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**The Magic of Mandalas:
An Ancient Healing Technique Comes of Age**

By Lily Mazurek, M.A.
“You must be the light you wish to see in the world.”

**T**here is no doubt that creating a mandala, or even “entering” one visually is a spiritual, almost magical, experience.  Circular in design, often composed of beautiful and intricate, concentric forms, mandalas have universal appeal and power.  They have been used in rituals around the world for centuries.  The Navajo, Tibetan, and Indian people are just a few of the cultures who create them as part of their healing ceremonies.  Interestingly over the last couple of decades or so, ancient mandala healing techniques have drifted into the hands of contemporary healers, such as Judith Cornell and Jose and Miriam Arguelles, with new interpretations and great success.  The magic of mandalas has come of age.

Creating a mandala is not about having artistic talent, or showing it, however.  It is about self-healing to wholeness.  Any form of self-expression, whether skilled or unskilled, is healing in itself and essential for good emotional, physical, spiritual and even mental health.  Researchers at the Getty Education Institutes for the Arts in California have found that creative self-expression and participation in the arts even fosters intelligence in children.  They cite that the arts “develop(s) key cognitive skills—analysis, synthesis, creativity, and decision making,” all of which help equip young people for success in the 21st century.

The true power and magic of a mandala lies in its spiritual qualities and in the process of its creation.  Its very shape is the circle.  It has no beginning, no end, just one continuous line enclosing a space.  There is nothing more whole than that!  Because of its shape, a mandala is naturally a centering device.  You cannot think of a circle without thinking of its center.  Even the word Mandala is Sanskrit for circle or center.

Lama Anagarika Govinda, author of Creative Meditation and Multidimensional Consciousness, says, “When entering the realm of inner vision, we must create a three-fold sacred circle”.  These concentric circles within a mandala lend focus to the center and, at the same time, depict different dimensions and interactions between them.  Symbolically, from the largest to the smallest circle at the center, the circles all have the same essence.  It is the macrocosm reflecting the microcosm, as vice versa, just as physicists have confirmed about the physical universe.  In a workshop, what you depict or envision for one circle will affect all the other circles.  Indeed, the concentric forms of the fascinating mandala are a natural organizing principle that can be found on all levels of nature, as well—in the human eye, in the cross section of a twig, and in the x-ray diffraction of certain elements, for example.

Ancient mandalas were almost always created with colored pigments and sands on the ground.  Today, mandalas are being created with crayon, watercolor, markers, and colored pencils on paper.  The medium is not the message where mandalas are concerned.  It is the content and process that hold the magic.

Healing with mandalas also comes from the accompanying meditation, which is done prior to the artwork.  Through guided visualization and the use of imagination, healing stems from the act of making the invisible visible—that is, from the very act of creation.  Why?  In the very act of creating, you enter into the divine consciousness of THE Creator.  You become part of the whole, which is why you feel whole.  You come into touch with your own true nature, your Higher God-Self.

Initially, my own spontaneous mandalas came out of my efforts to heal myself emotionally, psychologically and physically after a bout with breast cancer.  Expressing myself through color, shape and symbols, without the use of words, was very liberating and healing.  In Mandala Workshops held locally at Gilda’s Club in Ft. Lauderdale, several members reported major shifts in the direction of their lives, and peacefulness where there had been turmoil in relationships.  At Unity Church in Hollywood participants dealt with issues such as eating and weight problems and incest.  In creating images of how things are and how we want them to be, transformation takes place—first in our minds and on paper, then in our hearts and in the outer world of our being.  Mandalas continue to hold power and give us back our power.

Courage is also necessary.  Courage is needed to create a mandala and to embark on your own healing.  You are out on a limb bringing something into existence out of nothing. Writers and artists alike are often intimidated by the empty page or canvas.  Going forward, in spite of fear, is healing in itself.  We dare to be whole again.

The curious thing about these wondrous images is that people often create mandalas spontaneously, without prompting and with no templates.  Miron Borysenko, for instance, brought himself out of a depression after creating mandalas spontaneously and continually for two weeks.  Such designs usually come directly from our subconscious mind and are often full of amazing and beautiful archetypes.  In Judith Cornell’s book, Mandala, Miron’s wife, Joan Borysenko, states, “A mandala is like an archetype, a blueprint of some aspect of creation, a hologram.”  Truly, they are an outer representation of our inner self and also illustrate how we are all connected through the collective unconscious.  Particularly during a time of crisis, transition, or inner darkness, the mandala becomes our sun to light our way back to ourselves, uniting our sense of fragmentation and leading to wholeness.

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