

Meditation

How to Meditate

You have probably heard the word “meditation” many times in your life. You may have seen pictures of people sitting in meditation with crossed legs and eyes closed. You may even know someone who meditates. But what exactly is meditation? What is its purpose?

In all traditions of Buddhism, followers meditate in order to still their minds, to let go of the running thoughts inside their brains and purify it of greed, hatred, and ignorance. If you stop to notice, thoughts go on from the moment of waking until sleep. They even appear in dreams. For Buddhists, meditation is a means of finding what lies beyond these thoughts. Of course, this takes practice.

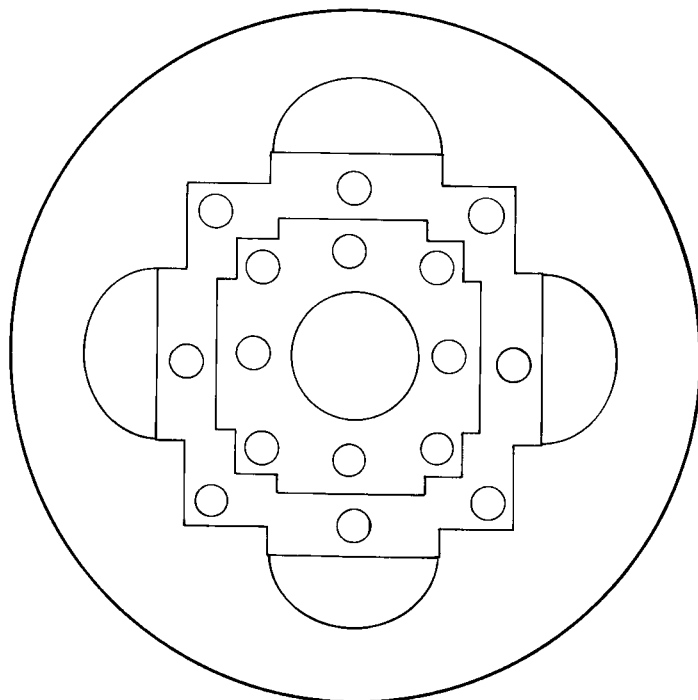
There are many forms of meditation. Usually, Buddhists sit still, spine straight and eyes closed. By focusing on their breath, they become more “present,” more aware of themselves. Although the stream of thoughts continues, the student simply watches them go by like clouds in the sky. Thus, he or she begins to be free of the grip of thinking.

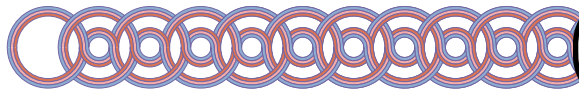
Zen Buddhists have some unusual entries to meditation practices. One such entry is called a koan, or a riddle. The master asks a puzzling question which the student must answer correctly—although it may take days to comprehend! Thus, the koan provides the means for meditation.

Tibetan Buddhists like to focus on *mandalas* during meditation. Mandalas are elaborate designs rich with color and detail. They are often circular, containing either portraits of various gods or intricate patterns. After meditating on the mandala, the student will close his or her eyes and try to visualize the picture. Thus, the mind is disciplined while the heart merges with the spirit of the mandala.

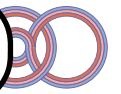
Extension

Try sitting quietly five minutes a day. Just sit and listen to the sounds around you, even the sound of your breathing. After a few days, try ten minutes. Keep a journal of your “quiet time” experiences.



