



# CONNECTING

Carol Kurtz Walsh

*“The real voyage of discovery lies not in discovering new lands, but in seeing with new eyes.”*

Marcel Proust

*“Let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you ...Fill each other’s cup but drink not from one cup...Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone.”*

*The Second Journey, \_Kahlil Gibran*

Remember when you were a child and you played ring-around-the-rosy, or when you were in junior high and had to learn to square dance. These games and dances are organic, moving circles, helping us to form a connection with each other. If viewed from the ceiling, they can be seen as Mandalas in motion.

In the book *Mandala*, Jose and Miriam Arguelles state that the Sanskrit word Mandala comes from the word meaning circle and center. In traditional design the Mandala is a circle, symbolizing the cosmos. Although the design is most often a circle it can also be made of straight sides, but either way it is usually symmetrical, consisting of concentric forms.

Mandalas are universal symbols used throughout history as abstract representations of union, protection or healing. As symbols Mandalas can represent connections between different dimensions, points in time and space, personal/cultural viewpoints, and between the conscious and unconscious. They can also represent the Self. As an artist and therapist, I see the process of *creating* Mandalas as an effective therapeutic tool, used to help establish a connection between the opposites within us, as well as the connection between ourselves and those around us. Whether creating a Mandala or using it in a ritual of healing, they can be used as effective symbolic tools, which is so important during this time when internal and external connections are so vitally important.

Because of their purported magical, protective, healing powers, most all cultures have used Mandalas in one form or another. Some examples include the Native American medicine wheel, the rose windows in cathedrals, the sand paintings created by Tibetan Monks, the astrological chart of the zodiac, the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral, the Celtic cross enclosed in a circle, and the Pennsylvania Dutch's hex signs. In each case the purpose of the Mandala is different, but whatever their function, they all hold great significance for each culture.

A specific example of the use of the Mandala is the well-known Chinese symbol for yin/yang. (Refer to the yin/yang symbol used in my illustration at the beginning of this article.) According to Wikipedia, yin/yang “is used to describe how seemingly...opposing forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world, giving rise to each other in turn. The concept lies at the heart of many branches of classical Chinese science and philosophy, as well as being a primary guideline of traditional Chinese medicine...” It goes on to say that, “Many natural dualities — e.g. dark and light, female and male, low and high — are viewed in Chinese thought as manifestations of yin and yang.” This, yin/yang represents a symbolic connection between opposites.

It is interesting to realize that the universe, the human eye, as well as the entire human body can also be seen as a Mandala, as demonstrated in the illustration created by Leonardo DiVinci. Leonardo used a man's body, in the form of a Mandala to represent the golden mean – a mathematical ratio found in nature, and often used to inspire artists, musicians. (*See my rough illustration in figure 1.*) This form of Mandala symbolizes the connection between man, nature and artistic expression.

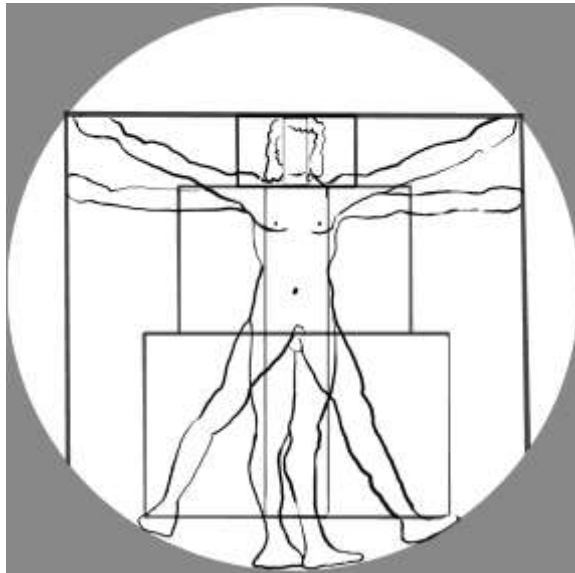


Figure 1

The Mandala is a potent symbol having the ability to help one focus internally, and heal emotional wounds. Carl Jung, a psychologist and “explorer of the collective unconscious” first used the Mandala to help in the emotional healing process. Beginning spontaneously and intuitively, and as a result of his own emotional struggles, Jung drew a Mandala each day for a year. Experiencing its healing power, he used it with his patients. In Judith Cornell’s book *Mandala*, she states that only after thirteen years, and when Jung was convinced of the universal power and archetypal meaning behind these Mandalas, did he publicize his findings. The symbolic Mandala can be a great visual, and/or creative tool for realizing inner and outer balance and connection.

