

# *Let the Crayons Out of the Box!*



*8 Creative Ways to Relax,  
Relieve Stress and Reconnect  
to Your Creative Spirit*

*Lesson 1 - Coloring Mandalas*

# **Let the Crayons Out of the Box: 8 Ways to Relax, Relieve Stress and Reconnect to Your Creative Spirit**

**with Dr. Minette Riordan**



## **Lesson I – Coloring Mandalas for Connection and Relaxation**

*“From Native American and Tibetan sandpaintings to Gothic rose windows and Hindu yantras, mandalas are used as symbols for meditation, protection and healing.” - Clare Goodwin 1996*

The purpose of each lesson in the course “Let the Crayons Out of the Box” is to provide you with fun, relaxing and easy-to-do lessons that take you outside of your normal day. These stress busters will offer a creative oasis that will help you to distance yourself from the busyness of everyday routines. Get ready to play, to get in touch with your creative self and to relax!

A mandala is a sacred space, often a circle, which reveals some inner truth about you or the world around you. In Sanskrit mandala means both circle and center, implying that it represents both the visible world outside of us (the circle- whole world) and the invisible one deep inside our minds and bodies (the center- healing circle).

In creating a mandala we open ourselves to all the possibilities that exist inside and outside of us. A mandala can take any form and there are many natural mandala forms to be found in nature. Mandalas capture a moment in time, embodying it as a circular picture or object. The circle is a potent and universal symbol of wholeness and eternity. The earth we walk on is a circular globe and the sun, moon and stars are all circles.

In the last century, the Swiss psychologist C.G.Jung developed the use of mandalas as an aid to

psychological understanding. He drew a mandala every day to express his innermost thoughts and feelings. Each time he noticed that the circle he had drawn contained a snapshot of his mental, emotional and spiritual state of being. It was as though the images were reflecting his inner self. He also realized that the expression of the circle was universal, transcending time, place and culture - children spontaneously draw them, as do adults when they doodle, for example.

This process of focusing on the creation and the journey within the circle and to our center is what I want to share with you in this class over the next 8 weeks. I have been focusing in my own work recently on the relationship between creativity and healing. I personally find that spending time coloring, doodling, painting or journaling can bring me back to center when I feel overwhelmed or scattered.

In fact, for the past week, I have had company inhabiting my craft room. I feel bereft without my playtime and am definitely a bit grumpy and distracted the past few days. I find that without the solace of quiet time spent connecting to myself, I lose sight of what matters to me. Creative play keeps me focused and connected to myself and to God.

About 5 years ago, I stumbled across a beautiful coloring book and picture book about mandalas at Barnes & Noble. I knew instantly that I had to buy it and spend time coloring the mandalas. My kids saw me coloring and soon you could find all three of us snuggled up on the couch watching a movie and coloring together.

Over the years my mandalas have evolved and I often create my own but there is still something so freeing and joyful about a coloring book, especially one full of mandalas! There are links at the end of this document to some of my favorite mandala coloring books and places online to print mandalas to color.



## Why are we coloring mandalas?

Cathy Wong writes, “People create and look at mandalas to center the body and mind. Mandalas are entering medicine as a healing tool. An increasing body of clinical trials suggests that meditation can boost the immune system, reduce stress, combat depression, reduce pain, lower blood pressure, and stimulate the release of melatonin, a hormone believed to slow cell aging and promote restful sleep.

Mandalas are not just something to look at or meditate on... Coloring a mandala using pencil crayons, crayons, paint, or pastels combines the benefits of meditation and art therapy.

People who color mandalas often experience a deep sense of calm and well-being. It's a simple tool that doesn't require any expertise, but it can be remarkably soothing and nourishing. Mandalas not only focus your attention, but allow you to express your creative side, which many of us neglect in our daily lives.”

I loved her simple description! Coloring mandalas is both meditative and healing. Perhaps you don't think of yourself as a meditator or you worry about being able to sit still and calm your mind. Trust this process. You don't need any special tools or skills, you must need some quiet time to focus and to relax.

These sessions should be playful, quiet and enjoyable. If you do want more information about the healing power of mandalas, see the links at the end of the document. This mandala is one that my daughter colored recently, she is 11 and I love how creative she is!



## Instructions for Coloring Mandalas

That sounds funny, do you need instructions to color? Probably not, but I want to create the space and structure for your coloring experience. We are going to be coloring with intention!

