

## **Recharging Your Battery through Art: Creating Mandalas**

On airplanes, flight attendants tell their passengers who are traveling with small children that in case of emergency, to put on their own oxygen mask before placing one on a child. This may initially seem really wrong. However, upon further reflection, the reasons become clear. What if in the process of masking your child first, you lose consciousness? Who will put your child's oxygen mask on then? And who will put on yours? By putting on your own oxygen mask first, you may increase your child's survival rate, as well as your own.

How does this apply to everyday life...or working in a helping profession? Often times people find it hard to make time for themselves... time to unwind, relax, refresh, and recharge their batteries. By “putting your your oxygen mask on first” in your everyday life, you are working toward keeping yourself as healthy as possible, and thus teaching others to be healthy by example. No one benefits from a drained person!

There are many ways to keep oneself healthy in life, such as adopting good eating habits and exercising. However, one of my favorite ways to keep myself mentally healthy is to make art. You may not think of yourself as an artist, but you don't have to be a “formal” artist to enjoy the experience. EVERYONE has creative talents, and anyone can benefit from the relaxation, stress relief, and fun that artmaking can provide.

You don't even have to have formal art materials to get started. Grab some crayons, sharpies or colored pencils, find a quiet corner, and give yourself 10 minutes at the minimum – more if you can. Or... if finding alone time seems impossible, doodle while waiting for appointments or talking on the phone. Just focus on the process, not the product, and allow yourselves to express freely.

One of my favorite art activities is making a mandala. Mandala is the sanskrit word for circle. The circle shape has been used throughout history in many cultures, and is known for it's centering, calming effects. Studies have shown that making mandalas can lower blood pressure and heart rates. Many mandala forms are also found in nature.

### **Directions for Making a Mandala:**

1. Start by drawing a circle on a piece of paper. You can either draw it freehand or trace something circular like a plate.
2. Gather some art materials. Any art media will do: pencils, colored pencils, markers, oil pastels, watercolors, tempera paints, glitter, sand, glue, sequins, yarn.
3. Start by simply focusing on lines, shapes and colors. Do not try and make anything that looks realistic. Draw like no one else is looking, and as if no one else will see it.
4. Instead of working toward a “product”, just focus on the process. Let yourself relax and sink into the experience without caring what it looks like. Play! (This is

- what children do, and it's why their art is so fantastic).
5. When it feels like you are finished, give it a title and record the date.
  6. If you feel so inclined, write about it as if no one else will ever read it.
  7. Keep your finished works together in a safe place like a journal, or toss them out if you feel like they are something you need to release.
  8. Appreciate your work no matter what it looks like. It is a reflection of your moment, and that is a beautiful thing no matter what!

If you have questions about Mandalas, Art Therapy, or Art Education opportunities, please feel free to visit my webpage at [jeannafearon.com](http://jeannafearon.com) or email me at [mail@jeannafearon.com](mailto:mail@jeannafearon.com). Thank you for sharing part of your day with me!