

MANDALAS

Doorways to the Universe and Your Infinite Self

By Chip Richards

It was the last day of a 33-day peace vigil for the living waters of our planet. I had been with many different people throughout the month, but it happened to be that I was alone as I arrived at Wategos to “close the circle”. This little bay and its rocky headland is the most easterly point of the entire continent of Australia. It is an ancient ceremonial gathering place for the Bundjalong People and it has a perfect view of the migration trail of the Southern Hemisphere Humpback Whales — who were making their annual journey up from Antarctica to their breeding and birthing grounds in the tropics at the time.

I came with the simple intention of drawing a big sand mandala and then watching the tide come in and take it out to sea – along with my prayerful intentions for PEACE in the WATER.

I found a great drawing stick and a huge slab of smooth wet sand to carve my drawing, then I set about my task... With myself as a compass, I carved a large image of THE SEED OF LIFE (an ancient sacred symbol of seven interwoven circles), encircled by a life-sized drawing of a MOTHER and BABY HUMPBACK WHALE. I have drawn variations of this mandala hundreds of times in the past few years, on beaches all around the world, and with it always seems to come with some special moment, insight or experience.

As I drew the circles of the SEED of LIFE, I found myself reflecting on the past month and the Peace in the Water vigil (www.peaceinthewater.com) ... I found myself wondering how to gauge the effectiveness of our prayerful intentions, sent from our own hearts into that of the unseen world of creation. I finished the drawing of the mother and baby whale circling around the sacred symbol and then paused... Wondering for a moment if my message would reach its intended recipients today... Suddenly, as if on cue, I heard a young man yell out behind me, “Oh - my - God!!! Did you see that?!”

*I turned just in time to see a HUGE adult humpback breach fully out of the water!! BABOOOM!! There were two of them, adult and calf (just like in my drawing) and they were so close to the shore that I could barely believe it was deep enough for her to breach. It was actually the closest I've ever been to a breaching whale... and I was standing on the sand!! I stood in awe along with many others on the beach, as the pair stayed there in the bay for several minutes, breaching repeatedly with unfathomable grace and power... Twelve times in total. **WE ARE HERE.***

Then they slowly moved back out to sea... the crowd of breathless people dissolved back into their sunset walks... and I returned to my drawing, feeling like my question had been answered loud and clear. I went for a swim, and when I came out of the water, the mandala and its intentions were gone ... effortlessly claimed by the peace-filled hands of the rising tide.

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Sanskrit for ‘circle’ or ‘centre’, Mandalas have been used for thousands of years by indigenous elders and spiritual traditions, as a way of giving form to their prayers and weaving visions into the fabric of reality.

In nature, the ‘circle with a centre pattern’ is the basic structure of all creation and is reflected everywhere we look. The centre of a seed, a flower, a piece of fruit. The

circling rings of stone dropped into water and the spiralling shape of a tiny seashell, up to the wide circular pattern of storms, celestial currents, the Sun, our solar system - and beyond! Every atom and every cell with its nucleus... is a mandala.

In the Americas, Indians have long created medicine wheels and sand mandalas for healing and as a gateway to communion with the Divine. In Tibet, Mandalas have been used throughout the ages as an active form of meditation and integral part of spiritual practice.. The creation of sand mandalas can take many hours or days to complete. When finished, monks gather in ceremony and they sweep their mandala away, emptying it into a nearby body of water as a blessing.

From Christian nuns to Aztec shaman, mandalas in various forms have been drawn, carved and created throughout the ages to infuse our visions with energy, to unify groups around an idea and to help Dream Our World into BEING.

Pioneering psychiatrist Carl Jung used mandalas extensively in his own personal growth and as a way of communicating and understanding his clients' subconscious. He saw them as a "safe refuge of inner reconciliation and wholeness." Today mandalas are even being used in European schools and hospitals as a way of calming, centring and enlivening patients and children.

Representing Wholeness, mandalas can be seen as a model for the organizational structure of LIFE itself, as a doorway into our own inner self and a reminder of our relationship to the infinite.

Mandalas represent both our outer and inner universe. They open a powerful pathway to self-transformation, for they operate like energetic mirrors, reflecting back to us our energy, insights, thought and behaviour patterns. Drawing or creating mandalas in any form helps us to align and integrate our thoughts, emotions and spirit with our physical body – facilitating whole brain activity and helping us to open the pathways between that which we dream and vision... and that which we experience in our reality.

