

## Creating Mandalas for Insight and Healing



The word mandala is Sanskrit for magic circle, or circle of mystery. It holds the meaning of center and circumference simultaneously. The circle is an ancient symbol, across cultures, depicting, containing and expressing wholeness. From primitive stone carvings, to Native American medicine wheels, to Stonehenge, to labyrinths, to stain glass windows, to Tibetan intricate sand drawings that are completed and swept away, all are representative of the use of the mandala throughout humankind as a significant archetypal symbol.

Renowned Psychologist, C G. Jung through his own personal explorations began using the creation of mandalas to reveal the workings of the psyche as it seeks individuation. The mandala is a sacred container where just as in dreams the psyche reveals its ever-evolving process towards wholeness.

*The mandala is an archetypal image whose occurrence is attested throughout the ages. It signifies the wholeness of the Self. This circular image represents the wholeness of the psychic ground or, to put it in mythic terms, the divinity incarnate in man.* Carl Jung

*I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time...Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is:...the Self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well is harmonious.* Carl Jung

*My mandalas were cryptograms concerning the state of the self which was presented to me anew each day...I guarded them like precious pearls....It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the center. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the center, to individuation.* Carl Jung

*Often the hands will solve a mystery that the intellect has struggled with in vain.* Carl Jung

## Working With Your Own Mandala

**Intuitive Mandalas** are different from other art forms. They are meant to be a form of creative meditative prayer that anyone can do. The process of creating the Intuitive mandala is just as important as the final creation. Each mandala is appreciated for its unique beauty. Creating Intuitive Mandalas are based on the following practices:

- Its creation is **spontaneous and intuitive**. When you begin creating a Intuitive mandala, you are asked to de-center, to release any preconceived idea of what it should be. Rather, allow the pattern to reveal itself as you draw.
- The mandala is free form. It may be totally abstract, or you may discover particular representative shapes find their way into the creation. The process of creation is a **practice of mindfulness** yet what comes forth is unexpected. Each stroke should be made deliberately, rather than hesitantly. Make peace with imperfection. The creator should see “mistakes” as the foundation for an unexpected pattern.
- The creation of Intuitive mandalas are **celebratory and ceremony**. Like meditation or prayer, the process is meant to feel freeing and healing. It is a prayer or meditation of gratitude for the beauty of life.
- A Intuitive mandala is **timeless**. It is a focused contemplative activity not requiring any technology or special tools. The process of creating them connects all who make them to the timeless human endeavor meaning making through the artistic process.

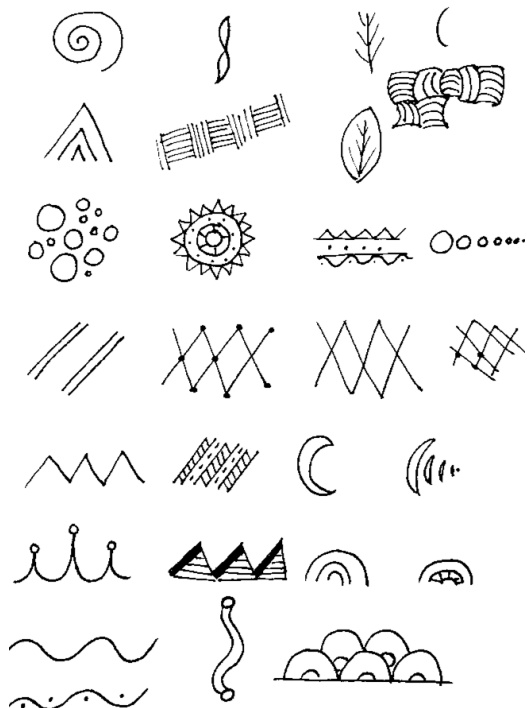


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*"When the Soul wants to experience something, she throws out an image front of her and then steps into it."* Meister Eckhart

## Drawing Your Own Mandala



1. Begin by sitting quietly in receptive meditative prayer.
2. When you feel ready begin by drawing a string starting on the edge of the circle and reaching another point on the edge of the circle.
3. Pause and ask what shapes want to be present in your mandala? Continue to draw strings to make the shapes that want to be present.
4. Now view each separate shape and choose one of the doodle patterns to fill each shape. Pause between filling each shape to contemplate what wants to be next.
5. When your drawing feels complete. Sit with it for a minute or so. Noticing what draws you in or where you feel uncomfortable. Just notice. Noticing is a form of mindful meditation. Try and suspend judgement. Don't evaluate. Just notice.
6. After a few minutes ask which colors have the most energy for each shape? Slowly color in your mandala in an easy way pausing between colors to notice what is happening. How has your reaction shifted as a result of adding colors?

