

welcome

Welcome to the divine playground of your soul. Here, Julian of Norwich's sweet blessing "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well" actually comes to pass. And none too soon. For many of us things haven't been going so well. We look around and wonder, "What happened? How did I get here?"

It isn't that we haven't been told what to do. We have. In many ways and by many teachers, we've been told to ask and receive. Asking sounds so easy and so fun. And sometimes, it works! But sometimes, nothing happens. Or the wrong thing happens. So we ask again. And again. And again. It seems no matter how much activity there is at the asking end, there's never quite enough on the receiving end.

Something is wrong, and we assume it must be with us. Maybe we're not asking correctly, or we're not clear enough about what we want, or our thoughts aren't in the right alignment, or perhaps our vibration is off, or we don't trust enough, or we're not saying the right affirmations, or—here's a scary thought—maybe we don't deserve to get what we want. Or, yikes, what if the universe doesn't actually work this way.

It's frustrating to keep knocking at a door that doesn't seem to want to open. Many of us are ready to give up.

Please don't give up. There's nothing wrong with you, and there's nothing wrong with the way the universe works. Furthermore, you are utterly and completely worthy of experiencing a life of abundance and joy. And—here's an important piece of good news—you already possess everything you need to create that life. Because you are a soul. That means you were born with innate spiritual intelligence. That means direct and immediate access to the Divine was built into you at

the factory. That means the creative powers of desire, imagination, will, and intention are all at your fingertips. Hafiz, the peerless Sufi mystic, knows this little secret about you:

All the talents of God are within you.

How could this be otherwise

When your soul

Derived from His

Genes!

—Hafiz, from “All the Talents of God,” *The Gift*,
translation by Daniel Ladinsky

Here’s another little secret: You chose this human experience, and you came to live in beauty, not in pain—to consume life, not to be consumed by it. You came to create life, and at the soul level, you know how to do that. You’ve just humanly forgotten, as we all have. But the truth is still alive and waiting. The great masters, the Buddha and Jesus, told us ages ago how to create an abundant life and—guess what?—they did *not* say get clear about what you want and ask for it. The Buddha said, “When conditions are sufficient there is a manifestation.” Jesus said, “[W]hen we pursue a right relationship with the Universal One and allow this relationship to realign our lives, we produce a condition of receptivity in which anything we need to help us complete our purpose in life will be supplied by the universe.”

Although they lived six hundred years and thousands of miles apart, and gave birth to two very different spiritual traditions, the Buddha and Jesus taught exactly the same thing: you create a beautiful life by creating fertile conditions, not by asking for anything. In my own words, what I hear them saying is this: You can have anything you want—why, you can have things you don’t even know you want—but not by focusing on them. Instead, put your undivided attention on your connection with the vibrant presence of the Divine within, and your life will change. It has to. It is the natural order.

Sound like a paradox? It is. It's the Great Paradox of Prosperity. Get used to paradox. It's one of the Divine's favorite games. So is creation. In *The Lotus and the Lily*, you will play with many creation toys. You will learn the cosmic power of the mandala. You will play with Soul Slinky waves of intention and gratitude. You will awaken your inner shaman and be amazed at what you can do. You will discover the power of naming your past and your future. And you will experience the generative power of your own voice.

It all sounds rather magical, but it isn't. It's natural order—the same natural order that produces an abundant harvest on a physical farm. A wise farmer will tell you that planting a seed takes a few seconds. The real value is in the preparation of the soil. Fertile fields produce lush crops. That abundant beautiful life you want? That's one very lush crop. So for the next twenty-eight days, you will walk your spiritual fields, plucking weeds, removing rocks, and nourishing your soil with twenty-eight essential spiritual truths. When the fields are ready, you will give yourself a special Soul Day. On that day, you will clarify your conditions and plant the seeds of your beautiful life in a highly charged and deeply personal Intention Mandala. Then you only have to watch what happens. Because when conditions are sufficient, there *will* be a manifestation.

These fields of the soul lie beyond our popular understanding of the law of attraction. This doesn't mean the law of attraction is wrong; it means that we've been limiting ourselves to one small corner of our creative capability. Why ask for one thing or another when you can create fertile conditions in which everything you need is supplied? Here's a comparison of the principles of Law of Attraction and those we'll be using:

Law of Attraction	The Lotus and the Lily
human at the center	divine at the center
how to ask	how to live
ask for things	create conditions
ego	soul
external	internal
desires	purpose
effort	effortless
control	allow
material goods	heaven on earth

Does heaven on earth sound implausible? It's not. The Buddha and Jesus pointed the way. All we have to do is follow.

