



The Healing Power of Mandalas

Finding Meaning from Trauma

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Trauma and the Brain



Verbal Expression

The pre-frontal lobe (responsible for language) is adversely affected by trauma, which gets in the way of its linguistic function.

Emotional Regulation

The amygdala (responsible for emotional regulation) is in such overdrive that it often enlarges.

Brain Lateralization

When discussing trauma, significant parts of the left hemisphere (Broca's Area) shut down and the right hemisphere becomes activated.

Healing from Trauma Involves...

- Interrupting the natural cycle of avoidance.
- Discharging pent-up “fight-or-flight” energy.
- Making connections between feelings and symptoms.
- Learning how to regulate strong emotions.
- Processing and integrating trauma-related memories and feelings.
- Understanding of self and the world in light of the trauma.
- Restoring relationships, connections, boundaries, and trust.



Finding Meaning from Trauma

If there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete.

~ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 88

“Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars.”

~ Khalil Gibran

“You desire to know the art of living, my friend? It is contained in one phrase: make use of suffering.”

~ Henri-Frederic Amiel

"Emotion, which is suffering, ceases to be suffering as soon as we form a clear and precise picture of it."

~ Viktor Frankl quoting Spinoza's *Ethics* in *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 95

“In some ways suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning...”

~ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

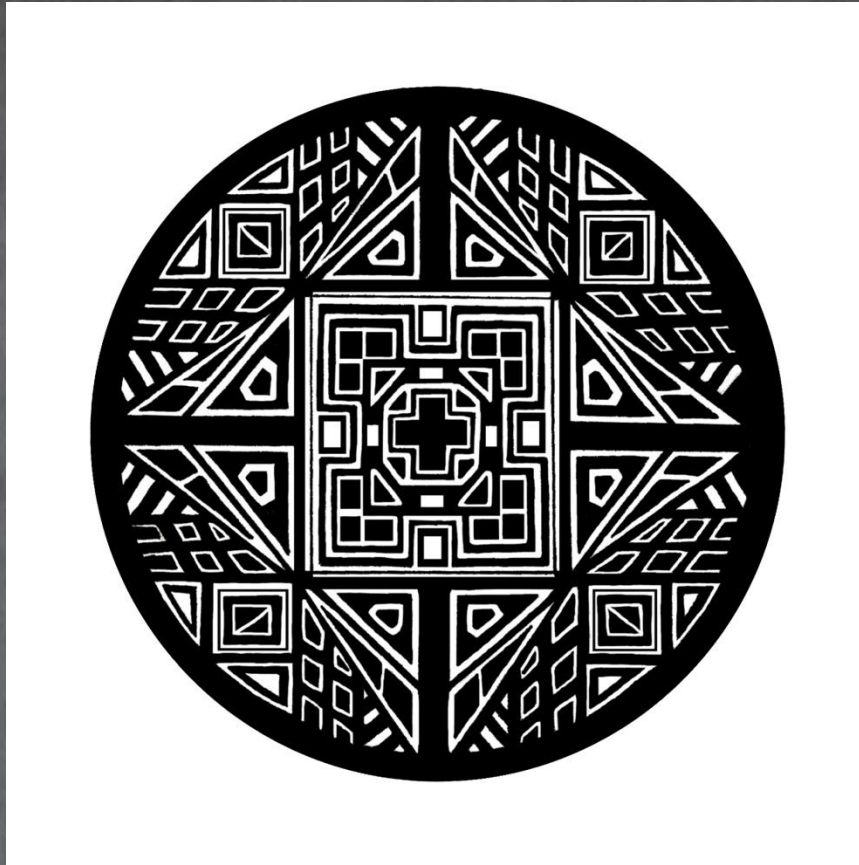
Finding Meaning from Trauma

1. Suffering is part of the human experience
2. We must discover why we are suffering
3. Suffering can be transformed and healed
4. Once you have identified the cause of your suffering, you must find an appropriate path



