**Mandala Creation Expressive Activity**

In the Sanskrit language, *mandala* means circle. Mandala art is anything that is drawn, painted, collaged, created inside a circular shape or form. Tibetan Buddhism has used mandala art as a form of meditation for thousands of years. Navajo sand painters use them in healing rites. The shape of the mandala recalls the Medicine Wheel used by many native people to connect to nature wisdom.

The round shape of the circle, the mandala, allows us to experience wholeness (unity/yog) and there is no up or down, top or bottom. Classical use of the mandala, has the artist/meditator beginning with a central point. In yoga, the *bindu*—a point of intense focus. From that bindu point, the design of the classical mandala radiates. It is used as a tool for meditation during and after creation.

The circle and mandala shape is found all through nature, from the structure of cells, to solar systems. We see it in seashells, tree trunks, flowers, wind patterns, the concentric rings that move from center after a pebble is dropped into a puddle. A circle can expand without strain, and there is no point on a circle that is stronger than another.

In creating mandala art, we are working with multiple aspects of self and being. This work brings in multiple aspects of the koshas and allows them to work together, encouraging synthesis of being. We work with our physicality and senses by seeing color, feeling texture of the medium we are working with as well as elements we may bring into the piece—engaging annamayakosha. We can allow the energy of inspiration and power of emotion to move us, stimulating the flow of life force—pranamayakosha. We use the power of our minds, purposefully choosing certain elements, color, patterns, spatial design and form, talking to ourselves as we go, making decisions and choices, disregarding and commenting along the way—manomayakosha. The entire process encourages and allows the rising of our intuitive, imaginative, unconscious or subconscious mind—vijnanamaykosha, the place from which symbols, shapes, colors and images speak. This part of ourselves so rarely consciously available in thought, through artmaking is given tools and the means to come forward. Use of all the koshas allows natural access to anandamayakosha, the bliss or spiritual body. The art-

making, expressive process encourages access to the liminal space where the bliss body can come available. Art-making and mandala work, can be used as ritual, relaxation, self-care, expression in general. The process can be seen as a Bhakti practice, a Tantric practice, an exploration of the self-inquiry of Jnana, and a form of meditation in itself, and drawing on multiple of Patanjali’s limbs of yoga.

Art making in general is a way of using all our faculties to assist us in accessing the wisdom of our personal, as well as collective unconscious and imaginal realms. The mandala with its rich tradition and the strength of the circle, provides an ideal container to hold whatever we may find within and whatever may find its way out.

Fill in this mandala shape as you like.





**Body Map Expressive Activity**

