

## SoulCollage® in Chemical Dependency Treatment

By Suzie Wolfer LCSW

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Most clients struggling with chemical dependency issues suffer from mistaken identity.

They confuse the thoughts arising from the body's Addicted Self with the Authentic Healthy Self. The genetic pattern that makes drug and alcohol use a supercharged dopamine high, gradually eclipses the real self. The day by day process of letting alcohol or drugs gradually take over is so subtle, that most people never realize the ruse. Then they find themselves in front of a judge, trying to explain their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> DUI, or discover that their liver enzymes are dangerously high.

SoulCollage® comes to the rescue by externalizing the voice that votes for drug and alcohol use and all the behaviors that support it. And even better, with skilled use, SoulCollage® can also help clients find and strengthen the Healthy Self who chooses recovery, not just resorts to change.

Most clients vaguely realize that their drinking or drug use creates some problems, but often minimize the impact it is having in their lives. However, when clients make a card for "The Conman" or "The Saleswoman" or the "Con-artist" they can begin to see who and what is doing the thinking for them, without the stigma and judgment attached.

With help, clients begin to take back their role as CEO at the head of their personal "corporation." The very act of making and reading cards develops healthy, observing ego skills. They become powerful witnesses, rather than bystanders in their own lives. And they recognize that they have a troublesome, permanent board member, such as the "Conman" or "The Depressed One" and learn to manage these characters. The client learns to identify the Con Artist's "advice," notice where it will eventually lead, and then take appropriate action as "Chair of the Board."

SoulCollage®'s unique power to launch the client out of the gravity well of logical thought, can put them back in the drivers seat again. Imagery has staying power. Long after the client has forgotten the words, images remain, and continue to working while they are doing other things.

Use "externalizing questions" appropriate to the stage of change for each client, we explore the territory that drugs and alcohol have claimed. Some clients may not yet connect choices with consequences. These "externalizing questions" start to weave a tapestry showing the effects of alcohol and drugs in every day life. For example:

- What made you vulnerable to the Conman, that he was able to dominate your life?
- In what situations is the Con Artist likely to take over?
- What has your Salesman convinced you to do that was against your better judgment?

These types of questions "de-construct" the story and belief that the client is helpless against what is often thought of as an "addictive personality" or "character defect."



Shelly, an attractive, intelligent 33-year-old woman in early recovery from alcohol problems had a wake up call from her doctor who warned her of liver problems. She made a card for her Con Artist and interviewed her:

"I am the One who says relax, have a good time. Just one won't hurt. Who would know? Only idiots can't handle their liquor, and you're no idiot. Take the road with me. You think it goes nowhere, but with me, we'll discover new horizons, new friends, new experiences wherever we are. Just relax."

Shelly discovered that her Con Artist would encourage her to "just look at" all the bottles of wine at the store, to "test her strength" not realizing it was the slippery slope of a hypnotic induction to anaesthetize her to early warning signs of relapse.

She learned to consult her Con Artist frequently. She realized that though her advice seemed logical, sound and even in her best interest, she would listen respectfully and do the exact opposite, taking the nearest exit off the road to relapse.

Most clients feel scared to personify what they believe are their worse fears. The buried shame they feel can also make it challenging to look at the problem directly. They mistakenly fear that if they made a Conman card, it will have more power over them. Even though in practice, the opposite happens. Working with a skilled therapist or sponsor helps them stand up to the Conman's conviction that drinking and drugging are safe.

When we help clients externalize the problem using SoulCollage, they quickly identify the thinking errors and shame that condemns them to repeating destructive behaviors. They can identify the old story and begin to author a new story. By externalizing the relapse process through SoulCollage, they can begin to see choice points rather than bad luck or fate wearing them down.

Using SoulCollage, many clients have fun making and working with their cards. They shed their shame, and move more easily into recovery, with a stronger sense of self, as Chair of a colorful and diverse Board of Directors including the Conman, who in recovery can work for the client rather than against them. . . . all using a few recycled magazine images.

To learn more about SoulCollage®, visit Suzie's website at [www.suziewolfer.com](http://www.suziewolfer.com) and click on the SoulCollage® link. You can also read about SoulCollage®, a trademarked process developed by Seena Frost in [SoulCollage: An Intuitive Collage Process for Individuals and Groups](#). To see a video about how to make SoulCollage® cards, and find other SoulCollage® resources click this link [http://www.counseling-portlandoregon.com/SoulCollage\\_Resources.html](http://www.counseling-portlandoregon.com/SoulCollage_Resources.html)

### **About Suzie Wolfer LCSW**

In her 23 year career, Suzie Wolfer LCSW, has worked extensively with chemical dependency and dual diagnosis at Providence Hospital as well as in her private practice. She has lead weekly SoulCollage® therapy groups at Providence Outpatient Behavioral Health. Her special 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 workshops. She offers SoulCollage® Facilitator Training in Oregon and internationally as well as continuing education workshops and tele-courses on the process.