

Creating a Clear Vision of the Future Collage

Activity: Create 2 collages: 1 will depict the past and 1 will envision the desired future.

Purpose: This activity helps the person clearly identify problematic life themes, including dysfunctional relationships with family members and romantic partners, negative self-images and self-defeating behaviors.

Materials Needed: 2 poster boards, scissors, glue, markers and multiple magazines from which to cut pictures and words.

Collage #1

Start by creating a collage that depicts your life up until now. Think of your life as a story that you will be telling with pictures and a few key words. It might help to consider it in this way: if you were going to tell the story of your life to someone who did not know you, and you could only show them photos, what would the photos depict? Would the people in the photos be smiling or frowning? Would they seem angry, sad, or frightened? For example, if somehow you got the message that you had to act happy no matter what was happening in your life, how would you depict that in the collage? Look through the magazines for photos that remind you of yourself and others in your life. Remember that you should not necessarily look for people in the photos who physically resemble you, your family and friends. Instead, look for pictures that capture the *essence* of experiences and feelings. Also, look for key words that you can cut out of the magazines, or cut out individual letters to spell the words that you will put in the collage.

Give the collage a title and put it at the top of the poster board, using the magazine letters or marker. This is your personal story, so the title should be something that feels right to you.

Think creatively about the layout of the collage. What seems right to you? Some people lay out the collage going linearly from left to right, while others lay it out in a spiral or multi-directional fashion. There is no right or wrong way to lay it out. Do it however you think is best for you.

Through creating the collage of the past, negative themes and patterns emerge. It is both informative and healing to *see* the past clearly as you have depicted it in the collage, and to *label* it as the "Past." Once old patterns and habits are identified, they can be changed. This change begins in earnest when you start the second collage.

Collage #2

Begin your personal transformation by considering what you want your life to be like. For instance, if the first collage depicts you as a victim in your relationships, then you may want your future relationships to be healthy, nurturing, and safe. Think about how you will depict this in your second collage. Look through the magazines again. This time you will be looking for pictures and key words that that depict how you will feel, what your relationships will be like, and what you will think of yourself when you are at your healthiest. Cut out the magazine pictures and words that seem right to you.

Give this collage a title before you begin to glue the pictures and words on it. The title should be in the future tense. Again, lay it out in a way that feels right to you.

Remember, it is all right for the pictures and words to overlap each other, or for the pictures to hang over the edges of the poster board.

Once you have completed the second collage, step back and admire it. This is what you want in your life. You deserve to have every good thing that you desire in your life. But of course you don't want it sometime in the misty future. You want it to start now. In order for the future to be like you want it to be, you need to start making changes today.

Lasting change usually happens in small steps. Creating these two collages were steps. Now it is time for the next step. Look again at the title of the second poster. Now you need to change it so that it is stated in the present tense instead of the future. Creating the second poster as a depiction of the *future* was valuable because it helped you to think through what you want *before* making changes. It is important to have a clear picture of the outcome before making changes. Otherwise you could be changing things without improvement.

Consider how you can change the title of the second poster. If the title of this poster is "The Future," then one way to amend it is to add the words, "Begins Now," to the end of title. Or you may choose to cross out the first title and change it completely. Most important, be certain that the new title is stated in the present tense. Now that you clearly see what you want, the best time to start living the life you really want and deserve is right now.