Come. Out here, the pastures are beautiful and the harvest is rich. Out here, anything is possible. Out here, all the talents of your soul come out to play. Out here, all is well. More than well, all is divine. Everything is unfolding according to divine will. Welcome, you are on your way!

The Story Behind the Lotus and the Lily

I discovered the process described in this book the same way I discovered deep soul writing, which I introduced to readers in *Writing Down Your Soul*—on my knees. I stumbled onto deep soul writing trying to navigate a terrifying divorce. Out of sheer desperation, I picked up a pen and poured my woes onto the page. There, I made a startling discovery: the connection to Source is in your hands. You ask for guidance, and you receive it. It's that simple. Thousands of people have been making the connection ever since.

Thanks to *Writing Down Your Soul*, my career leapt from human-resources consultant to spiritual writer. This, I thought, was

a very good thing. When my book came out in early 2009, I happily traipsed around the country teaching deep soul writing. Every day brought new stories of lives changed by the guidance and comfort received on the page. But those trips were financed on my already-burdened credit cards. By November, I had to face the reality that I was bankrupt. I sat down with my son and told him how ashamed I was to be in such a pickle. I couldn't even say the word *bankrupt*; it came out as a little sob. My son, Jerry, wise before his years, said, "Mom, there's nothing to be ashamed of. I'm proud of you. You're doing the work you want to do. If bankruptcy is the next step, take it." With his words the shame dissolved, and I called a bankruptcy attorney. But his first available appointment wasn't until the following February. What was I supposed to do till then?

The next morning, I said my prayers and got in my sacred writing chair. I told Spirit all about my financial woes and my loving son and the appointment with the attorney. I asked a lot of hard questions: Why, if I'm doing the work I'm here to do, am I broke? How did I get here? What am I supposed to be learning? Where's the blessing in bankruptcy? I want a beautiful life! I want real prosperity. How do I create that? Tell me how to create a beautiful life, and I will do it.

Well, I received answers. I was told to write at the very deepest soul level every day of December. And I was told exactly what to write about and in what order.

Week 1: Spend a week in preparation. Learning how to create life is deep; you need to prepare yourself.

Week 2: Look back at your life. There are gifts buried in there that you haven't explored and don't understand.

Week 3: Release and forgive. You are full of old wounds that haven't been released, and until you release them, there is no room for the new to grow.

Week 4: Before you ask for anything, get clear about what you want and why you want it, so you are sure to create a life of purpose and joy.

This outline made sense to me. In fact, it sounded similar to what I'd been doing on my annual Soul Day. Every New Year's Day, I'd spend time in prayerful preparation, then I'd write about the year just completed and all the gifts and learnings I received, and finally, I'd talk over what I want for the new year.

This process had always worked, but it had been wildly effective on January 1, 2006. That year, no matter what I asked for, I received it. I said I was ready for my marketing partner, and five days later, the news and information outlet United Press International (UPI) invited me to write a weekly column. I said I was ready for my publishing partner, and book publisher Conari Press contacted me in June. I asked for a relationship, and met a man thirteen days later in my favorite restaurant. That year, 2006, was far and away my most magical year to date. I wanted another year like *that*.

On January 1, 2010, after four weeks of intense spiritual exploration, I felt ready to call in a magical new year. That morning, I woke early, made a pot of coffee, and headed to my writing room. I said my prayers and settled in for a day of divine dialogue. But when I reached for my journal, I noticed a bright yellow book, *You Are Here*, by Thich Nhat Hanh, at my feet. I began to read and couldn't stop. Thich Nhat Hanh kept drawing me deeper and deeper into his book with his gentle, loving explanation of the Buddha's great teachings. In a chapter on how everything is connected, I turned the page and stumbled upon a sentence: "When conditions are sufficient there is a manifestation."