Mandalas are the ultimate symbol of unity – of the joining of opposites and ultimately the coming together (both internally and externally). In my last article, “Moving Toward the Center”, in the September 2009 issue of “Pathways”, (available on my website [www.ckwalsh.com](http://www.ckwalsh.com)), I used the symbol of a wheel (a form of Mandala) to symbolize the coming together, or unification of opposites. I said, “The center of

the wheel is a symbolic position of unity. That is, it is from this perspective that we can mentally and emotionally acknowledge the existence of all aspects of a continuum. It is a place from which we can experience the non-dual.”

The center point in the Mandala is the symbolic place where all opposites are held in unity. That center point is also symbolically unique between individuals. In the book, *Finding Oz* by Evan Schwartz (a fascinating and wonderfully written book), Plato is quoted as saying “...the soul is a circle, representing totality, and in the center of the circle is the one thing that marks each true being, and that one thing is different for everyone.”

One way of graphically illustrating our soul’s purpose and our individual uniqueness, is by arranging the signs of the zodiac around an astrological chart, forming a Mandala. However one might feel about astrology, I believe the symbolism embedded in this chart presents us with information to be considered. Given that the year 2012 is the purported beginning of the Aquarian age, it may be especially helpful to consider the symbolic messages embedded in our current individual and collective astrological information.

In Guru Rattana’s June astrological newsletter she said that “... embodying the feminine polarity of our soul is required to successfully move into the Aquarian age. The shift that is upon us is not the take over of the feminine at the expense of the masculine. The evolutionary imperative is to get in touch with and learn to express the highest qualities of both the male and female polarities of our soul.” Further summarizing Guru Rattana’s thoughts, she says we need to work on unifying ourselves by becoming conscious of our inner light which we have denied, abused and neglected. We do this by upgrading our connection to both the male and female polarities of our soul. We need to develop the consciousness function of our mind (male polarity) as well as embrace the feeling function of our physical and emotional bodies (female polarity). (If you would like to subscribe to Guru Rattana’s newsletters her website is [www.yogatech.com](http://www.yogatech.com).) When these two seemingly opposing energies work together they nurture, protect and serve life with equality, cooperation and compassion. Symbolically we become an emotional/intellectual Mandala.

It is not important whether we intellectually believe the information presented to us by astrology or not, but it is helpful to see if it resonates with our heart’s truth. Emotionally and spiritually we know that it is a profoundly healing process to work on uniting the masculine and feminine energy in all of us. We intuitively know this to be a spiritual, holistic, and humanistic way to increase the

quality of our individual lives, as well as that of the universe. When we connect to all parts of our inner selves – including both the female and male aspects – we experience self-love which can then be expressed externally to others. We can then unite with others through compassion, love, and our souls’ connection.

To better understand this concept, picture yourself as a 6-sided Mandala having a center and radiating spokes. Look at *figure 2* and imagine that you are the grey area, with the black dot representing your core – your soul. From this circular center you radiate out, connecting you to others in your life.

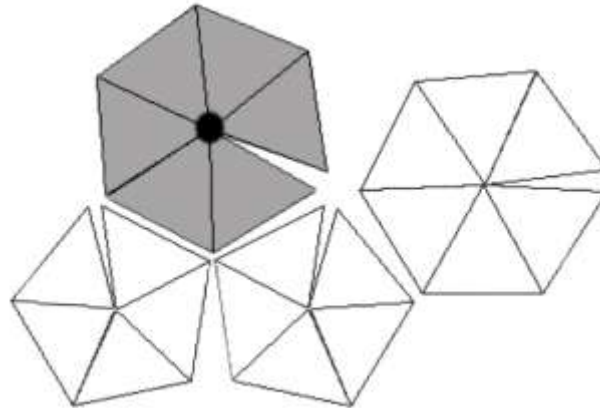


Figure 2

Now look at *figure 3* and imagine that each of the 6-sided Mandalas is another person, and that with your outward reaching spokes you become interconnected to all those around you. Once we can see how a Mandala symbolizes our connection to others people, we can then extend that thinking and see how this one-dimensional symbol, when multiplied, can connect with others creating a three-dimensional structure. This graphic and architectural structure, called the geodesic dome, was designed by Buckminster Fuller. Just as the geodesic dome forms a stable solid structure, so it is with us. When we unite with family and community, we form a solid, strong emotional/spiritual bond.

