talking. In addition, the cards have more ability to express themselves in an evolving way, rather than being limited by a particular group of words

### **Using SoulCollage®**

Once the cards are made, clients are invited to talk about the cards. Although they have cut out and glued the images, they often fail to see imbedded images, or relationships and

patterns within the collage. Talking about the imagery with a compassionate witness helps the client enter the story. Then the card is invited to “speak” from first person using the words “I am One who . . .” The therapist transcribes the words spoken, asks questions, and invites the client to go deeply in the card’s story. When the client is done, the therapist reads the cards message out loud.

Once a number of cards have been made and the suits identified, the client learns to identify both the troublesome characters, as well as those parts of the self who support healthy choices. Because these “stories” no longer reside exclusively inside the client, they become more audible and visible in the everyday life and enter the realm of conscious awareness. SoulCollage® imagery takes feelings and thoughts and converts them to a visual picture story, which works like a catalyst to allow meaningful expression of unconscious impulses and emotions swirling around inside the client. The cards also act as a placeholder, calling up both the client’s wisdom, as well as their wounding, so the client can become more objective.

### **SoulCollage® within the stages of change and motivational enhancement**

Clients in the early contemplation stage (see appendix) work to define the problem and connect choices to consequences. Their cards often portray the “problem,” using a cast of many characters, rather than the traditional SoulCollage® card with one theme and one main speaker per card. Clients may initially include every element of the problem, helping them see the limiting narrative of their life story.

SoulCollage® cards help identify thinking errors by interviewing the inner characters who portray problem behaviors. These challenging thought patterns can then be met with compassion and understanding. SoulCollage® cards also offer solutions to the problem that do not occur to the client when they are held hostage by thinking errors.

Once clients learn to externalize the problem, they are more able to separate the “diagnosis” from their identity. When they reduce their shame and fear, they are more able to elicit help to solve the problem. They may even begin to see ways that the problem has been trying to help them. Freed from the diagnostic stigma, many clients feel energized. They no longer feel weighed down by the idea they “are” depressed rather than “have” depression.

The simple experience of dialoguing with troublesome patterns of thought and behavior creates a neutral zone where the problem is the problem and it has a solution. The client starts to see and feel the difference between their own point of view and the point of view of the problem. For example, the “Conman” in the case of a client struggling with alcohol use, is revealed as the instigator of poor choices, who can be spied upon by the client to see the early stages of relapse.

Dialoging and consulting SoulCollage® cards alone helps clients learn to manage abstinence and triggers. However, externalizing questions also start to reveal the natural history of problem behaviors and lay the groundwork for long-term recovery by getting to intimately know the part of them that moves toward relapse. Here are examples of typical “externalizing questions.” The questions can be simplified when working with clients who have rudimentary English skills.

- ❑ What made you so vulnerable to Depression that it was able to dominate your life?
- ❑ In what situations is Anxiety likely to take over?
- ❑ What has Alcohol convinced you to do that was against your better judgment?

These types of questions “deconstruct” the problem story and belief that the client is helpless against the diagnosis. Problems can be defined and solved much easier than personalities can be changed. With the therapist modeling the role of compassionate witness, clients develop empathy enabling them to address troublesome inner parts when the “enemy” is no longer the Self. The problem is the problem, not the person.

Clients experience a powerful shift in self efficacy when they identify the voice of a future Happy Self who has already moved through the challenges to successful change. When asked, “what would your Happy Self do when you feel depression trying to get the best of you?” the client has a powerful ally to outsmart problem behaviors and thoughts.

### **Multicultural SoulCollage® work with individuals, couples, families and groups**

Many authors have commented on the advantages of using art therapy with clients outside the dominant culture. Words and thoughts leave behind a mountain of experience and meaning, acting like cliff note abbreviations of our complete experience. McNiff (2009) comments that “Art therapy has potential for in-depth exploration on a cross-cultural basis that is not possible within more language limited therapies. The art object becomes a bridge between cultures and languages and a common focal point that provides access to universal qualities of feeling.”