### Supply list:

- A printed copy of one of the mandalas in this document, cardstock is great but plain paper is fine.
- Colored pencils or markers. You will want sharp tips on your pencils and fine point markers.
- A blank journal or notebook of some kind that you will use for this 8 week course.
- Your computer, phone or mp3 player to listen to the guided visualization. This is optional. You can follow the simple instructions below for settling into the moment.

If you feel like treating yourself to some nicer art supplies for the duration of this course, here are some of my favorite art supplies:

- Prismacolor pencils – they have a creamy texture, brilliant colors and blend beautifully
- Tombow Markers or other craft markers with dual tips – fine point on one end, brush tip on the other end
- A set of watercolors and a variety of sizes and textures of paintbrushes
- Oil Pastels
- Chalk pastels
- Good quality paper like Bristol board or watercolor paper. Strathmore makes a great line of art journals.

### Let's get started!

Make sure you have at least 30 minutes to complete this activity. You might want to light a candle or listen to soft music while you color, so have that nearby.

**Step 1.** Print out one of the mandalas on the following pages on cardstock or plain paper.

**Step 2.** Collect your pencils or markers and mandala, candle, music, and the guided visualization (optional.)

**Step 3.** Find a quiet, brightly lit spot to sit and color. A table is great or if you want to go outside, use a clipboard to hold your mandala.

**Step 4.** Close your eyes and sit quietly for a moment, taking three or four deep breaths. Then breathe naturally for several minutes. As you breathe, breathe in peace, breathe out stress and tension. Breathe in peace, breathe out peace and tension. Do this until you feel fully present in the moment. Slowly open your eyes and look at your colored pencils or markers.

**Step 5.** Select 3 to 5 colors from the set in front of you. Set the others aside. I tend to use many shades

of the same color when I do this. I might feel that I need green and blue, like in the mandala at the beginning of this document and focus on only those colors. There is a reason we gravitate to certain colors.

**Step 6.** Start coloring and don't stop until you have completed the mandala. Pay attention to the shapes of the mandala. Color carefully, focusing on staying in the lines.

**Step 7.** When you are finished coloring, spend a few moments looking deeply at your mandala. Breathe in the colors and the shapes and notice how you feel. Close your eyes for a moment. Open them and look at your mandala again.

**Step 8.** Now take out your journal and answer the following questions:

When I started this process, I felt ...

Now I feel...

I picked the colors \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ because...

When I look at the mandala, I see...

After coloring the mandala, I ...

What else do you want to share about this experience? Write it in your journal.

**Step 9.** Allow yourself a few moments to return to normal. Feel yourself back in your body. Collect all of your colors and supplies and put them away, blow out the candle, turn off the music and return to your day knowing that you can come back to this space at any time just by returning to your breath and looking at your beautiful mandala.

I like to paste my mandalas into my journal with the notes I made about them so I can return to them. Or, you can hang it on your wall where you can see it every day.

“A Mandala when hung in a room or sacred space, also acts as a visually beautiful energy portal or ‘Feng Shui’ piece radiating out the energies that are most needed to activate personal and spiritual growth. When experienced over time, it will support the manifestation of the highest outcomes required by the Soul. If there are any blockages, limiting patterns, or belief systems still being held by the viewer(s) that would prevent this, the energies channelled into the mandala will also assist the gentle release of these.” - Christine Rainbird

**Step 10.** Share your mandala and your thoughts about this process in our Facebook group.

**Do it again!!** The next time you are feeling scattered, disconnected or overwhelmed, pick a different mandala and color again.

## Color Symbolism

**Red:** Excitement, energy, passion, love, desire, speed, strength, power, heat, aggression, danger, fire, blood, war, violence, all things intense and passionate.

**Pink** symbolizes love and romance, caring, tenderness, acceptance and calm.

**Beige and ivory** symbolize unification. Ivory symbolizes quiet and pleasantness. Beige symbolizes calm and simplicity.

**Yellow** signifies joy, happiness, betrayal, optimism, idealism, imagination, hope, sunshine, summer, gold, philosophy, dishonesty, cowardice, jealousy, covetousness, deceit, illness, hazard and friendship.

**Blue:** Peace, tranquility, cold, calm, stability, harmony, unity, trust, truth, confidence, conservatism, security, cleanliness, order, loyalty, sky, water, technology, depression, appetite suppressant.

**Turquoise** symbolizes calm. Teal symbolizes sophistication. Aquamarine symbolizes water. Lighter turquoise has a feminine appeal.

