

# Beginning a *Mandala* Meditation Practice

**M**ANY PEOPLE ACKNOWLEDGE the importance of using meditation in their lives, realizing it is vital to spiritual development. They desire the effects that it provides but are unable to achieve consistency.

Maintaining a “meditation practice” means developing a mode for accessing the three major aspects of your being; mind, body and spirit. In this practice a reserve of time is devoted to entering into your *sacred space* within, allowing these aspects to regularly converge. No one questions time set aside for a physical regimen to focus on the body, but what about the other two important components of our being; mind and spirit?

The difficulty that many have with meditation may be knowing how to begin. In many meditation traditions, one is asked to disengage the mechanics of the thought process—to empty the mind of thought—but is this level of “powering-down” the mind easily achieved? For the beginner, the attempt to relax the body, expand awareness and empty the mind concurrently can be fragile and fleeting at best. We have become accustomed to processing the busyness of our daily routines, and our “monkey minds” just won’t stop. To enter a meditation space from the daily regiment we’ve created and expect to “un-process” or “un-think” feels unnatural, as if we are setting ourselves up for failure.

So how do we gain access to our “un-natural” adult mind? Must we force our hyperactive minds into submission? If we can, how many times will we return to this struggle before giving up? Fortunately, we can access our minds in an easier and natural way. First, we can acknowledge our active minds and use

this activity to begin the process of powering-down. This natural modality shifts the active mind by giving it something to *think about*. Rather than attempting to arrest the stream of conscious thoughts, it maximizes that activity but streamlines it, diverting its scattered focus to specific thoughts. This alteration in focus will begin the shift from the conscious mind to the sub-conscious mind, and this is the first foray into “open-eye meditation practice.”

Consider an open-eye meditation as an elementary yet powerful method to access the fundamental mechanics of the working mind. When the visuals of a specific form are introduced, the mind begins to concentrate on this stimulus. If this visual stimulation is potent enough, it will command a long period of focused concentration. When this image is multi-faceted and intense with visual variation, the mind must channel more resources into processing the visual stimulus, increasing the attention span. This process will trigger the response for the mind to power-down its thinking processes. That is, a shift in the conscious mind begins because it is incapable of processing what it has been unable to assimilate from the visual stimulus. The conscious mind gives in to this focus and the secondary shifts occur, allowing a more meditative state to commence.

There are many stages to achieving a level of meditative, subconscious, expanded awareness, but it is attainable through practice. Open-eye meditation is a powerful method used to access the mechanics of the overactive mind employing a *natural* approach. The key to this method is to invest in an image that has enough presence for the mind

to consistently access higher levels of awareness. Choosing the right mandala is the first vital step. It is important to always have this image available. Imagine a sacred space created specifically for it within your home or office. This space can be a small altar area or an entire room set aside for meditation, relaxation and devotion.





*THE NATURAL MANDALA was created by the author, Rex Oxley. It is a six-foot square sacred circle rendered 100% with organic material. It is now on tour and being used in meditation practice at Garden Park Unity Church until February. Call the church (513-385-8889) to view it during the week.*

the Universe and connection with the infinite as well as for symbolizing the self, divinity within and God. As a result, the mandala has descended from the mystic sages of time and is still a highly potent, structured image sought for its psycho-spiritual focus and healing.

When searching for a mandala, the key word to keep in mind is: beautiful. If you are not absolutely overwhelmed by the image when you first look at it, it may not have the presence worthy of investment into an extended practice. Look for a mandala that speaks to you in many ways; intellectually, emotionally, physically and even creatively. The more areas of your conscious mind that are energized, the more impact the mandala will have on your meditation practice, leading you into realms not yet discovered. The most important quality that your mandala will possess is an ineffable spiritual energy that defies definition, understanding or explanation; however, you will feel its presence, replete with symbolic meaning and as a threshold to All That Is.

Many people are attracted by the mandala form as it has become more popularized in Western culture. Although indigenous to Eastern traditions, the use of the mandala as a vehicle for meditation has been borrowed from various cultures, from ancient India to Native Americans, but most notably from Tibetan Buddhism. The visual struc-

ture of a mandala is primarily circular, although other shapes and design elements may be employed. The circle is the most powerful and quintessential of the symbolic shapes of sacred geometry, carrying a history of symbolism from antiquity. Since ancient times, the circle has become traditionally accepted as a diverse and powerful symbol of unity,

*About the author: Rex Oxley creates works of fine art for self-empowerment. He is currently touring with The Natural Mandala. He offers museum-quality, archival fine art prints for creating sacred spaces and for use in open-eye meditation practice in the home and office. For information: [www.natural-mandala.com](http://www.natural-mandala.com) or call: 513.367.1456.*