In school settings, students new to English and American culture struggle to learn and process information. "Children whose first language may not be Standard English are not used to expressing themselves verbally and have difficulty with cognitive material." (Cochran 1996). Differences in cultural values and background experiences can also inhibit learning cognitive material. For example, some students' culture of origin emphasizes group over individual decision making and conforming over creative thinking. When they encounter contrary values in mainstream culture their education may suffer (Cochran 1996).

When using SoulCollage® the absence of verbal language may have positive results because it by-passes cognition. Imagery is a natural form of communication since the human brain comes encoded to respond to imagery. Many clients report feeling both energized yet relaxed after making SoulCollage® cards. Since no artistic skills are needed, even people with

mild handicaps can cut and paste. In Providence St. Vincent's Partial Hospital Behavioral Health program, many clients with disabilities have successfully made cards including a man missing an arm, clients with stroke and hearing disabilities, neurological problems or chronic pain.

Cochran (1996) suggests that children with minimal English abilities are reluctant to talk with their teachers, especially when they are triggered emotionally. Because their emotional vocabulary is limited, non-verbal modalities engage them in learning, and expand vocabulary. When doing SoulCollage® they learn to let the image speak, helping them bridge the language barrier. Additionally Cochran (1996) suggests that the tone of acceptance and understanding in art therapy improves children's self-esteem.

### **SoulCollage® compared to other expressive therapies**

Traditional psychotherapy, especially Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT (see appendix) models rely on words, ideas and concepts that may be challenging for non-English speaking clients. In an acute mental health challenge, clients first need to be understood in order to understand what he or she needs and wants to do. Imagery helps clients identify what they are feeling, especially if they do not speak English well, or if they are uncomfortable in a psychotherapy setting contrary to their cultural norms. Typically, clients in a mental health crisis have trouble defining the problem, and are most often in the contemplation stage (see appendix), feeling overwhelmed confused and discouraged. Imagery can quickly cut through these three troubling states, since it does not rely on cognition and it can bypass limiting thoughts. Using imagery, clients avoid the stigmatizing reality of diagnosis and start to calm down and notice what is happening inside them. The language of imagery speaks for them.

## **How SoulCollage® differs from traditional art therapy**

Art making is seen as an opportunity to express imaginatively, authentically, and spontaneously, an experience that, over time, can lead to personal fulfillment, emotional regulation, and transformation. Traditional art therapy can help clients increase insight and judgment, cope with stress, work through traumatic experiences, and improve cognitive abilities. The experience itself is a life-affirming creative activity. Art expression creates understanding while language camouflages the client's deeper wisdom. Because imagery is a viable alternative to verbal language, it bypasses the client's verbal defenses. Using traditional art therapy, clients create art and the discovery of its meaning with the help of a therapist. It may provide insight but not illuminate a clear pathway to changes clients want or need to make.

By comparison, SoulCollage® not only helps the client develop insight and express content from their inner world, but it also helps clients examine, evaluate, and change their relationship to a problem. The therapist poses questions that help clients externalize the problem and then investigate it. By acting as an "investigative reporter" clients begin to challenge the "problem saturated" story and reduce its power (White & Epston 1990). Intertwined with this problem investigation, clients uncover unique outcomes and exceptions to problem saturated stories. These exceptions highlight core values that lay the foundation for a new liberating story that supports the client's self efficacy.

Grady (2007) suggests that "The alternative to art as psychotherapy is what we in arts and consciousness call 'Transformative Arts.' As artists, rather than psychotherapists, we witness and encourage the creative process. We make suggestions and provide a structure in which others may investigate themselves through a variety of media. Art heals entirely without the assistance or intervention of the 'therapist.' We've discovered art is not a tool for healing, but the healing itself. In the process of expressing ourselves through any art medium, and (very importantly)



being received or 'witnessed' by others through this self-expression, we literally create a new self -- a new you/me through which both the personal and universal dimensions of our beings are affirmed. That's where the healing takes place." SoulCollage® gives educators and therapists an accessible tool to assist clients in the healing that Grady (2007) mentions that they can continue to use long after they have completed therapy.

