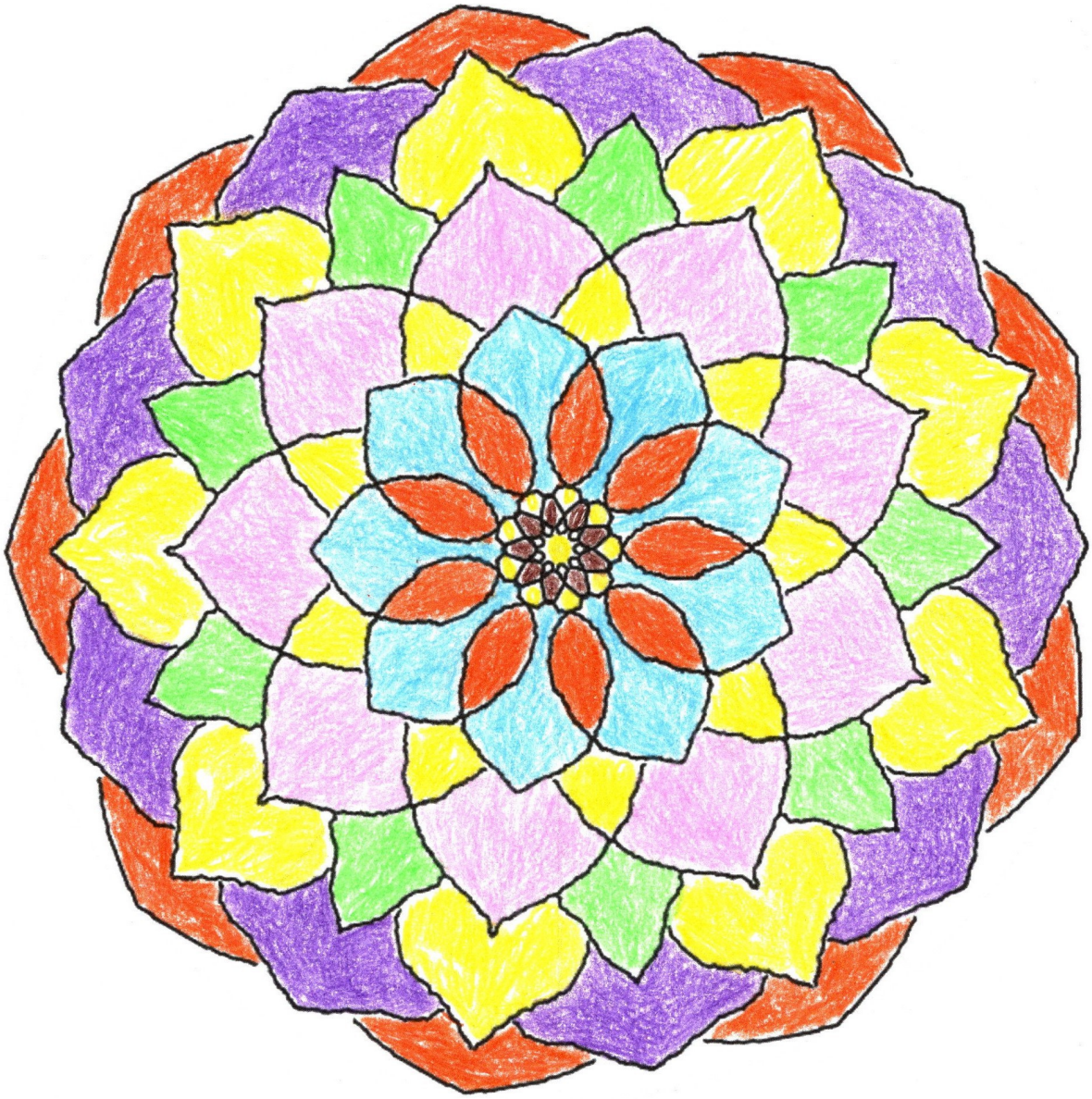
Refocus and Relax



With Art Mandala Coloring

Designs by Barbara Gini

When I was a child, one of my favorite activities was coloring. I would sit in my room for hours, with a variety pack of paper spread out in front of me, a stack of coloring books and a large box of colorful crayons (with a built-in sharpener on the back.) One by one, as I had kids, I introduced each of them to this favorite pastime using it not only for fun and creativity, but also as a method to express feelings, talk out problems or to wind down after a busy, stressful day at school.

As I became an adult and studied Holistic health, psychology, chromotherapy, and stress management, I learned about Mandalas and understood why my kids and I enjoyed coloring. It was not the action of coloring so much as the transformation-the sensory input, the colors, and the feeling of calm that came over us when we were coloring that we loved.

A Mandala is a symmetrical design, usually circular, that can be used as an object of focus to help one explore emotions, questions, solutions, ideas and find deeper meaning. Carl Jung used mandalas as part of patient therapy and saw them as a representation of one's own consciousness.

He wrote: *"I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time. With the help of these drawings I could observe my transformations from day to day. Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is: "Formation, Transformation, the Mind's eternal recreation.' And that is the self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well is harmonious, but which cannot tolerate self-deceptions." -Carl Jung, MDR, Pages 195-196*

Often used as a tool for art therapy and meditation, Mandalas are also used to problem solve, minimize anxiety, refocus, relax & reduce stress. They can be made from sand, rice or other natural materials, or as a colored or painted design on paper.

The instructions to use this book are simple: put away your phone, find a quiet place, with no interruptions, and color in the designs. You may put on some quiet music or sit quietly with no sound. You can use crayons, pencils or markers and color in one design a day. Take your time and enjoy the coloring. It doesn't have to be perfect. Just try!

When you are finished coloring in a design, you can sit for a few minutes in focus, and see what thoughts, ideas, feelings or solutions come up. Don't judge what comes up, just write out some notes under the design or on the back of the page if you wish. The important thing is to allow yourself to just be. Just color, reflect & enjoy the process!

~Barbara

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