

Supplies:

Cardboard, Cake Rounds or Large Paper
Magazines, Photos, etc.
Glue Sticks
Scissors
Journal and pen

Consider:

We live in a world that enacts and upholds separation so that we no longer feel the innate sense of interconnection to all groups of people, animals, and the natural world. Through this creative practice, we can begin to rewire our neural circuitry to recognize our interconnection with others and the world around us.

Begin by reflecting upon the following questions: Who do you identify as “other” in some way? When you imagine them, do you feel a constricting inside, a subtle pulling away or tightening in your body? With whom do you feel a sense of non-belonging?

Guidelines:

There are many ways to approach this project and I am sure you can vary this according to your needs or intentions. I am writing the instructions from the perspective of building interconnection with people who you feel are “different” from you - “other” in some way. I suggest you start with those who do not evoke a strong emotional charge for you.

This is a meditative art process where noticing is very important. Your body’s responses, your thoughts and feelings will be clues to help you discern when you pull away and when you lean toward another... when you separate and when you open to interconnection. The goal is not to be “good”, the goal is to bring to consciousness the ways you are trained to unconsciously separate and to practice “wondering” as a way to recognize interconnection.

Project:

1. Set your intention. For example, *“My intention in this creative time is to better know, feel and understand my interconnection with people who are different from me”... who are black, white, differently abled, older, gay, straight, trans, male, female, republican, democrat, immigrant, rich, poor, religiously different, etc....*
2. Have your journal and pen near at hand. Jot down any thoughts or feelings as they arise.
3. Take some deep breaths, center yourself and softly focus on your body and inner experience.
4. When you are ready, start browsing through your magazines trusting your intuition to guide you. This is not a mental exercise, just move through the images, choosing what feels right.
5. After you have gathered your photos, start trimming them. You may begin wondering who these people are as you look at them. Get curious and use your imagination. If any resistance arises, write a short note in your journal.
6. Set aside any photos that no longer call to you, trusting your intuition.

7. Now arrange your photos on your board and glue them down. You can get playful here, imagining the people in the photos have preferences for where they want to be, or who they want to be near.
8. When you are finished, take a moment to reflect in your journal about what the process was like for you. What felt easy, or difficult? Did you notice resistance?
9. Go back to studying the faces on your collage. Does any person draw your attention? Take a moment to wonder who they are. How are they feeling? What do they like? Where do they go to school or work? What might their family be like? This is a practice you can return to over and over again. The more you can imagine them as real, well-rounded and connected people, you can imagine the ways they are hoping and striving for wellbeing, just as you are.
10. As a daily practice, spend some time with your collage and your imagination - connecting, wondering, caring, reflecting and meditating with the intention to more fully grasp and cultivate conscious interconnection. Breathe deeply and often to soothe and relax your body. Be aware of your resistances and reflect upon where they may have originated.
11. As you continue to practice being consciously interconnected, you are growing a new neural network. When you are ready, create another collage with a new "other" to continue to challenge and expand your awareness.

Project Reflections:

As you reflect on the people in your collage, can you imagine they have hopes, dreams, loves, griefs and worries? Can you relate to them as someone's family member or someone's child?

Do you feel a bit closer to them as someone having their own experience of life just as you are having yours? Do you feel a sense of connection growing as you sense the possible similarities between you?

If you feel resistance or negative feelings rising up, where do you notice it in your body? Are you able to hold it separately from this photo/person, knowing it resides in you?

Gently inquire where that might have come from... is it an area that needs your healing attention? Can you offer yourself compassion? This might be a good thing to write about and explore in your journal.