Buddha's Four Noble Truths:

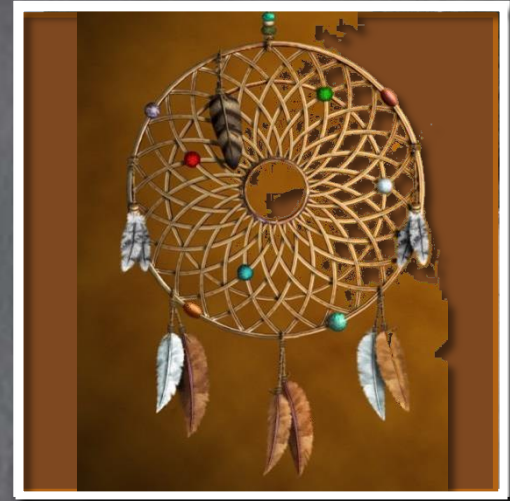
1. *Life has inevitable suffering*
2. *There is a cause to our suffering*
3. *There is an end to suffering*
4. *The end to suffering is contained in the eight fold path*



Mandala Drawing

In therapy, the mandala is any drawing made within the framework of a circle

Mandalas – The Sacred Circle



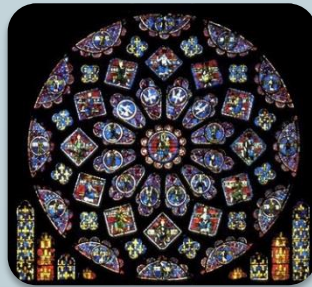
Archetypal Circle

As the rest of the world has been seeking to understand oneself, experience is what appears to be the most important experience in the universe

Mandalas – The Sacred Circle



Tibetan
Mandala



Rose
Window



Native
American
Medicine
Wheel

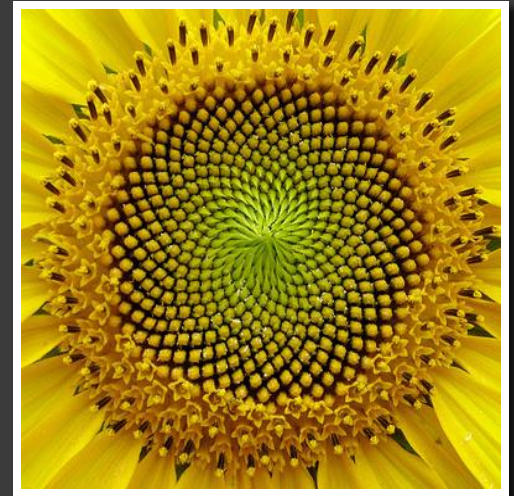
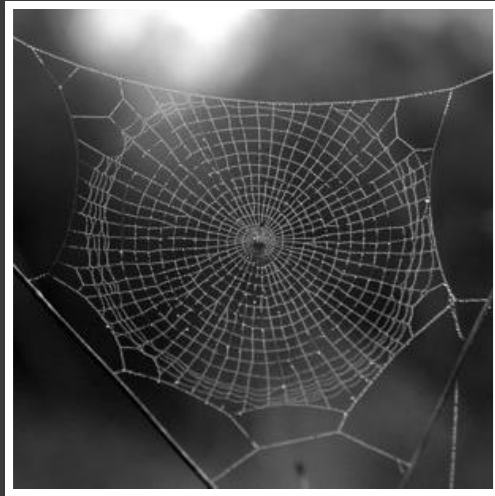


Labyrinth
Walking
Meditation



Mayan
Calendar

Cultures from around the world have used circle drawings to express universal aspects of the human experience. At the root of all mandalas is the human longing to understand oneself, experience harmony, and grasp one's place in the universe.



Natural Mandalas

Mandalas in Therapy



The mandalas of Ms. X: Journey toward individuation (Jung, 1972)

Carl Jung

The mandala represents the center of personality from which the “Self” develops.