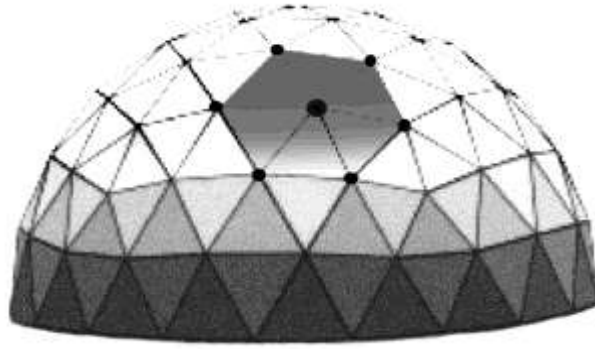


Figure 3

Symbolically, the more people that are connected to one another the larger the structure – ultimately uniting all of humanity. (See figure 4.) Thus, we create a global community.



Figure 4

This is an ideal, a goal to be worked toward for world peace. The process needs to start somewhere, and it can be with us. We can also foster this connection by teaching our children about living in a global community, first by modeling this behavior and then by demonstrating through experience. There is a wonderful and timely book, *Growing Up Global: Raising Children to Be At Home in the World*, written by Homa Sabet Tavangar.

Interestingly, another way to initiate the process of global connection is to begin with the Self. We can practice by fostering an inner connection – by experiencing loving compassion for all parts of ourselves, including those parts we struggle with. It is hard to experience non-judgmental compassionate acceptance and love for others without first experiencing this for ourselves. Loving ourselves requires that we love all parts of our physical, emotional, and mental being as well as loving all that we do, all that we think – even traits we sometimes see as negative. It is so much more productive to treat each part of our being as we would a small child – gently and with unconditional love. This does not mean we stagnate in our development, or assume there is nothing to improve upon. It does mean that we view our “defects” with a compassionate desire to progress toward a better Self.

Feeling compassion toward traits we perceive as unacceptable will help us transform them into something positive. For example, one of my clients frequently referred to herself as a “bitch”. When I asked her to define “bitch”, she hesitated but then decided that a “bitch” was a woman who was assertive and powerful. By realizing that “bitch” was not negative in the way she was meaning it, but that her negative use of the word was conditioned by society, she was able to use the power of “bitchiness” as a constructive tool in her professional life. She needed to form a connection within herself by embracing her “bitchiness”, then converting it to assertiveness, and ultimately channeling the energy in a way that enhances her spiritual and emotional growth.

Anne D. LeClaire said in *Listening Below the Noise*:

*“Just as a blade can pare fruit, sculpt wood, or inflict injury, or a key can set free or imprison, in hundreds of tongues around the world, words are being employed both to hurt and to heal. To cause both peace and chaos. To connect and to isolate. To praise and to condemn. Create harmony and discord. Honor and abase. To mask truth and to tell it. To align and to alienate neighbors and nations.”*

Each of us can be the blade that creates and heals. When we honor (but not settle for) what we see as our “negative” traits, a transformational process occurs that moves us along our spiritual path. To accept and love a negative personal trait does not mean we keep the status quo, but that we understand and embrace the trait with compassion so that it may be transformed into something positive. Author Gary Zukav states, “If you cannot love yourself, you cannot love others and you cannot stand to see others loved”. Until we love ourselves

unconditionally, we cannot love another unconditionally; therefore intimately connecting with another will be difficult if not impossible.

Once we connect to ourselves with love, acceptance and respect, (and just to be clear, this is not to be confused with narcissism or egotism), and embrace unity in life, the more we will become aware of love and grace flowing from us. Self-love enhances unity between our mind, body, personality and spirit. Love extended outward has the potential to create a union between two souls, as well as becoming the bonding energy connecting our inner spirit to the Infinite Spirit, God, Great Spirit, or Higher Power. Interestingly, as we connect with love – both internally and externally – it enhances the awakening of our own spirit as well as that of others, by lending support and nurturance.