### **Challenges of cross-cultural work: cultural bias and ethnocentrism**

As many writers have suggested, cultural bias makes it challenging for dominant culture therapists to know what they don't know. We are like fish in the ocean swimming in our concepts, such as the nature of time, concepts of the self, natural world, family, role of prayer and ritual, role of family and ancestors, or for example in Muslim culture, the use of imagery itself.

In our Eurocentric Judeo Christian culture, clients may see "the therapist as a messiah – an individual who intervenes in our life and delivers us from our own wretchedness – our pathology" (Grady 2007). He goes on to say that the entire field of psychotherapy has internalized this assumption of "Judeo-Christian theology and applies it to the 'secular' practice of psychotherapy. The Asian - Hindu/Buddhist/Islamic view is that we are all inter-connected and that redemption and enlightenment come as the result of penetrating illusion and vanity – understanding the illusory nature of the ego" (Grady 2007). In America, we have an "individualist worldview and the distancing of personal suffering from its societal context are instrumental and necessary for engendering acquiescence to the social order" (Hocoy 2005). In the Mexican culture, therapy is seen as either "irrelevant or as oppressive. Many Hispanics come in contact with a mental health professional only when forced to by the court, by welfare agencies, or by other governmental agencies. Consequently, their experiences are negative, and

they are reluctant to accept counseling.” (Cochran 1996). Hocoy (2005) suggests that “without examining how the worldview and social order of the dominant culture is embedded in its practices and philosophy, art therapy can unknowingly reinforce structures of domination and contribute to continuing injustices. Even the “healing” traditions can serve dominant culture interests, complicit in neocolonial power arrangements, tools of assimilation and social control (Hocoy 2005).

Though not free from dominant culture values, Burt (1993) suggests that “art therapy de-emphasizes the language-oriented mode of communication, and validates the experience of visually oriented modes of communication. It is argued that the development theory in Western culture, which holds that the aim of development is separation-individuation, is not shared by traditional Native American culture, with its emphasis on interdependency and allegiance to the family and the community.”

Because in SoulCollage® the therapist does not offer interpretations of the work, the client becomes the expert. The therapist serves as a compassionate, active listener, helping the client to express their own story, discover the problem and its solutions, aligned with the principles of the stages of change and motivational interviewing and minimizes at least some cultural bias.

One of the benefits and limitations of SoulCollage® is the use of recycled magazine images. This ubiquitous resource makes collage vivid and easy for nearly anyone to use successfully, including non-English speakers. But the range of images usually present in magazines is itself an expression of dominant culture values. Seldom seen are the less popular emotions such as anger, depression or anxiety. Racial, cultural and sexual minority images are often hard to find. And dominant culture imagery often portrays the objectification of people and animals and resources. Magazines like National Geographic provide a wider range and

depth of images, with somewhat less cultural bias than images from Forbes, Good Housekeeping or Teen Magazine for example..

### **SoulCollage® - Case Studies: benefits to clients outside dominant culture**

Three examples of SoulCollage® are presented below, demonstrating the ways SoulCollage® has facilitated growth and change in various settings: (1) a social service agency employing multicultural outreach workers; (2) clients attending Providence St. Vincent's partial hospital program dealing with acute and chronic mental health problems; (3) individual therapy.

#### **One: Team Building in Multi-cultural Social service agency team building**

In a social service agency retreat, about 29 women gathered for a team building weekend. The women attending included 17 immigrant women who were employed by the agency to do outreach with women of color including Hispanic, Muslim, eastern European, Vietnamese and Cambodian families. The women listened to a brief introduction describing the SoulCollage® process, including how to make and read a card. They made cards for about a half hour and later read the cards. Surprisingly, some women made more than one card in such a short time. Thousands of images lay spread out on tables. National Geographic and other magazines had been trimmed of all words. Three Muslim women were present, complete with head to toe burkas. I was concerned that the proscription against using imagery might have made it difficult for these women to participate, and gave them permission to decline if that felt like the right thing to do. They said little, made no eye contact, but with



some hesitation made cards, huddled by themselves at the end of a table.