I stopped and read it again. Then I read it out loud. Then I leapt out of my chair. My hands shot to my forehead. I raced in circles around my room gushing, "Oh my God! Oh my

God! Everything we think we know about manifestation is 180 degrees off!" I ran to my white board and scribbled "When conditions are sufficient there is a manifestation" in green marker. I stared at the sentence, letting this deeper understanding of manifestation settle into my bones. Here I was, wanting to manifest a beautiful life, but I had my eyes on the wrong half of the equation. I was focused on what I wanted, but it's not about wanting. It's about creating the conditions that organically produce what I want. Conditions first; manifestation second. From the moment I read that sentence, my Soul Day changed forever. Heck, my whole life changed forever.

I spent the rest of the day alternating between reading *You Are Here* and talking over what I was learning with the Voice—what I call the speaker of the divine guidance that appears on the page when I'm soul writing. The Voice and I had rich conversations about the full implications of "when conditions are sufficient."

Suddenly, I wondered if this is what Jesus meant when he said, "Seek first the kingdom and God's righteousness and all else shall be provided" (Matthew 6:33). Surely the two great masters, the Buddha and Jesus, would have to have taught the same thing.

I jumped out of my chair and searched my bookshelves for *Blessings of the Cosmos* by Neil Douglas-Klotz. I knew from spending time with his earlier book, *Prayers of the Cosmos*, that Jesus spoke Aramaic, a rich Middle Eastern language that carries literal, metaphorical, and mystical meanings simultaneously. When the gospels were written in Greek and then translated into Latin and finally English, much of the majesty and impact of Jesus's words were washed out along the way. In *Blessings*, Douglas-Klotz says that in English we read, "Seek first the kingdom," but in Aramaic, Jesus's words are much more thrilling and clear. To give us a sense for what first-century Aramaic listeners heard, he translates "Seek first the kingdom" into a whole page of poetry. In the end, he captures Jesus's intent with this summary: "Here Jesus says that when we

pursue a right relationship with the Universal One and allow this relationship to realign our lives, we produce a condition of receptivity in which anything we need to help us complete our purpose in life will be supplied by the universe.”

With the wisdom of the two great masters stirring in my heart, I made an Intention Mandala for 2010. (Later in the book, I’ll explain exactly what a mandala is, why it’s important, and how an Intention Mandala fits into the Lotus and the Lily process.) It had pictures of what I wanted, but those images were on the periphery of the circular mandala, not the center. At the heart of my mandala, I drew a lily and on each petal wrote one of my conditions—the six actions I take every day to live a life aligned with Spirit and become the fertile soil in which my beautiful life can grow. Then I gave my mandala a name: “My Breakthrough Year.”

I posted “My Breakthrough Year” on the wall and began a daily mandala prayer practice. Every morning, I stood in front of my mandala, handed my desires over to Spirit, and announced aloud that I would spend the day focusing on my part of the equation—living my conditions. I talked to my mandala every morning, and from its position overlooking my computer, it spoke to me all day.

Forty days later, I had my appointment with the bankruptcy attorney. He explained the process and asked if I had any questions. “One,” I said, “I made \$12,000 in January. Is that a problem?”

“Well, yeah, it’s a problem,” he said. “You’re not bankrupt.”

After the appointment, I drove to my favorite holy place, St. Michael’s Shrine in Tarpon Springs, Florida. There, I poured tears of gratitude onto my soul-journal page, thanking the angels and Spirit for leading me to the teachings of the Buddha and Jesus. “How can I thank you?” I wrote. The answer was simple and clear: teach it. I’ve taught the process I discovered, which I call “the Lotus and the Lily,” ever since.

And now, here you are.

How to Use This Book

This book, *The Lotus and the Lily*, will lead you on a dance with the wisdom of your wild soul—the part of you that is authentic, alive, and hungry for the full adventure of life. Your soul has never been wounded and never can be. It emerged from divine ground, and it will return to divine ground. In between, it is here to play in the fields of life.

Most of us have only a cursory relationship with our brilliant soul. We hear occasional tapping on the window—perhaps a nudge to explore an idea or ask a bigger question or consider a new possibility. But we rarely sit down and say, “I’m here. I’m listening. What do you want?” In *Writing Down Your Soul*, I share what can happen when you step out of conscious mind for a few moments and give the extraordinary Voice room to speak. Now, here in *The Lotus and the Lily*, you will use deep soul writing and many other delightful spiritual practices to give your wild soul all the room it needs to create a truly beautiful and abundant life.