To experience love also means to forgive unconditionally. To forgive unconditionally we must be able to separate the act from the person committing the act. We must see the individual as lovable and forgivable – even though we do not condone the act. Even if someone tries to hurt or shame us, we can feel love and experience grace around that person, while at the same time protecting ourselves from harm. For example, Amy has a verbally abusive, shaming mother. Even though Amy is forty years old, she still becomes emotionally caught by her mother's nasty tongue. In therapy she began to understand the history behind her mother's behavior, and have some empathy for her mother's difficult, abusive history. In turn she could experience some compassionate love. At the same time she learned how to protect herself emotionally by no longer accepting her mother's abuse even if it meant maintaining some distance.

It is energizing to experience positive emotions such as empathy, compassion, forgiveness and love. On the other hand it is energy draining to experience and act on negative feelings. Out of fear, doubt, shame, or anger we often choose to withhold our love – from ourselves and/or others. When we can come from our hearts and cease to make judgments by expressing our empathy, concerns, and possibly our love, we will in turn feel grace.

*The American College Dictionary* defines grace as, “the influence of the spirit of God operating in man or woman to regenerate or strengthen”. Although traditionally a Christian word, “grace” is becoming more universally used, even by Buddhists such as Ken Wilbur. Ken Wilbur, one of the founders of the transpersonal psychology movement, is the author of *Grace and Grit* – a story of his experiences of grace while his wife was dying of cancer.

Grace can be imagined as a warm, glowing light radiating from a higher source and penetrating to the center of each being. This supportive warmth, energy and radiance of grace provides us with a feeling that is both grounding and at the same time fluid – for grace has no boundaries. When I think of grace I think of being held, internally and externally in a supportive way. Being in the “state of grace” means that we are aware of the energy of Spirit within ourselves and the power and potential this embodies.

Perhaps we can understand grace better by using a metaphor. Picture a balloon filled with thick, black mud and laying flat on the ground. This filled balloon will appear small, dark and solid. On the other hand, picture another balloon filled with air and light. This translucent balloon will float, appear to glow and be larger because it is infused with air and light. When we are filled with fear, judgments and negativity we are like the mud-filled balloon. We have no room for grace. The weight of the burden keeps us from taking action. Ultimately, if we are filled with negativity, we will break – emotionally or physically. On the other hand, when we glow with the light and energy of grace we will feel expansive, have more presence and feel as though we can “gracefully” move through life.

Have you ever watched someone enter a room who appeared to glow? All attention goes toward that person. They emanate an obvious confidence, warmth, love, and serenity. They are like magnets and people are drawn to them. The opposite is also true. People who have no grace will appear to be hiding under a grey cloud. They walk with a heavy gait as though they have a weight on their shoulders. The only people drawn to these dark souls are other dark souls, for misery does like company.

Grace is not something we have sometimes and don't have at other times. Grace is always present. However, in order to experience grace we must learn to maintain an awareness of its ongoing presence. When we do not experience its presence, it is only because we have lost our awareness of it. As we develop our awareness we will be able to accept and act from grace more frequently. Returning to the image of the mud-filled balloon – experiencing grace is like becoming aware of a small diamond in the center of the mud. The light of the diamond is sometimes so shrouded by mud that it cannot be seen. But the diamond is still there. As the mud is gradually washed away, a speck of light will appear, and once this has been exposed, an awareness of grace can begin to grow. Over time, this light grows larger and brighter and is more constant. The more attention we pay to the light, the more the mud will disappear and the more the light will glow.

Awareness of grace is enhanced in two ways, by letting go of judgments and negativity, and by lovingly focusing on the light and allowing it to develop. Once we become aware of the presence of grace, we will increasingly trust in its existence. As my clients develop grace, I perceive an external physical change. This change is usually obvious to others but is hard to describe. People will describe the change by saying: “She is more pleasant to be around.” “He isn't so serious all of the time.” “Things don't bother her so much.” “He is more loving toward his brother.” “She seems softer and more approachable”.