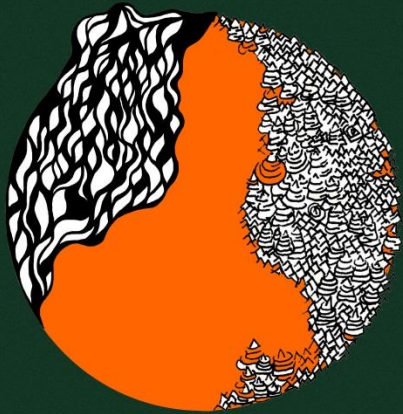


Figure 12. Archetypal Stages of the Great Round of Mandalas (Kellogg 1976, drawn by Suzanne Trocher 2003)

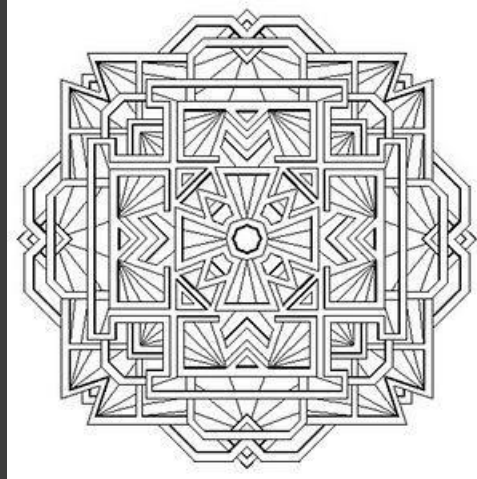
Joan Kellogg

Our unconscious draws us toward certain symbols, colors, shapes, etc. which reflect our mental state or tasks related to our psyche’s current stage of development.

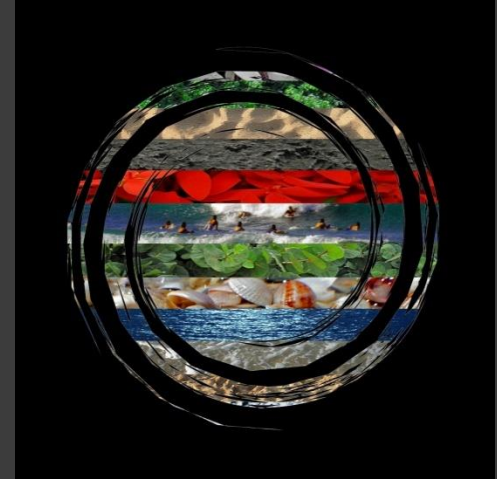
Mandalas in Practice



Creating and interpreting mandalas to develop insight.



Drawing or coloring mandalas as a meditation tool.



Creating mandalas as a form of self-expression and healing

Creating a Mandala...

Let yourself go....the object of mandala drawing is not to make a picture of anything in particular, but rather to let the drawing unfold without conscious direction.



Allow the colors to pick you

There are no mistakes!

Mandala Drawing: The Process...

Take a moment to reflect upon the following questions

1. Imagine yourself inside your mandala

How does it feel to be inside?

Where is it the most comfortable?

What do the symbols look like from this perspective?

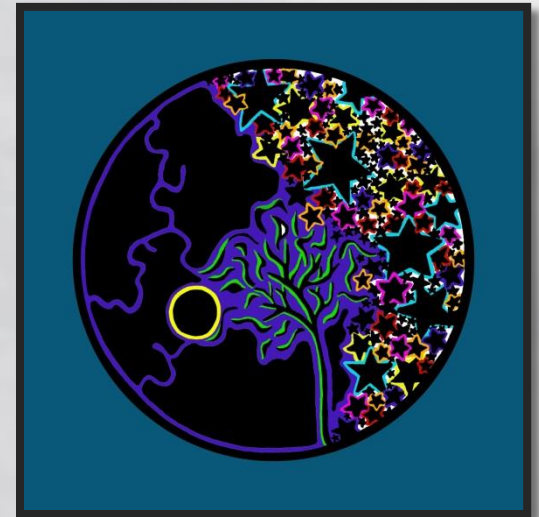
2. List the colors you used

What associations do you have for each color, if any
(words, feelings, images, memories)?