There are thirty experiences, one each day. The first twenty-eight are divided into four week-long explorations:

Week 1: Prepare—step into your natural spiritual power, set your intention, and create your own ritual and prayer

Week 2: Look Back—uncover all the gifts in the life you’ve created to date

Week 3: Create Space—make room for the new by releasing and forgiving the old

Week 4: Look Forward—identify what you want in alignment with your soul’s desires

After twenty-eight days of rich exploration, you will spend Day 29 setting up your Soul Day. And then, on Day 30, you will give yourself something precious—a day alone with your soul. On this day, you will clarify your all-important conditions. Then,

with your conditions in hand, you will make a highly charged and deeply personal Intention Mandala. The mandala, as you are about to learn, not only holds everything you want, but it also spins out into the universe to draw it all to you.

The mandala sounds exciting, and it is, but don't jump ahead. There is a reason the days progress the way they do. They build gently one upon the other until you know you are ready for your Soul Day. Without the twenty-eight days of preparation, you could create a life, but it might not be the life you really want.

The Structure of Each Day

The Lotus and the Lily process is deep, but it is not work. The soul does not work. At the soul level, life is divine play. Approach the content of the day from the vantage point of soul play, and you'll discover that even the deepest exploration can be a source of delight. Each day begins with a page or two about the day's subject, then invites you to play in the following ways:

Reflect. Big questions crack you open and allow big information to flow in. Ponder these questions before you dive into your deep soul writing.

Write. Each day has a sample deep-soul-writing prompt to stimulate your imagination. Take any parts that speak to you, but allow your own conversation to come through your hands, onto the page.

Explore. Pick and choose any activities that call to you, or create your own.

Nourish. This short, powerful, soul-nourishing statement holds the essence of the day. Savor it aloud. Feel its wisdom enter your being. Write each statement on a card or in your journal, and watch what happens as these jewels accumulate.

Want More? If you want more, dive into any of the books and resources listed for additional information.

Paradox Alerts

As you walk through the Lotus and the Lily, you'll stumble upon the occasional "Paradox Alert." In his book *Psychology and Alchemy*, Carl Jung said, "Only the paradox comes anywhere near to comprehending the fullness of life." You'll discover many paradoxes in your own deep soul explorations. When you find one, stop and look inside yourself. Capture all your divine puzzles. Mull them over. They hold clues to the miracle of life.

Your Journal

You will do lots of deep soul writing, so get a journal in which to capture your "Nourish" statements and "Paradox Alerts" and all kinds of other insights and surprises. Perhaps you'd like to write under the wise, loving eyes of the owl on the cover of *My Soul Pages*, the companion journal to *Writing Down Your Soul*. Whatever journal you choose, dedicate it to this exploration. Almost everyone who goes through the Lotus and the Lily repeats the process and makes a new mandala the following year. Just imagine how exciting it will be to look back at several mandalas and journals and watch how your soul has created life over the years.

Deep Soul Writing

If you've read *Writing Down Your Soul*, you know that deep soul writing is not journaling. It is a unique but easy writing process that moves you quickly out of high-stress beta brain waves into slower, calmer theta brain waves. It is in theta that we have access to true creativity, breakthrough thinking, and divine guidance.

Three things happen when you write at the soul level: You exit the conscious mind. You get in touch with your authentic self, your soul. And you connect with and activate the divine Voice of wisdom within.

There are seven simple steps to transforming your writing practice and get into the theta brain-wave state:

1. Set your intention to connect with your divine Voice.
2. Address the Voice by name. If you have a special name, as many deep soul writers do, use that. If not, simply write, "Dear Voice."
3. Write by hand. It's possible to get into theta while writing on the computer, but looking at a screen pulls most of us back into our conscious mind. If you can, write with a pen so you feel the presence of the Voice in your hand.
4. Activate all five senses:
 - Vision is automatically engaged.
 - The parts of your brain responsible for hearing are firing even if you write in total silence, but if you want to add sound, you can play sacred chants, the *Theta Music* CD (available at my website), or anything else that appeals to you.
 - Touch is automatically engaged.
 - Activate the sense of smell with essential oils, flowers, candles—anything that feels right.
 - Drink pure water after you write to bring your wisdom and insights into your body at the cellular level.
5. Ask lots of open-ended questions. In *Writing Down Your Soul*, there is extensive information on questions that work and questions that don't.
6. Write fast without editing or judging.
7. Be grateful. Say thank you, because you were heard.

