

# Mandala on your mind

Why Mandala making can be good for you

**D**o you feel the need to relax and relieve your stress? Perhaps you need an avenue to express how you feel or want to discover more about yourself in a creative way. There are various ways to achieve these things, one of which is through art.

According to a study conducted by **Deirdre Heenan**, art as a therapy course was credited with improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence. It provided a safe space for reflection on mental health issues. Furthermore, art therapy addresses mental health issues in a supportive, positive, non-clinical environment that can encourage and facilitate empowerment and recovery through accessible creative programs.

Professor **Amos V. Manlangit** from the College of Fine Arts, University of the Philippines Diliman, is on a journey of helping individuals maximize their expression and communication, enhance creativity, manage stress, and nurture their wellbeing by integrating his training in the fine arts and pursuing the arts-based approach.

"I teach *Mandala* Visioning Exercise by merging two important concepts which allow students



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or participants to identify their own core values drawn by revisiting their personal history or life stories and expressing it through *mandala* painting on Capiz plates," explained Prof. Manlangit.

With the countless forms of art available to us,

you might be wondering what makes *mandala* special. *Mandala* art goes way back in our history. Ancient artists have done this kind of practice for the longest time. In the advent of psychology during the 20th century, *Mandalas* were found to be helpful in processing emotions. The *mandala* serves a purpose to its maker; it has become an activity of intense value

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that encompasses culture, philosophy, and time.

When asked to describe what a *mandala* is, Prof. Manlangit said, “*Mandala* is a diagram created by patterns, symbols, shapes, and representational elements arranged in a uniform manner, showing balance and a harmonious design. But this is just not an ordinary arrangement of a two-sided balance. It talks about symmetry in four sides or quadrants.”

He further shares three areas by which *mandalas* are considered of great value:

The first area by which *mandalas* become valuable is through its artistry and aesthetic experience. By arranging them in fours, you can achieve a radial pattern that stabilizes the composition from any of its sides. It gives a certain kind of harmony that balances the work in multiple levels. Colors will also need to balance each other; thus, being applied in synchrony on the quadrants. Finally, the rich use of pictography and symbolism personalizes the process. The center sets the theme of the *mandala* and all images should relate with each other in order to unify the whole.

Another dimension why people make *mandalas* is for its psychological importance. *Mandalas* are said to help in contemplation, discernment, and self-discovery. Psychologist **Carl Jung** made extensive studies on *mandalas* and realized

how deeply rooted circles are in the process of centering—unifying one’s thoughts and feelings. One can achieve self-reintegration and balance by exploring dualities, dreams, and inner thoughts inherent in the creative process.

Finally, *mandalas* are revered for their cultural and spiritual significance. All over the world, they are present whether in churches, temples, mosques, or even on the streets. It plays a role in various religions such as Christianity, Islam,

Buddhism, and Hinduism among others. *Mandalas* are universal forms that can be appreciated for their value in culture and faith.

Today, *mandala* making can provide a holistic experience that can rejuvenate from the stress and disorientation caused by the modern world. It has a mindfulness benefit, especially when the art-maker is induced to a creative flow. Placing in meaning and emotions can help in communication and self-expression. It is said



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that ultimately, one’s art is an extension of the self, thereby allowing *mandalas* to manifest the inner character. Indeed, *Mandala* making can be a good opportunity to create art with meaning, as well as, promote mental wellbeing.

To know more about how *Mandala* making can help you emotionally and psychologically, visit [www.amosmanlangit.weebly.com](http://www.amosmanlangit.weebly.com).

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