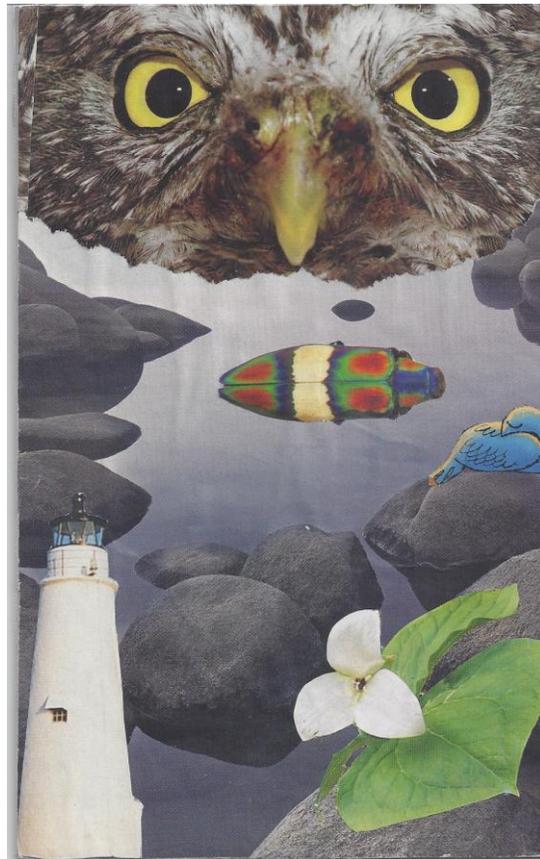


Discover Yourself Through Collage – Nancy Weiss, LCSW, BCD

Who are you? If someone asks you this question, do you have an easy answer? Or do you stop and consider the many roles you play in your life and the many different ways you express yourself? As a psychotherapist, I know that the more you reveal of yourself—the more aspects of your self that dance together—the more whole you are. Let me tell you a bit about myself: I am a psychotherapist, a spiritual director, an educator, a mother, a sister, a loving partner and friend. These are only a few of the hats I wear. There are other “selves” deep beneath my surface; some of these, I can’t even name, but they also inform who I am. These aspects often reside in the hidden realms of the psyche: in the place where soul and psyche collide. They come to me in dreams, images, art, and in spontaneous expressions. All of these aspects cohabit in me.

I am always trying to make sense of the different pieces of myself. The more I come face-to-face with them—the more I dialogue with them to discover their essential natures—the more integrated I feel. Often, I think of myself as a shifting collage of self-aspects that make and re-make themselves as I go through my days. Derived from the French word, *coller* (to stick or to bond), collage is the process of gluing together papers, cut-out images, photos or other materials to compose a new picture. In the words of one of my clients, *I can’t imagine a better way to find wholeness than with the collages and the writing that comes from them.* She is describing a creative approach to the essential therapeutic intention of increasing consciousness, enhancing well-being and individuation.

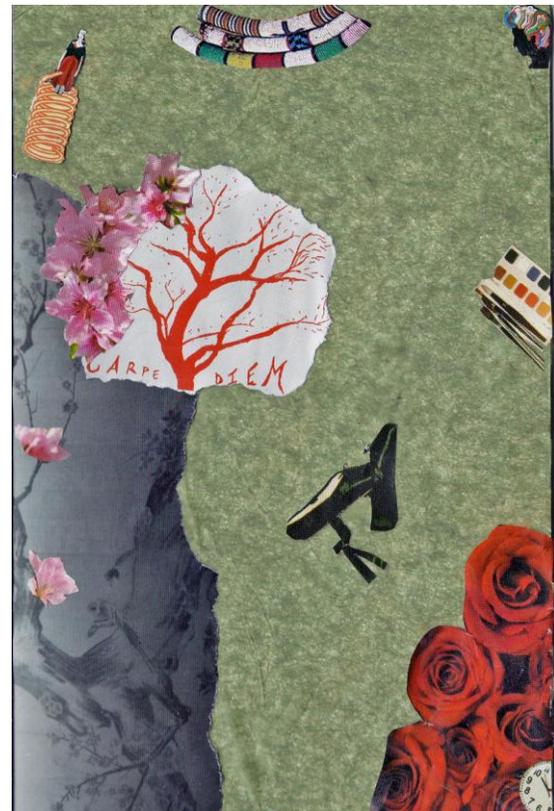


In Rumi's profound poem, *The Guesthouse*, he writes

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
Who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

Collage is a fun and accessible way to welcome your own unique and special guests. For hurt, vulnerable parts, there can be the solace.

And here are reminders to cherish the day by filling it with beauty, creative play and sensory pleasures



There is so much you can discover about yourself! And with each collage, you come to know more. Imagine that you are looking at a large amount of images. Images that hold the greatest resonance are the ones that will hold your attention; essentially, these images choose you. Intuitively, you know they are meaningful, although you may not know why. Jack, a second-grader, offers this wisdom: *I get very quiet and I go inside myself, like in my own little world. The process of picking them involves feeling the image I want, and I choose from my heart. The images just come to me.*

Once you choose your images, you get to play with them, cut them, and glue these cut pieces onto an 8 x 5 board. This intuitive collage is like a puzzle that is making itself. Often, the process feels even more creative and interesting, when you don't have a preconceived notion of what it will look like. You will likely feel a mix of surprise and delight, and as you sit with your image, it will begin reveal its nature. If you step out of your own way, you can consult with it, ask this image to tell you about itself and let it speak.



This collage “made itself” out of a handful of scraps that I was about to place in the trash. I had such spontaneous pleasure as I watched this image emerge!. *Who are you,* I asked, and the image replied:

I am the one who is stepping out....

I was once a pile of scraps.

*Now I am filled with the life force of Spring,
and formed anew. Look at me now!*

Aren't I bloomin' beautiful?

This is a part of myself I definitely want to keep by my side!

You might approach your collages as “soul-visitors” from the world of the unconscious, seeking my attention for the deeper purpose of knowing myself more fully. In this context, the language of collage brings to light the particularity of essential and innate processes as you journey inside, waiting to see what wants to be revealed. In the simple act of cutting out images and pasting these discrete images together, you have the opportunity to encounter yourself with a greater awareness, compassion and wonderment! And when you dialogue and journal with your images—even write poems to honor their unique spirit—your sense of wonder will increase.



I am one whose feathered feet
soar to the edge.

I am one who dares the edge
to reveal its mysteries.

In a flash, the world shimmers.
In a flash, the world is awash in color.

I am one who soars.
Look at me way up high—
suddenly I see my reflection!

I give you the capacity to soar,
the lightness, the song.
My gift to you is the world alive,
pulsing with light,
your own true reflection.

Follow me:
open your eyes, your ears;
feel the spring in your step
lifting you up, up.

So make a space for your own journey: prepare for it, and trust your intuitive spirit. Let yourself play! Let yourself soar!

Nancy L. Weiss is a licensed clinical social worker, spiritual director, collage artist and poet. In her practice of psychotherapy and spiritual direction, she focuses on the interface of spirit, psyche and the creative, blending Jungian depth psychology, dream work, and the expressive arts. In addition, she facilitates groups in the practice of Mussar, an ancient Jewish practice focusing of soul-traits. As a SoulCollage® Facilitator, she facilitates groups for professionals, schools, non-profits and other organizations, often integrating dream work and poetry. She has developed a collage and poetry process for children to help them deepen their self-expression. Her website is: www.nancyweisslcsw.com.