Because many of the immigrant women were not fluent in English, they read their SoulCollage® card in their native language while a native speaker transcribed the reading, in this case Arabic. One of the women more fluent in English translated the written words into English so the larger group of their colleagues could hear the message. Figure 1 shows a copy of the card made by one of the Muslim women. Its message read: “I Am the One Who is a champion of my people. I am strong and know what to do to protect my people. There are many mountains ahead, but I have a strong horse and a strong spirit.”

Each cultural group used the same format, speaking in their native language, later translated by an English-speaking colleague. One participant, who read her card in Russian, later observed that the language itself shaped the card’s message. “You have no concepts in English that explain my card. I can’t even translate the message, so I noticed it had a different message in English.”

Though the entire experience lasted a little over an hour, many women commented on the evaluation forms that they learned a lot about themselves as well as their colleagues and hoped to continue the process.

## **Two: SoulCollage® at Providence St. Vincent Partial Hospital Program**

At Providence St. Vincent Partial Hospital Program, clients participate in SoulCollage® offered once a week. Many of them were emerging from mental health crisis’s that resulted in such despair that they contemplated or attempted suicide. The client population, about 35% male, includes people with physical disabilities, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, grief, OCD, CD issues and eating disorders. Many of these clients were confused, disoriented, and hopeless.

They entered treatment for initial stabilization and then use the excellent CBT skills presented over a few weeks duration until they have met their treatment goals and discharge.

In this program, the patients spend 75 minutes in morning group learning about SoulCollage® and make cards. After a lunch break they spend an hour in a second group working with their cards in dyads and in the larger group. Clients whose native language is Spanish, Polish, German, Hispanic, not fluent in English, found SoulCollage® helpful to identify the problem that brought them to treatment. As they tried to navigate a largely CBT oriented program in a language they did not speak well, the imagery gave them an expressive tool that transcended both the cultural and verbal barriers.

Many of the patients in this program created what I call problem cards. Instead of identifying various aspects of their inner and outer lives, as in the suits discussed above, these clients experience so much chaos and confusion that their cards usually portray the entire problem that brought them to treatment, with many of the inner characters on the same card. This problem description process is an important task in the contemplation stage (see appendix). Like the blind man and the elephant, they were walking around the problem trying to understand what it was, what they can do about it and developing the confidence to address the problem. After an acute mental health crisis, when clients are struggling with words that stigmatize and condemn them, imagery can be a welcome relief. With recycled magazine images, the client is in charge of creating something that is easy to do. The act of creating the card itself may be a new and refreshing experience in a long siege of depression or anxiety. For clients struggling with English as a second language, imagery levels the playing field allowing them to think and feel without having to make “art.” Clients are reminded that they are making meaning not art, which seems to free them from the tyranny of their boisterous inner critics.

Patients suffering a mental health crisis in the form of a first psychotic break, who have attempted suicide have made progress in the stages of change using SoulCollage® in a CBT environment (Wolfer, 2007, p. San Jose CA). Often these clients slip through the cracks because of their difficulty with self efficacy. They are challenged to engage in treatment when they are working through the early stages of change in pre-contemplation and contemplation. SoulCollage® not only gives them a tool to work with CBT skills, but also gives them a meaningful transitional object to reinforce their progress. Many nonverbal people or ESL populations, find that the cards enable them to communicate in an authentic, satisfying way (Baker, 2007), first with images, the language of symbols, and then later, with words. Imagery lays the foundation upon which verbal skills can be built.

Traditional self-exploration with art can be a solitary experience; however SoulCollage® can be very effective in dyads, triads and groups. SoulCollage® improves communication with others who may have difficulty using other artistic media (Wolfer, 2007, p. San Jose CA). The universal language of imagery helps to bridge the client to a sense of community and belonging, drawing them out of isolation.

