

Mandala Practice



Building a mandala (a geometric design inside a circle) of colored sand is a tradition of Tibetan Buddhist monks. They may spend several days creating intricate designs within the mandala, only to sweep it all away once it has been completed. This exercise is to remind them of the transitory nature of all living things.

You can create your own mandala as a ritual to help you let go of attachments and celebrate living in the present moment:

1. Gather a number of objects from nature, such as leaves, sticks, rocks, flower petals. If you are doing this exercise with a group, have each person gather several items to be used in the mandala. You can also use pieces of broken glass, yarn, cloth, or sand.
2. Make a circle of sticks and/or rocks as the outer border of the mandala.
3. Place the other items you have gathered within the circle, creating designs with them. You may want to place just a few items each day so that the mandala grows gradually over time. Have each person involved create their own unique patterns within the circle.
4. After the mandala is complete, spend some time in gratitude for the beauty of the design you have created. Allow time for each person involved to enjoy the mandala.
5. Slowly begin to disassemble the mandala, removing each piece mindfully and with care. Contemplate the fact that everything ultimately dies.
6. Gather the natural objects used in the mandala and scatter them on the ground or in a moving stream – releasing them back to the Earth.