A mandala is more than an image seen with our eyes, drawn with our hand. It is an actual moment in time and a gateway to explore our art, science, dreams, spirit and life. It is said by Tibetan Buddhists that a mandala consists of five "excellencies":

### **The Teacher – The Message – The Audience – The Site – The Time**

Mandalas represent both the macrocosm and the microcosm. The inside and the out. The above and below. All that is within and around us. They offer us a doorway into Universal insight and to the powers of our own infinite SELF... This is a doorway in which we each hold the KEY! Amidst the fast pace pressures of our modern world, it is easy to defer our own wisdom and inner knowing to outside sources – books, oracles and clairvoyant readings – and while each of these elements may hold a valuable piece to our unfolding and fulfilment, the gift of Mandalas is that they come from within the oracle of YOU.

## Creating Your Own Mandala

Beginning your own journey into Mandalas is easy and incredibly activating. All that is required is a piece of blank paper and some (preferably) coloured pencils, pastels or even crayons, and a little bit of time (start with 20 minutes).

Do you have to be an artist to draw mandalas? NO. In fact, I find that self-proclaimed “non-artists” (of which there really is no such thing) often take to Mandalas even quicker because there is less sense of expectation and desire to make it look “right” or appear a certain way than seasoned artists sometimes carry. So wherever you are on the artistic path of life, you are surely in the right place to begin.

Mandalas can be used in a few ways, two of which include:

1. **Anchoring a Vision** - Much like native cultures have done for thousands of years, mandalas can be drawn as a way of anchoring an idea or vision into form. The process of creating a mandala builds a feeling in our body and that feeling becomes our potent prayer and energetic intention to the Universe. We use this method whenever we are beginning a new project and want to clarify our vision for the project and clearly communicate our intention to the Universe. What comes is always a clear and powerful reflection.
2. **Moving/Clarifying/Centring Energy (aka. ‘Mandala of the Moment’)**- Mandalas can also be used as part of an active meditation and a way of shifting energy or gaining clarity in a moment. This can take a very short time and be used as a form of art therapy to calm and centre yourself, to activate your left and right brain and to give you a mirror reflection into what is going on inside of you. I have done mandalas with children right through to elderly, and it always amazes me to see and feel the shift in their state of Being from beginning to end of a piece.

For the purposes of this exercise, we’ll create a ‘Mandala of the Moment’ - a simple doorway of centring expression and a message from your high spirit to YOU.

Simple Steps and Guidelines

1. **Begin with a Circle.** This is not necessary, but because Mandala means “circle” I find that it is usually a great place to start – and it immediately takes us one step beyond the potentially intimidating view of a blank page. But don’t feel confined by this shape either. I almost always start with a circle, and yet I almost always end up bringing my drawing out beyond the circle by the time it is finished.
2. **Breathe and Listen.** Take a moment to close your eyes, take some quiet breathes and ask your higher SELF to reveal to you a colour or image that would be particularly helpful for the expansion of your Soul at this time. Don’t force it. Just breathe, listen and watch with your inner eyes... When something comes (whatever it is), don’t judge or question it, simply pick up your pencil or crayon and begin.

3. **Allow Your Vision to Grow.** Once that pencil hits the page, your mandala will begin to reveal itself to you more and more. It may want to change and shift and grow into colour as and shapes you don't quite understand. The real key is to keep breathing and allowing it to come through. Don't try make it look a certain way or to lock it in to your initial vision. Be willing for the image to change and grow.
4. **Keep Breathing.** As we relax into deeper and deeper layers of our drawing, deeper and deeper aspects of ourselves may rise to the surface. These may manifest themselves as physical sensations, tightness, emotional release... Our breath is so powerful in this process. Do your best to keep breathing and just allow whatever comes up to move through you, out of your body and onto the page.
5. **Keep Listening and Following what comes.** Trust the wisdom of the image to lead you where you need to go. Even if you don't understand it. If you get stuck or are not sure where to go next, rather than looking at the image and asking, "what would make this LOOK good or right or balanced?" simply close your eyes again and ask for another image or colour, and when it comes, continue.

You will know when the mandala feels finished. (though you may come back to it later). When you feel complete, close your eyes and thank the great Source of infinite intelligence within you for sharing this reflection of your Divine self. Take a moment to observe the magic of what you have created and write down any thoughts or insights that may have arisen during your drawing process, and be open to receiving more impulses as this soul reflection ripples out through your being and beyond.

*Chip Richards is an author, artist and spiritual life coach, devoted to helping people of all walks awaken to their true SELF, high purpose and infinite capacities in life. He is the founder of New Earth Creations ([www.newearthcreations.com](http://www.newearthcreations.com)) and can be contacted at: [chiprichards@mac.com](mailto:chiprichards@mac.com).*