It has been a fascinating journey to note how clients' SoulCollage® cards indicate their location in the stages of change, name the problem that brought them to treatment, and demonstrate their progress as new stories of hope and possibility take root inside them.

### **Three: Individual therapy with racial minority: Asian man between two cultures**

A young second generation Asian male came in for individual therapy to resolve feelings of social isolation and depression. He worked in telecommunications, and though successful in his career, he was becoming increasingly depressed and having difficulty assimilating into the company culture and making friends both inside and outside of work.

He described his family history as being raised by a first generation Chinese mother whose marriage had been arranged, who immigrated to San Francisco and was soon abandoned by her husband. His mother raised three young children with the help of her mother in law who looked after the children while the mother worked in menial jobs to make ends meet. The client, Michael, grew up identifying with American culture and being the designated translator for his mother when she was forced to interact with the dominant culture. He grew up loving her yet being ashamed of her superstitions, resisting the traditions she required of her children. Michael felt abandoned by his mother even though he knew she had no other choice. Though he found solace in scholastic activities and became a high achiever in his high school, he made few friends because his sense of duty kept him close to home, helping his mother.

Once out of college he quickly ascended the career ladder and moved far away from his mother. At age 30 he started to realize he could no longer run from his depression and began therapy. He was somewhat wary of using SoulCollage® thinking it was something for children, so we started by identifying different points of view inside him before working with imagery such as:

- ❑ The Lonely Chinese Boy Who Never Fit In
- ❑ The Dutiful, Responsible Son
- ❑ The Scared Child
- ❑ The Rebellious Teenager
- ❑ The Bad Son Who Abandons His Mother

Once he became comfortable with these inner parts, he was more comfortable finding imagery that supported his work with these characters. He attended a public workshop and diligently made a number of cards without knowing who or what they stood for.

He brought his cards into therapy sessions and began more in-depth work. The first card he came to call the Ugly Duckling. See Figure 2. It shows an awkward child, frozen in a stance of wariness. When he spoke from the card, the child said “I am the One who does not belong anywhere. I’m ugly and unwanted and invisible. No one notices me and, if they, do they just make fun of me.”

The second card he chose was the image of a young Asian child in a long curving ornate hallway with an ancient Chinese woman in the upper left hand corner. He first talked about the card, not sure what it meant. “I think this is me and my grandmother. She loves me and looks down on me, wanting to protect me. I am happy in her presence. She doesn’t fully understand me, because I’m part American now. She’s old school and follows the Chinese ways, but she still loves me.” I asked him, “Who did this happy child grow up to be?” He thought for a long while and said. I think he grew up to be someone like my younger brother, not so sensitive, more confident and more happy.” Next we consulted the child in the image. “I am the One who loves to play and sing and build things. I love my Gin Gin and she loves me. She gives me little coins to put in my bank to save for something special.”

Because this client felt so dislocated in family, culture and community, I thought it might be helpful to use the imagery to re-weave his inner sense of belonging. So in another session, I invited the grandmother to speak to the child in the SoulCollage® card and to my client directly. This was a challenging request for him, and after a long pause, he hesitantly spoke from the grandmother’s point of view. “I am the one who has known you since before you were born. You are my special one. I felt a bond with you from the start. You’ve had a difficult life and I tried to make it a little easier. I fear I didn’t do enough, but I did what I could do. Now my Mico, it’s up to you. I know you can do better and I want you to try.” As these words slowly



emerged from this dialogue, Michael's eyes started to tear up as he realized both the loss and the opportunity. We sat in silence for a while until he was ready to talk about this message.

Over the course of a year, he came for a series of four to five sessions to make it affordable and he made a few more cards on his own. The last time I saw him, he was dating an American girl, had worked through some personnel conflict issues at work and had recently received a promotion to a position he really wanted. He was still a shy, somewhat hesitant young man, but made eye contact, was more direct and smiled more often. He went on to make peace with his mother, though he never made a Community card for her, his heart came to understand that she did the best she could. He also learned to have better boundaries, realizing his role as eldest son did not mean he had to sacrifice everything for her. He talked with her once a week and when he'd get triggered by her expectations, to his amazement, he learned he could talk with her about what she wanted and negotiate, realizing she wasn't as fragile as he had assumed.