When unity, love and grace are experienced and incorporated as a part of our inner spirit, it is easier to access wisdom, for we will have more direct access to the source of external wisdom, or to what Carl Jung called the collective unconsciousness. Imagine a transparent balloon floating in a brightly lit sky. Because this balloon is transparent, the light will flow into the balloon and as a result the balloon will appear to be more infused with light. The light inside the balloon is of the same essence as the external source of light. The clearer the balloon's casing, the more inner light. The balloon is *not* the light, but it allows the light to flow within it. In our striving for unity, we are trying to make our “plastic casing” clearer and clearer, so that more light, energy, and wisdom will flow through us.

As a reminder, there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is what one acquires from books, the media, institutions, and other people's experiences. Carl Jung says, “Knowledge does not enrich us, it removes us more and more from the mythic world in which we were once at home by right of birth.” On the other hand, wisdom comes from our personal experiences and inner intuitive knowing. When we directly experience something, it becomes a part of our truth, our wisdom. For example, no one can be taught the smell of a flower, the color of a sunset, the feeling of love, or the experience of grace. We need to experience these things to make them a part of our own internal understanding.

Knowledge is important, but wisdom is a special gift. Wisdom contains eternal truths. We can never say that we have “achieved” wisdom for this implies a state of being wise. We can more clearly say that we have achieved the ability to access wisdom and to use this wisdom for potential growth – both for ourselves and others. We are the well – not the water that flows through the well. We can be aware of the water and make use of its presence. We can contain the water, but we will never *be* the water. We gain the most by developing our truths from personal experience as well as tapping into the ocean of universal wisdom. When we tap into this ocean, we experience grace. It might be helpful to practice the following meditation.

*Sit in a quiet place, either in a chair with your feet on the floor or cross-legged on a cushion. Take a few deep breaths, and begin to breathe in a slow, relaxed, even manner. Now, begin your meditation by imagining your body expanding into the shape of a circular, energetic orb. Visualize yourself gradually expanding and becoming larger and larger. As you gradually expand, the shell of your body becomes softer, more translucent and filled with light. Gradually your body connects and unifies with everything around you.*

*Now visualize someone you love coming into the space next to you. Imagine their body, as well as yours, becoming larger and more fluid, so that eventually they connect with you to form a unified whole. Experience the feelings of love that results from this unity. Realize that although you are energetically connected, you are still a separate being. Yet you are one in this field of energy.*

*Imagine that you are now unified with all that exists, for everything is made up of the same pure white energy. You are now one with the universe. Experience the joy in the unity of this lighted energy. You feel filled with love and gratitude for all that is. Translate this feeling of oneness into love and feel the power of this love. Experience the peace and serenity with the feeling that all is one.*

*Slowly, and when you are ready, gradually allow your body to resume its natural shape and form. Be aware of your normal shape and then the position of your body – remember to breathe rhythmically. Then, take a few deep breaths and allow yourself to focus on where you are sitting in the room.*

There is a quote (attributed to different people, including an ancient Indian philosopher Chanakya, and Orson Wells), that “We are born alone, we live alone and we die alone.” There is some thought that the translation is inaccurate and that “all alone” is really meant to be “all one”. Thus the quote would read, “We are born all one”...and so on. In Dan Brown’s new book *The Lost Symbol* he says that “...man’s oldest spiritual quest was to perceive his own...interconnection with all things. He has always wanted to become ‘one’ with the universe...to achieve the state of ‘at-one-ment’.

\* \* \*

As I write this, President Barak Obama has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. According to the announcement by the committee, it was not necessarily for what has already been achieved, but for his vision and amazing efforts to work toward disarmament and world peace. There is a very, very long way to go, yet I believe it is possible to achieve understanding, acceptance, and peace, as well as a greater connection between all people. Hopefully we can all do our part toward a peaceful global community by using our inner emotional/spiritual wisdom to work for the health of the environment, and the peace and respect between all people and cultures.

*Carol Kurtz Walsh is a psychotherapist, writer and artist in private practice in Bethesda, MD. She is the author of the new book 'Break Through: Coping Skills for Chaotic Times'. To contact her or order her book, call 301-656-6420, e-mail her at [Carol@ckwalsh.com](mailto:Carol@ckwalsh.com), or check out her website and her new artwork at [www.ckwalsh.com](http://www.ckwalsh.com).*