**When your mandala feels complete. Pause again for a few minutes of gratitude for what has come forth.**

*Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any other experience that reveals the human spirit.*

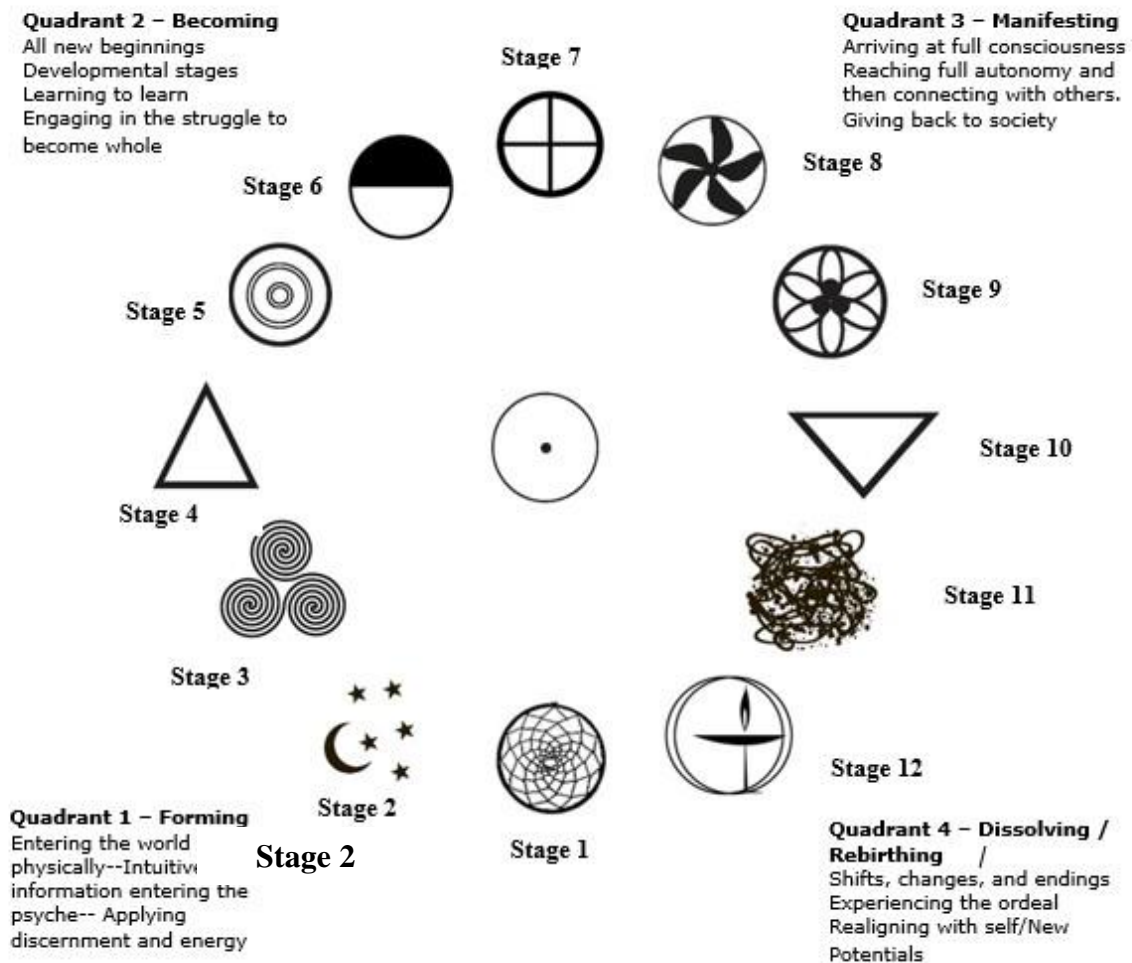
E.E. Cummings

## Archetypal Stages of the Great Round of the Mandala

Building on Jung's work, art therapist, Joan Kellogg, developed the Archetypal Stages of the Great Round of the Mandala in order to help us understand our own developmental spiraling process of growth. Our unconscious and collective minds reflect the cyclical nature we find in the natural world. The circle of life has periods of growth, periods of stagnation and of death. Mandalas and the Great Round can be engaged to help us better identify and travel through the various stages we encounter in our lives. In Kellogg's work with thousands of mandalas a recurring pattern in the drawings began to emerge. Her work resulted in the development of The Archetypal Stages of the Great Round. The Great Round is a cycle of developmental and spiritual stages that we all go through. The twelve stages reflect the cycles of growth in nature. Kellogg's work is useful in identifying archetypal stages that are present for ourselves along with energies represented through color.

# Archetypal Stages of the Great Round of the Mandala

Joan Kellogg 1978



## STAGES AND POSSIBLE MEANINGS

**STAGE 1 - ENTRY** - The descent into matter / The heaviness of physical embodiment / Close to the earth and deep unconscious / Feel like you don't fit into the world / Loneliness / The reluctant soul / Life is a waking dream –we are sleepwalkers

**STAGE 2 - BLISS**—Openness to creative ideas / The information comes in –through dreams, intuition, sensing or 'sleeping on it' / Growth in multiple forms / Receptivity /Regeneration /Recovery / Forming without knowing / Creativity / All is in potential

**STAGE 3 –ENERGY/PATH** – Energy and growth / Neurological connections increase / Finding one's path / A beginning trust in the process / Consciousness is activated / Movement / Activation of life force / A pilgrim on the path

