

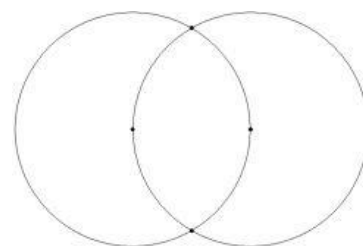
Mandorla in SoulCollage®; an Approach to Shadow Work

“What can one do when the banished elements [of one’s shadow] demand a day of reckoning? Then it is time for an understanding of the mandorla.” -- Robert Johnson, *Owning Your Own Shadow*

What is a Mandorla?



Mandorla is the Italian word for almond. An ancient symbol, the Mandorla is the almond shaped segment formed when two circles (mandalas) partly overlap, symbolizing **“nothing less than the overlap of opposites.”** (Johnson). Though it pre-dates Christianity, early Christians used the symbol, also known as the *“Vesica Piscis”* (vessel of the fish), as a method to describe the coming together of heaven and earth, and Jesus and the Virgin Mary are often portrayed in the framework of the Mandorla.



Mandorla on the cobbled path of Chalice Well gardens

As a model for shadow work, the mandorla shows us how to move from a dualistic view of the conflicting forces in our lives to the realm of paradox in which the opposing forces within us are held with equal dignity, creating a shared space for reconciliation to occur.

Within the liminal container of the mandorla, a third possibility is able to emerge that honors the separate qualities of each. It is not a neutralizing of the other, but rather a weaving together of the threads of both.

In SoulCollage® we can apply this concept to our work with shadow cards or to any cards that speak to conflicted aspects of ourselves.



Card: One Umbrella

While it is generally suggested in SoulCollage® that each card reflect only one type of energy, there are times when an individual card contains both shadow energy and the opposing or countering energy; that is, a card in which the tension of the “both/and” is held.

In this spontaneously-created card, I am able to apprehend the potential for a new “third image” to arise in the space between these two images. This third, which honors the separate qualities of each, takes place in the healing overlapping ‘almond’, or mandorla.

This card speaks to me of the inherently integrative nature of the card-making process. I can still recall the healing shift I felt when I placed the darker ‘armored’ image onto the shared space with the lighter ‘Other’.

Suggestion:

Consider looking for examples in your own cards in which the tension of opposites has emerged either on the same card, or perhaps on separate cards. Which images were placed first? Do you recall the moment or sensation of adding a balancing touch? Consider creating a dialogue between the opposing cards or images in your deck as a means of discovering the common ground between them.

SoulCollage® facilitator Mariabruna Sirabella, in her CD entitled *Embracing Change, Transforming Conflict using SoulCollage®* suggests the following steps as a means of “making mandorle” or “weaving a new pattern with the energies at play” using your SoulCollage® cards:

- a) Choose a Shadow card or one that reflects one side of an inner conflict, such as between your Lounging Lizard and Busy Bee.
- b) Choose a second card that balances the qualities of the first. If you do not have one, write down the balancing quality on a blank card.
- c) Using the “I Am One Who”, write down the perspective of each.

Then, consider asking (or sensing into) the following questions of each of these two cards as a means of weaving together the “filaments of understanding” between them.

What purpose do you have for me?

How do you serve me?

What do you want for me?

What do you want from me?

What is your opinion of this conflict/ polarity?

What outcome do you want?

Do you have anything else to say?

What do you think about the other part?

What do you want the other part to know about you?

Do you have any questions for the other part?

Do you have anything else to say about your relationship to the other part?

“Take this and take that – and make a mandorla of them.” (Johnson)

Making mandorla can become part of a regular practice of tending to one’s shadow content. Shadow accumulation and shadow work are ongoing and cyclical, and the mandorla is a healing place to be visited again and again.



Suggestion: (adapted from the work of Mariabruna Sirabella in her CD *Embracing Change, Transforming Conflict using SoulCollage®*)

1. Choose a card that has energy for you right now, whether in a positive or a challenging way.
2. Next, choose (or write on a blank card) a card that contains the opposite energy. Perhaps this is the un-chosen path, the other way of being, a quality you disown or reject, or a competing agenda.
3. Find a comfortable space in which to sit. Place your first card to one side of you and its counterpart to the other, allowing yourself to ‘sit’ in that liminal place in which each card has equal value.
 - Bring the cards together in front of you, gradually allowing the two cards to overlap.
 - What do you notice when they overlap by a sliver?
 - What happens in the shared space when they overlap by an almond?
 - What happens when you overlap them completely, envisioning that all along, they were one?

Holding these opposites in your mind, meditate on the statement, I Am One Who _____ and I Am *Also* The One Who _____.

What new possibilities arise in the mingling?

End by holding both cards to your chest and blessing them. Consider wrapping them together in a cloth, allowing further alchemy to happen between them!

Consider combining a shadow card with a variety of other cards. What happens between them?

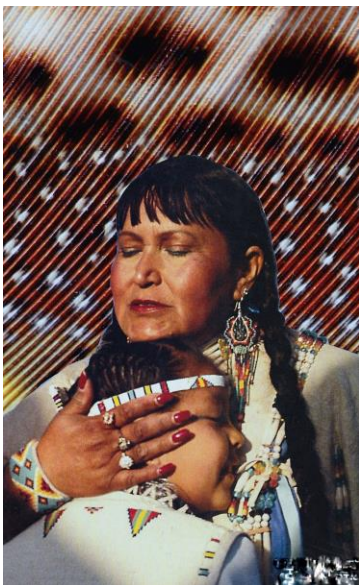


Card: Immersed (Shadow Card)

I Am One Who is immersed in the world of my creative work and possessed by its directive grip.

Card: Spontaneous Child

AND I Am One Who moves freely,
spontaneously engaging with my outer world.



Card: Great Mother

I Am One Who loves unconditionally.

Card: What Now Mother (Shadow)

AND I Am One Who sometimes becomes
inured to the clamoring for my attention.