**Purple:** Royalty, nobility, spirituality, ceremony, mysterious, transformation, wisdom, enlightenment, cruelty, arrogance, mourning.

**Lavender** symbolizes femininity, grace and elegance.

**Orange:** Energy, balance, enthusiasm, warmth, vibrant, expansive, flamboyant, demanding of attention.

**Green:** Nature, environment, healthy, good luck, renewal, youth, spring, generosity, fertility, jealousy, inexperience, envy, misfortune, vigor.

**Brown:** Earth, stability, hearth, home, outdoors, reliability, comfort, endurance, simplicity, and comfort.

**Gray:** Security, reliability, intelligence, staid, modesty, dignity, maturity, solid, conservative, practical, old age, sadness, boring. Silver symbolizes calm.

**White:** Reverence, purity, birth, simplicity, cleanliness, peace, humility, precision, innocence, youth, winter, snow, good, sterility, marriage (Western cultures), death (Eastern cultures), cold, clinical.

**Black:** Power, sexuality, sophistication, formality, elegance, wealth, mystery, fear, evil, unhappiness, depth, style, evil, sadness, remorse, anger, anonymity, underground, good technical color, mourning, death (Western cultures).

Source: <http://www.incredibleart.org/lessons/middle/color2.htm>

### **Resources**

Books available on Amazon.com that I recommend include:

[World Mandalas: 100 New Designs for Coloring and Meditation](#) by Madonna Gauding. This one includes some history and beautiful illustrations.

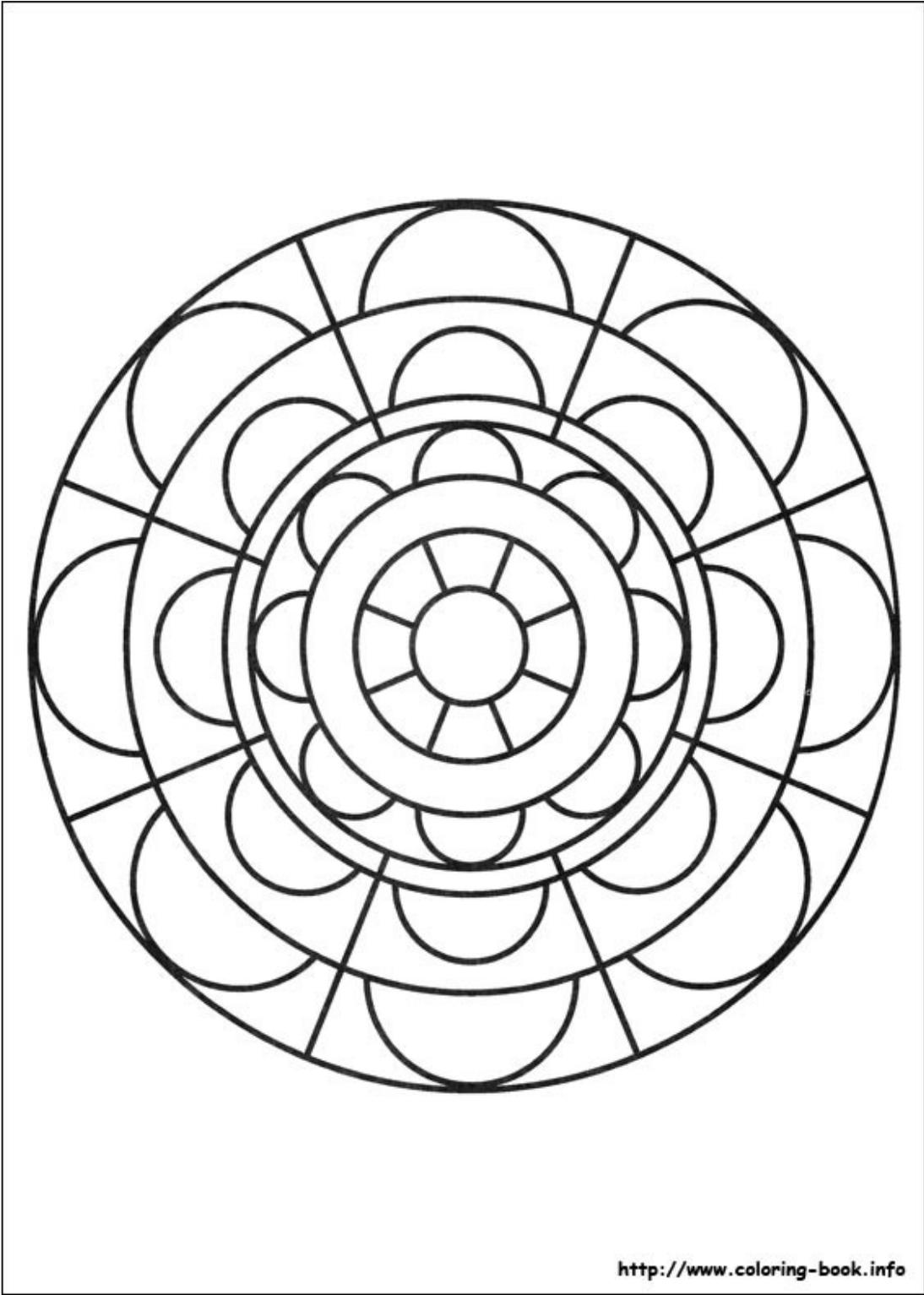
[Coloring Mandalas 1](#) by [Susanne F. Fincher](#) (she has multiple volumes and they are all wonderful.)