**STAGE 4 – BEGINNINGS** - Readiness to start / New Beginnings / Basic needs and support / Mother-child relationships / Birth of New Self / Issues of growth and dependence / Caregivers, nurturers, initiates

**STAGE 5 – TARGET** - Focus / Defense / Learning HOW –rules, patterns / Protects oneself and builds boundaries / Learning to discriminate / Engaging in ritual ‘ First encounter with the ‘other’

**STAGE 6 –STRUGGLE** - Establishing ego boundaries The tension of the opposites / Breaking free of parental dictates / Quest for individuation / The “Dragon Fight” / The Hero’s Journey / Yearning for wholeness and seeking integration

**STAGE 7 – INDEPENDENCE** -Full consciousness / Self (ego) is fully expressed / Responsibility / Abstract thinking / Enter the realm of wholeness / Address the expectations of the world / Birth of the Hero

**STAGE 8 – IDENTITY** -The specialist / Full autonomy / Individuality and full identity / Mature / Can be alone, but not lonely / Career issues / Can put aspirations and goals into form / Doing it your way

**STAGE 9 –SELF AND OTHERS** - Socialization / Leaving a legacy, bringing things to completion / Manifesting / Crystallization and anticipating change / Group identification / Feelings of harmony and satisfaction

**STAGE 10 –ENDINGS** - Shifts and changes / Crossroads / Major transitional stage / A Gate – some see it as a burden, others welcome it / Feelings of separation / Sensing the Wheel of Life

**STAGE 11-DISINTEGRATION** –Fragmentation / The Dark Night of the Soul / Creative Chaos /Crisis and opportunity / A time of fear, confusion and loss of meaning / Tear form apart for regeneration

**STAGE 12 -TRANSFORMATION** -Transcendent Ecstasy / Rebirth / Order out of Chaos / Realignment with Self / New potentials / Self-actualization / Sense of completion / Creative Synthesis

## Colors and Possible Meanings

**RED** –strong emotions/ life energy/ energy/ passion / will to live

**BLUE** –intuitive/ receptive/ feminine/ wisdom /comfort

**YELLOW** -knowledge / cognition/ abstract thinking/ confidence/ vision/ masculine

**ORANGE** - power / ambition / assertion / will/aggression

**GREEN** –healing / renewal / accepting / ability to care for others

**PURPLE** –royalty/ specialness/ special mission/ altruism/ wounded healer/ taking responsibility

**TURQUOISE** - selfless/ humanitarian/ mediator/ creative problem-solver/ healer

**YELLOW-GREEN** – new beginnings/ new growth/ spring/ little queasy

**WHITE** – spiritual versus physical/ lack of affect or emotion/

**BLACK** - loss/ void/ mystery/ possible depression/ negation

**BROWN/DARK BROWN**–fertile ground / grounded/ possible insecurity/ low self-esteem / muddy

**JEWEL TONES** – vital, pure intention, clarity

**DARKER COLORS** – heaviness, stagnant, older—ready to release.

**PASTELS** – airy and light, lower energy, fading away – Meditative/Spiritual

## Journaling

- Focusing first on your process, the felt sense of creating the mandala, what did you notice? What did you feel during the process of creation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Now look at the shapes, symbols or images. Are any of them like the shapes in the Archetypal Stages of the Great Round? If so, reflect on the stage and how it might inform where you are in your journey.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Finally notice the colors you chose and reflect on the color meanings. What insight into your journey do the colors bring you?

**Sharing:** As you feel comfortable share your mandala a partner. When reflecting on one another's mandala's own your projections...."If this were my mandala...."

## Cinquain: A five-line poem

To synthesize what has come forward write a cinquain about your mandala.

- Line 1: One word
- Line 2: Two words that describe Line 1.
- Line 3: Three action words ending in *-ing* that describe what Line 1. What is line one doing, revealing, being...
- Line 4: A four-word phrase or sentence that sums up Lines 1-3 or further describes Line 1.
- Line 5: One word, a metaphoric synonym for Line 1



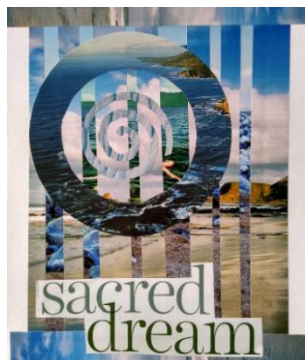


*"You must give birth to your images.  
They are the future waiting to be born.  
Fear not the strangeness you feel.  
The future must enter you long before it happens.  
Just wait for the birth, for the hour of the new clarity."*  
Rainer Maria Rilke

## Resources for Exploring The Great Round of the Mandala

Creating Mandalas: For Insight, Healing, and Self-Expression, by Susanne F. Fincher

The Mandala Workbook: A Creative Guide for Self-Exploration, Balance, and Well-Being, by Susanne F. Fincher



### Other Ways to Engage the Mandala

- Move in a circle
- Natural objects arranged in a circle
- Collage a circle
- Draw or paint within a circle
- Walk a labyrinth
- Place previously completed artwork or photographs on the floor in a circle and stand inside
- Create an altar on a round table or round cloth.