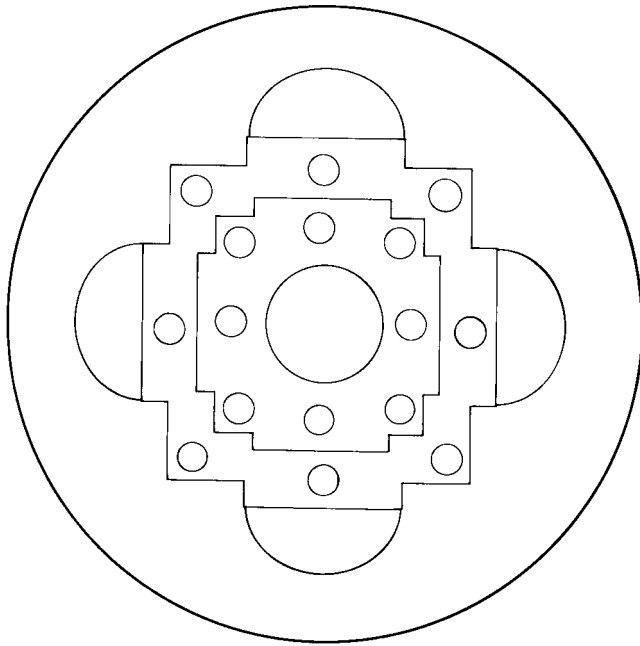


Mandalas

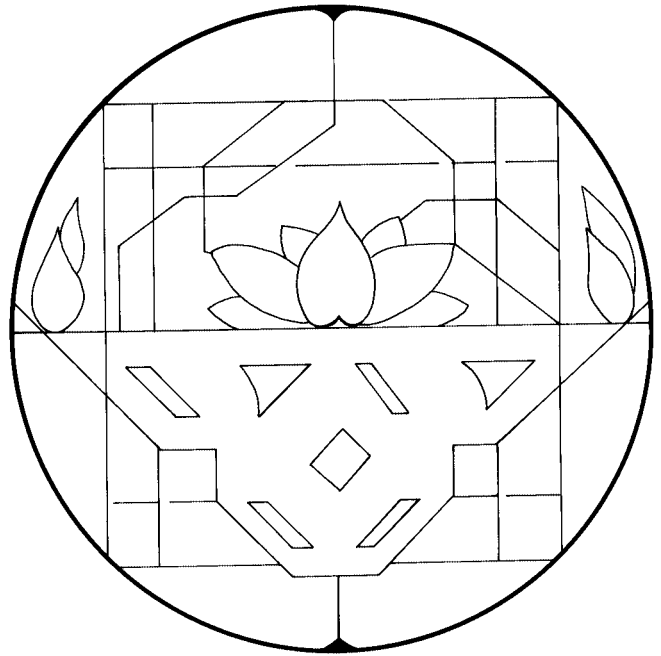


Directions: Below you will find three different mandalas. Color them. Then, try designing one of your own!

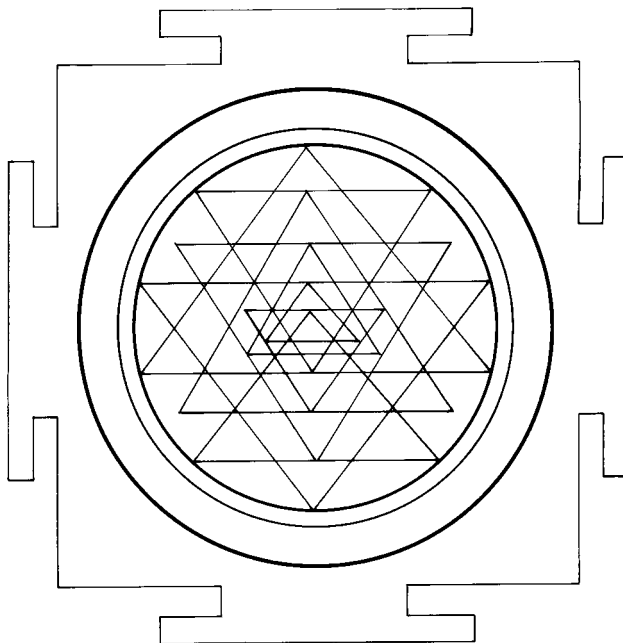
Typical Design



Tibetan



Sri Yantra



My Own Design