Links to online coloring pages that you can print and color:

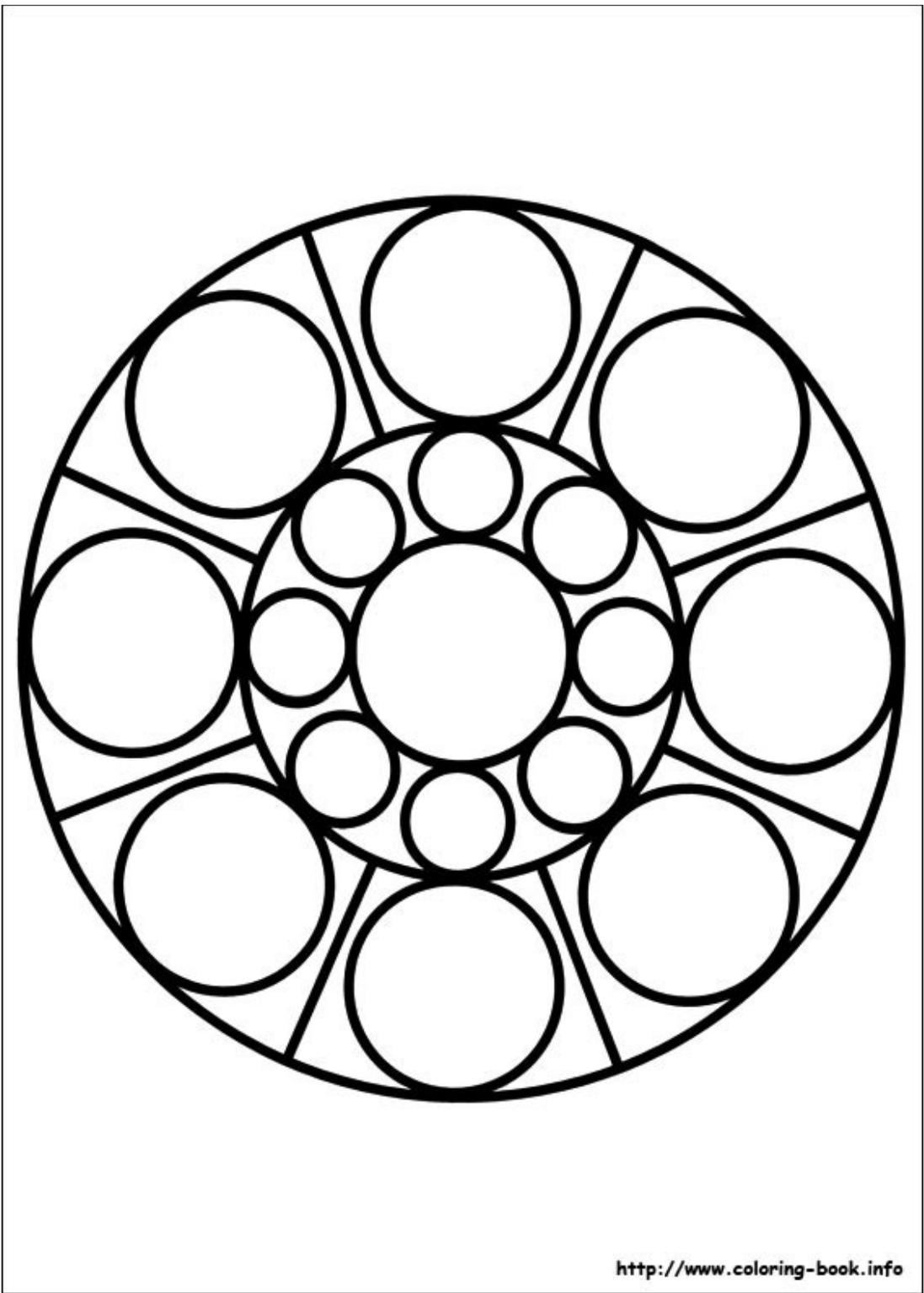
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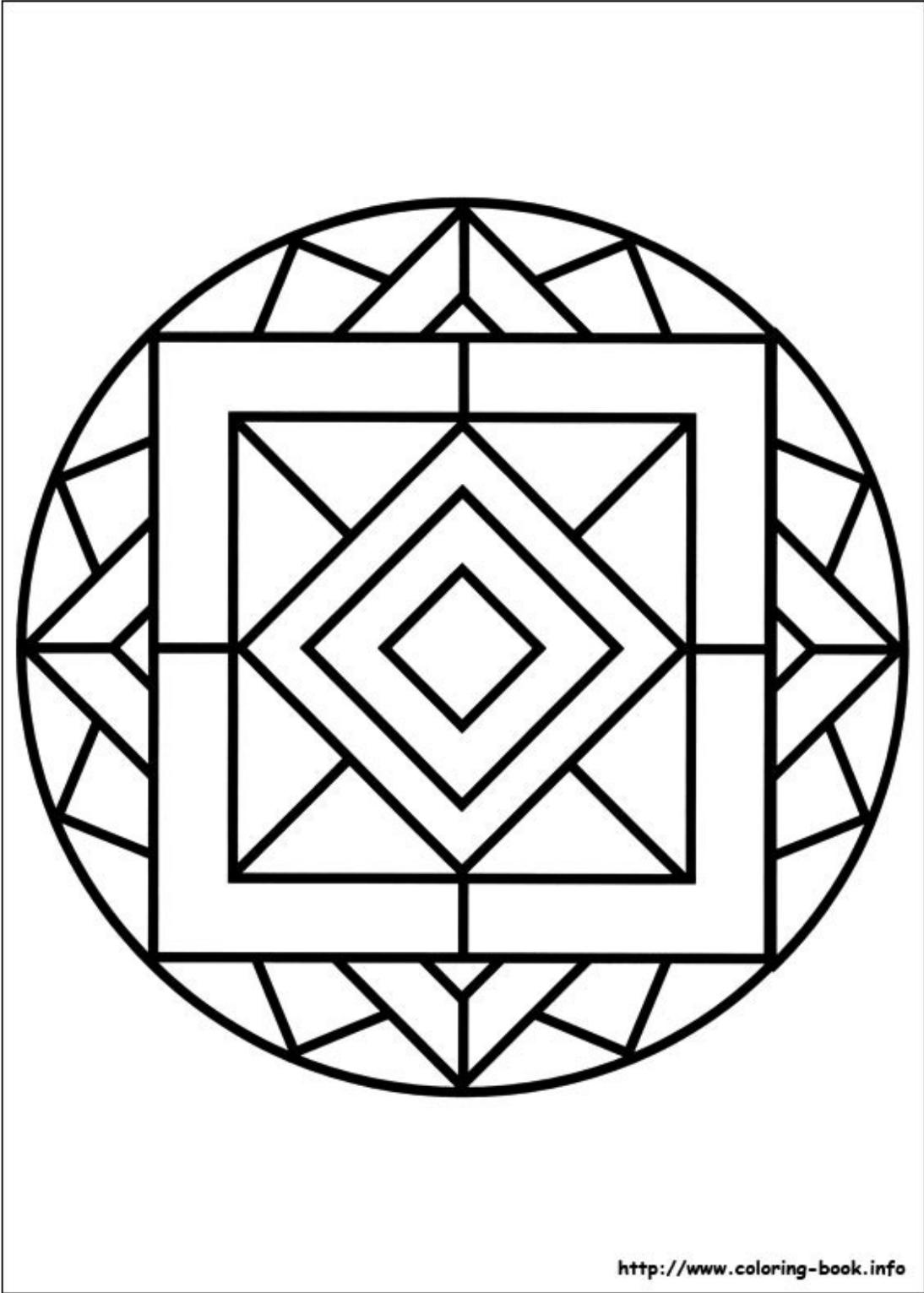
[http://www.hellokids.com/r\\_262/coloring/mandalas-gallery-coloring-pages/](http://www.hellokids.com/r_262/coloring/mandalas-gallery-coloring-pages/)