3. List the shapes used in your mandala

What associations do you have for each color, if any
(words, feelings, images, memories)?

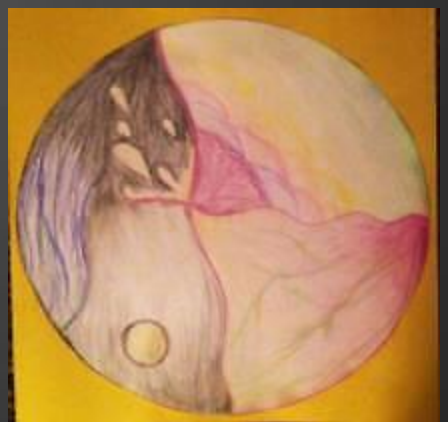
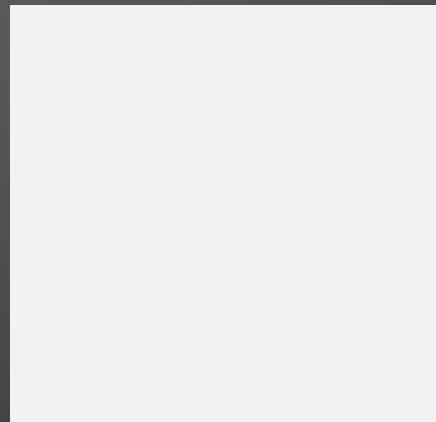
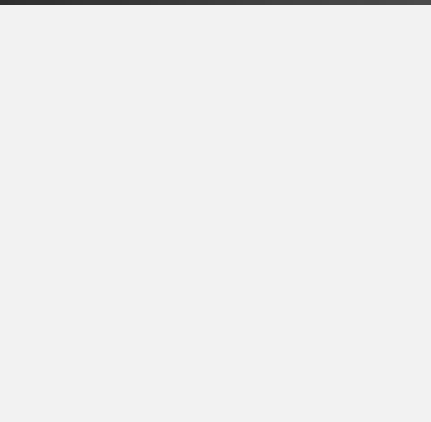
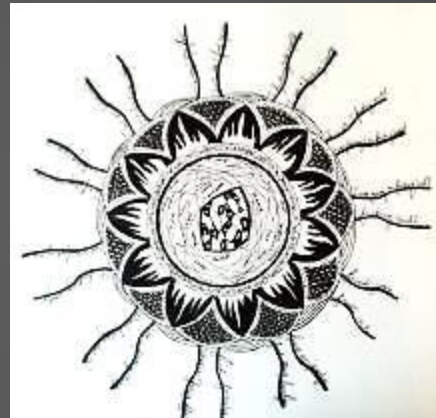
4. Give your mandala a title based on your reflections



What feelings does the client attach to...



- Colors
- Black/White
- Shapes
- Numbers
- Thickness and Thinness of Lines
- Strokes
- Border of Circle
- Location of Symbols/Shapes
- Background



The Healing Power of Mandalas



- Circles are centering and provide a protective boundary
- Boundary of the circle provides a safe container for memories
- Reconnecting implicit (sensory) and explicit (declarative) memories of trauma.
- Access trauma memories through right-brain symbolic communication
- Practice relaxation and self-soothing
- Bridge sensory memories and narrative
- Imaginal exposure: trauma is experienced through the art and therefore outside of oneself (externalized)
- The client unknowingly sets the pace of healing
- Suggestive mandalas: Cognitive reprocessing of the trauma providing alternative more empowering outcomes
- Provide a wealth of information: colors, shapes, spacing, and time devoted to the project
- Not biased by culture, class, gender, etc.

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