One of the last cards he made was what is called a shadow card, representing the fearful part of him that kept people away, the Escape Artist. He externalized what he initially thought was his real self, but discovered instead that it was only a part of him, trying to offer protection and sanctuary from what seemed like a threat of being submerged by other people's wants and expectations. He came to befriend the Escape Artist and learned to communicate rather than run at the first sign of trouble.

In his last session, he laid out all his cards in a way that told his life story. He was surprised to see that he had slowly, piece by piece, been examining his life, making adjustments here and there, taking charge of shadow parts, learning to listen and accept the more wounded parts, and nourishing the potential that he could feel inside him. His life story as expressed through his SoulCollage® cards showed a tapestry of a life woven of Chinese and American

threads. He felt more like the producer/director of his life rather than the victim of the script writer, Fate, and was making better choices, reaching out and taking chances. Ironically, he came to value his Chinese heritage and resumed practicing some of his mother's traditions.

His parting comments on an evaluation sheet noted that "I've gained a freedom of expression, allowing me to relinquish control and the notion of how things are 'supposed' to look. I feel relieved, that now I have an outlet for expression."

### **Conclusion**

SoulCollage® is a simple tool anyone can use for self-inquiry. It works for anyone, not just those who are 'talented' and can help them achieve goals that are important to them through the use of imagery.

Because SoulCollage® requires no artistic skill, people with ordinary abilities can express deep personal meaning in a way that others can appreciate. By using recycled magazine images, glue stick and scissors, even disabled and non-verbal clients can create an artistic expression which also connects them to others.

Going beyond traditional art therapy, SoulCollage® enables clients to build a bridge from thoughts and feelings to words. Even with limited English skills, they can think and communicate in their native language and use the experience to build English skills. Without extensive training, educators and therapists can offer SoulCollage® to clients in the role of compassionate witness.

Incorporating CBT skills, externalization (Freedman and Coombs 1996) (White & Epston, 1990), motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick 2002)



within the stages of change model (Prochaska, Norcross & Carlo DiClemente, 1995), clients make more rapid progress in reaching their goals. Using SoulCollage® they are better able to manage symptoms of depression and anxiety (Persons 2009) as well as gain access to their deeper wisdom. Additionally most clients enjoy the process and learn to cultivate a relaxing leisure activity.

Externalizing (White & Epston, 1990) this "story" or point of view of each of the SoulCollage® cards gives the client the "witness perspective." It opens to the door to knowledge that the logical mind might never deduce. It makes room for new ideas and behaviors not allowed in the old, limiting story, so clients are not held hostage by their unexamined beliefs. They are not doomed to repeat their history or live out the shadow of family history. And SoulCollage® helps to reduce cultural bias because the images emerge from the clients own meaning and value system.

## **Appendix - List of Terms**

### **Art therapy**

Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others; cope with symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art (American Art Therapy Association 2009).

### **CBT - Cognitive behavioral therapy**

Cognitive behavioral therapy (or CBT) is a psychotherapeutic approach that aims to solve problems concerning dysfunctional emotions, behaviors and cognitions through a goal-oriented, systematic procedure. (Wikipedia, 2009)

### **Cross-cultural therapy**

Cross-cultural therapy is based on the idea that to be effective practitioners need to have intercultural competence. To create a solid therapeutic alliance, therapists need to be sensitive to the cultural differences that can bias the therapist–client relationship. Self awareness enables the therapist to be curious about the meaning of clients’ behaviors and ways of thinking that differ from the dominant culture. In addition therapists need to be able to express his or her own point of view in a transparent way with the aim to be “understood and respected by staying flexible” when possible and being clear when it is necessary” (Wikipedia 2009). Cross-cultural skills include: (1) knowledge about other cultures, people, nations, behavior; (2) empathy, understanding the feelings and needs of other people; (3) and self-confidence, knowing what I want, my strengths and weaknesses, emotional stability. (Wikipedia 2009). For the purpose of this chapter, cultural competence also includes three other factors: respect for and curiosity about other cultures and values; willingness to recognize cultural bias; and an “awareness of the mechanisms that internalized cultural values serve the sociopolitical structure, which tends to privilege some individuals at the expense of others” (Greenfield, 1997).

