

CREATING HEALING MANDALAS

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The word mandala comes from the Sanskrit root word *manda*, meaning “essence”. When the suffix *la*, meaning “container”, is added to form the word *mandala*, it takes on the connotation of being a “container of essence”.¹ It

also means “sacred circle.”

Creating a mandala or meditating on it is a path of transcendence through which one’s own divine creative essence can be expressed in the symbolic and sacred art form of the mandala.

I learned the Mandala Healing process I practice and facilitate from Judith Cornell, who developed it as a modern expression of ancient sacred healing art. Cornell describes the mandala as “a concrete symbol of its creator’s absorption into a sacred center.” Her approach is a heart-centered, meditative, spiritual practice that is rooted in over three decades of direct personal experience with the sacred art form. It is a “synthesis of Western science, transpersonal and transformational psychology, the wisdom teachings of Advaita Vedanta, the contemplative traditions of Eastern Hinduism and Buddhist Tantra, Judeo-Christian and Sufi mystical traditions, Native American healing and the spiritual intuition and divine inspiration gained through the practice of Raja Yoga meditation”²



In the East, tantra and other forms of yoga are considered subjective sciences. In the Hindu and Buddhist traditions the practice of art is a

creative process of alchemy that integrates spiritual consciousness with the gross aspect of the physical body and art materials (e.g., divine love flowing from your hands into the paper and pencils). The ultimate aim of these practices is enlightenment, or total healing – physical, mental and spiritual transformation and blissful integration of the Self with the One Light.³

Cornell writes,

In its most elevated form, the sacred circle mirrors an illuminated state of consciousness

through a symbolic pattern – making the invisible visible. It is meant to draw creator and viewer into an encounter with animating sources of numinous energy. The Navajo call this center “a spiritual place of emergence” for sacred imagery. By focusing on it, both mandala artist and meditator can open to the divine energies of deities and to the contents of his or her own spiritual and psychological self. When a practitioner willfully illuminates and embodies a sacred image from within the psyche while in a meditative state, spiritual transformation, physical healing, and the integration of personality fragments can result.⁴



She presents the mandala as sacred art that mirrors the “the vibrational light of consciousness” and sees it as “the creative amalgam between science and religion” including physics and metaphysics, helping “us to understand our own divine artistry in the unfolding patterns of light, sound and consciousness. To her the creation of a mandala is about “Self-realization and ultimate healing.”⁵

That Cornell embraced the yogic practices as part of her own spiritual healing journey has made all the difference. It enabled her, through direct experience, to gain greater clarity on the healing potential of the mandala, and develop a process that brought mandala healing much further along on its evolutionary path. She combines elements of the ancient Indian spiritual practices of Raja Yoga (meditation), Nada Yoga (yoga of sound) and sacred art that creates optimal conditions for deep spontaneous healing to take place. The creator of the mandala is fully involved in a deeply healing yogic practice, bringing together intentionality, light, sound and creative expression to facilitate healing. Fragmentation and inner chaos is transformed, integrating body, mind and spirit as a whole unit - a microcosm of the unity of all that is.

The Mandala Healing process uses white and colored pencils on black paper. The black paper represents the “womb of the universe or the dark un-manifested parts of our soul’s consciousness.”⁶ The white pencil represents the pure light of the soul and colored pencils represent the rainbow spectrum contained in

white light. The colors of the pencils correspond with the colors representing the chakras or energy centers of the body according to the Vedic system.



Cornell has created a sequential format for creating healing mandalas: Creating a sacred space⁷ in which healing can take place: writing down a healing intention;⁸ blessing the materials; inviting

enlightened guides from one's own chosen spiritual / faith tradition, or invoking the healing energies of the universe.⁹ In this meditative state the practitioner asks for a symbol. When it is revealed, a white circle is drawn on the black paper and the symbol is projected from the mind into heart center, through the arms and hands into the pencils, and onto the white circle on the black paper. The symbol is first outlined in white. Then, in silence, it is illuminated with the white and colored pencils. Each mandala can be focused on a different intention such as expressing the light within, opening and healing the heart, expressing forgiveness or gratitude, creating a gift mandala for the healing and/or wellbeing of another.

When the mandala is complete, the final step of the process is to go back into a meditative state, and intentionally reintegrating the energy of the mandala back into the heart center, letting go of any attachment to its material qualities.¹⁰ It is this reintegration process that seems to fully enable and empower the intentional energy healing and transformation to take place.

Reintegration is similar to the ritual sweeping up of the sand used in creating the Tibetan *kalachakra* sand mandalas and giving it back to the earth to heal the suffering of all sentient beings that are a part of it, and releasing all attachment to it.

Two basic techniques to "create light" or luminosity with white or colored pencils on black paper. Once these basic techniques have been experienced, participants can create mandalas that express inner light, to facilitate healing in self and others, and to manifest intentions. As a Mandala Healing Facilitator I do not analyze, judge, critique or comment on my own or others' mandalas. However, in my experience of creating mandalas, I have often found profound insight and deep healing. Cornell refers to what takes place in the mandala process as "healing alchemy." She writes,

Healing alchemy is the magical transformation that occurs when the artist consciously focuses and directs *prana* (Life energy) through the body out of the hands and fingers and, along with his or her individual inspired soul-consciousness, into corporeal materials such as pencils and paper, paints, or stone. All true sacred art is alive with the spiritual energies of the maker. If open and receptive, the maker is inwardly changed by the creative act, just as the viewer of these spiritually energized symbols is changed.¹¹

My personal experiences of mandala healing have included both emotional and physical healing. A few years ago, I created a mandala to heal the cause of severe pain and stiffness of my right wrist and hand that had been diagnosed to be Carpal Tunnel Syndrome that had bothered me for several years. The symbol I received was that of a green hand with flowers growing from the fingers. By the time I finished the mandala process, the level of discomfort had gone from a level 8 on a scale of 0 through 10 (10 being "unable to function") to about 3. Within a day, it was down to 0 and I had full use of my hand with no pain or discomfort whatsoever. It has been several years and I have not experienced Carpal Tunnel Syndrome since.

I have also experienced and facilitated the healing of couple and family issues through the mandala process.

I facilitate mandala workshops with groups of up to 20 people including couples and family groups, or with individuals in a one-to-one format as part of Creative Holistic Integration (CHI) Facilitated Self-Care program I offer in my private practice.



Mandala workshops can be offered in a variety of settings, such as institutions (including prisons), organizations, churches and schools, with special interest groups and businesses etc. Mandala healing has been incorporated into programs for cancer patients and survivors. Creating a community or family sand mandala provides a unique and beautiful opportunity to bring people together to create a collective mandala for a common intention.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Nitin Kumar, *The Mandala: Sacred Geometry and Art*(<http://www.exoticindiaart.com/article/mandala> accessed on August 1, 2006)

² Judith Cornell, *The Mandala HealingKit Workbook* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2005), 2

³ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶ Judith Cornell, *Mandala* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1996), DVD.

⁷ Cornell, *The Mandala Healing Kit Workbook*, 15-27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17-19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 -21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 -31.

¹¹ Cornell, *Mandala* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1994), 38-39