

M
A
S
A
N
D
A
L
A

मण्डल

m a n d a l a

WHAT IS A MANDALA ?

Mandala in Sanskrit means "circle" ("mandala"). In Hindu and Buddhist Tantrism, it is a symbolic diagram used in the performance of sacred rites and as an instrument of meditation ("mandala"). It is also considered "a map of the cosmos. It is the whole universe in its essential plan, in its process of emanation and of reabsorption" (Tucci, 23). Tucci also defines it as a "geometric projection". Boiled down to a strictly formal sense it is a circle with geometric elements inside of it.

STUDIES WITH ANXIETY

Various experiments have come to the same conclusion, that coloring mandalas decrease anxiety (Shah and Borkar; Curry and Kasser; Duong et al.). In these cases, the experiments define a mandala as any geometric (usually symmetrical) drawing within a circle (Shah and Borkar, 46; Curry and Kasser, 82; Duong et al., 318). No study argues with the fact that coloring mandalas can decrease anxiety. There have been studies however comparing the effects of coloring mandalas, versus coloring square shapes and/or drawing freely (Curry and Kasser; van der Venet and Serice; Duong et al.). In some cases, the mandalas were found equally as effective as one of the other methods (Curry and Kasser, 81; Duong et al., 318). In other studies, the mandala was proven to be more effective than the other methods (Van Der Venet and Serice, 87). The square and free drawing however were never more effective than the mandala method (Curry and Kasser, 81; van der Venet and Serice, 87; Duong et al., 318). Put together the tests do suggest that coloring a mandala is never less effective than coloring a different shape and sometimes it can be more effective.

It has been suggested that there are three main reasons why this is the case, distraction, structure, and centering (Lee, 35). In a study by Lee, they could not prove the first two theories but found that in the test groups who were coloring a mandala their heart rate when down much faster than those coloring a square design (39). In the end, the participants reported the same amount of anxiety reduction (Lee, 38). This suggests that the coloring of the mandala was more efficient at decreasing their anxiety but equal in the amount of anxiety reduction. Overall, coloring in a mandala reduces anxiety and is one of the more effective anxiety-reducing coloring activities.

MY GOAL

My goal in doing this research is to inform more people about activities they participate in to help decrease their anxiety. College is a super stressful time for many and having something simple to help cope could be useful. Every person is different and requires different methods to decrease their anxiety. I want to give people another option to help them handle their anxiety. This is in no way trying to replace talk therapy or medication, but just providing another resource for assistance.



MY OWN INTERPRETATION OF A TIBETAN MANDALA