[http://www.coloring-book.info/coloring/coloring\\_page.php?id=209](http://www.coloring-book.info/coloring/coloring_page.php?id=209)

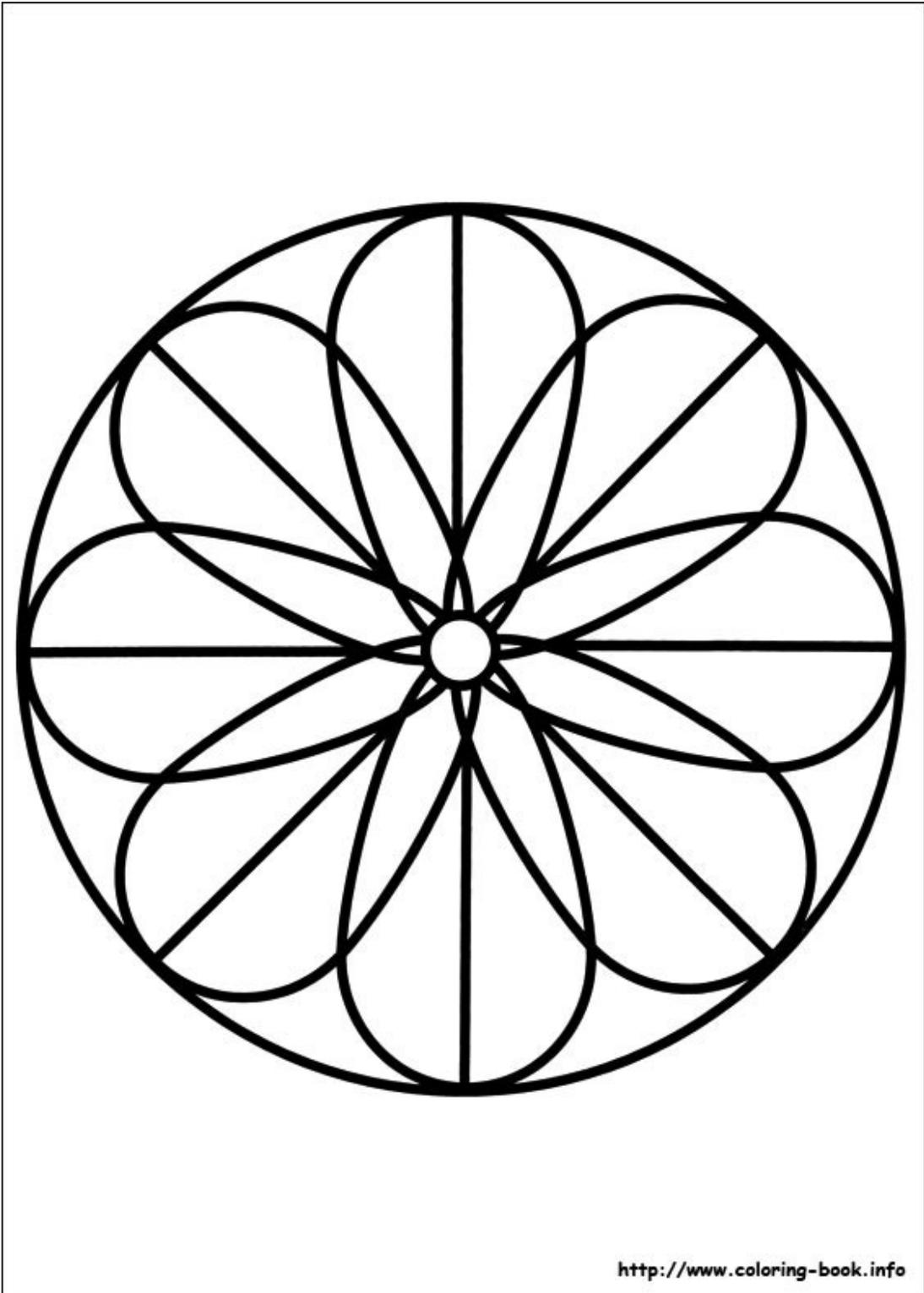


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