### **Externalization**

Externalizing in narrative therapy practice helps people experience themselves as separate from their problems, as contrasted to the psychoanalytic idea that externalizing is a form of denial. Externalizing identifies a new space: the relationship between the person and the

problem. Unexamined stories usually have at their heart an identity of being a “problem-person” reflected in words like addictive personality or character defect. In Narrative Therapy, the person is not the problem; rather the problem is the problem (White & Epston 1990).

Clients are invited to discuss problems in a way that separates them from these issues. They get a healthy and more objective distance to see the problem thoughts and behaviors as something they can observe and change. In many clients’ unexamined points of view, the problem is located within individual’s biology and character, not leaving much room for change.

This method helps to reorganize the client’s thinking to minimize shame and blame, helplessness and defensiveness. When these difficult emotions decrease, clients can then act on behalf of themselves in relation to their challenges (White & Epston 1990).

### **Motivational Interviewing**

Used with the Stages of Change, these techniques increase a person's awareness of the potential consequences and risks resulting from problem behaviors and thoughts. As feedback is presented, the clinician fosters the development of discrepancies between values and actions as a way to increase awareness and help clients shift strategies to achieve goals that are important to them. Key skills used by the therapist are empathy, developing discrepancy, rolling with resistance, and supporting self-efficacy (Miller & Rollnick 2002).

### **SoulCollage®**

In a process unique to SoulCollage®<sup>®</sup>, clients use imagery to access and process experiences and feelings that may be challenging to express in words. SoulCollage® is a trademarked process offered by trained facilitators who provide materials and tools so that clients can focus on their own inner process. To draw on the power of the collages, the images

are consulted by speaking or writing from the cards in first person using the phrase, “I am the One who . . .” The cards are arranged in suits, that illuminate the client’s inner and outer worlds, their “local and larger story” (Frost 2001), instincts portrayed by animal guides and supportive people. The suits include the Committee (inner parts), Council (archetypes), Companion (animal guides), Community (family, friends, teachers) as well as transpersonal images for the Source, SoulEssence and Witness cards. Only images are used, not words, so that that images can do the talking.

### **Stages of change**

Based on thousands of cases of successful changers, this trans theoretical model explains or predicts a person's success or failure in achieving a proposed behavior change. The model suggests that behavior change is a dynamic process that occurs in a sequenced and cyclical order, involving six stages resulting in permanent change. Progress through these stages is driven by a series of processes specific to particular stages, such as ‘consciousness raising,’ ‘counter-conditioning’ (substituting new alternative behaviors for problem behavior) and ‘stimulus control’ (controlling situations that may trigger relapse into the old behavior). These levels of change recognize that individuals can experience multiple problems that exist at different levels and that they may be ready for change in one area and not in another (Prochaska, Norcross & DiClemente 1995).

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### **Bio**

In her 23-year career, Suzie Wolfer LCSW has worked extensively with clients to help them overcome chemical dependency and dual diagnosis issues at Providence Hospital as well as in her private practice. She offered weekly SoulCollage® therapy groups at Providence Outpatient Behavioral Health. Her areas of expertise include chemical dependency, eating disorders, personality disorders, and resilience through art, spirituality and creativity. In her private practice she offers groups in advanced SoulCollage® practice, mindfulness and emotional intelligence. She is one of eight people worldwide who offer SoulCollage® Facilitator Training. To learn more about her background and training visit [www.suziewolfer.com](http://www.suziewolfer.com). Learn more about SoulCollage® at [www.soulcollage.com](http://www.soulcollage.com)