One of the amazing discoveries of deep soul writing is that the more time we spend in theta while writing, the more eas-

ily we slip into theta throughout the day. A particularly rich opportunity to experience a natural state of theta is during the semidrowsy moments before you are fully awake. Lie still on the pillow and notice what's happening inside. You can also slip into theta while meditating, praying, driving, walking, and taking a shower—a.k.a., the phone booth to God. (Don't laugh. I get so much information in the shower, I had to find waterproof paper.) For more information on deep soul writing and theta, please visit janetconner.com.

Foundational Truths

I'm not your teacher. I don't have your answers. My saying this may surprise you, but think about it—how could I, when I don't know your soul's purpose? It's possible that the very thing you are wrestling with—and trying so hard to make go away—is exactly what you're here to unravel. So I don't have your answers, and I don't think anyone else does either.

What I do have are powerful processes that help you activate your own innate spiritual intelligence, communicate at the soul level, and find the answers only you can find. Those are the answers that will change your life.

So who *are* your teachers? Well, for starters, they are you, your soul, and life itself. And then there are our master teachers, the Buddha and Jesus, and the many saints and mystics who reached the highest state of consciousness, called *perfection* or *divine union* or *Christ consciousness*. In the Lotus and the Lily process, we step back in time and stand in their holy footprints for a moment. From there, we can glimpse life as they saw it and allow their profound teachings to enter us—body, mind, and soul.

Here are a few foundational truths of the Lotus and the Lily:

1. The Divine lives in paradox. When you stumble upon a paradox, pay attention. Wrestle with it, and you will learn something about the mysteries of life.

2. Modern science is catching up to what the ancient mystics knew: We are an inseparable whole. Everyone and everything is connected in a verdant sea of information, energy, and potential.
3. When the conscious mind is not operative, information can flow to you from anywhere in the universe.
4. The masters of all traditions perceived the truth and shared it. We are not discovering new truths; we are listening to ancient ones with fresh ears.
5. Answers fill us. Questions open us. We don't want answers; we want bigger questions.
6. Intention and gratitude are two essential inseparable waves. They bless everything they touch.
7. You have the power to create, and you have the power to discreate what you have made.
8. You build an abundant life by creating conditions for receptivity, not by wanting.
9. You don't actually want anything. What you want is the freedom the thing represents.
10. The mandala is the perfect symbol of the union of the human and the Divine. It is a three-dimensional hologram that generates a dynamic relationship with all that is.
11. There are two engines of change: the mandala and full-body spoken prayer. Combine these two consciously and unconsciously every day, and your world will change. It has to. It is the natural order.
12. When one creates a personal universe of joy, all are lifted. As your life becomes sweeter, you kiss the world.

A Few Words on Time

The Lotus and the Lily is laid out over thirty days. Many people go through the process in November and Decem-

ber, so they are ready to have a Soul Day and create a new Intention Mandala on January 1. I teach a live telecourse on the process every November to December for that reason. But you don't have to do it then. Go through this program thirty days before a special date, like a birthday, or any time you feel the urge to create or recreate your world. Whatever date you choose for your Soul Day, be sure to give yourself thirty days to play through the process beforehand, so you can have the whole experience.

For some, thirty days is not enough. They find they want to linger over some of the experiences. If you are going through the Lotus and the Lily with a group, try to keep pace with them. Mark the parts you want to revisit, but give yourself at least a taste of the days the rest of the group is experiencing. That way you can participate in the group discussions. You will find that you learn something in the discussion that you might not have discovered on your own. Group sharing is often the richest part of the entire experience. (Go to janetconner.com for information on group-facilitation guides and certification.)

If you are going through the program on your own, progress at your own pace. If you feel you want more than a day for an experience, take more than a day. But please, don't let yourself get stalled on a particular experience trying to finish it "completely" or "perfectly." These rich spiritual practices make up the adventure of a whole lifetime. Each time you return and repeat the process, you'll have a deeper experience. The Lotus and the Lily is not a one-time experience. It is a way of living, a way of walking; it's an ongoing dance of creating life. And as with all dances, we move more easily with practice.

Don't Forget Your Body

You are an embodied soul. That means what your soul experiences, your body experiences. So treat your whole self with tender loving care. Here are a few gifts you can give yourself:

Time. We stay so busy that the truth of our lives can't catch up with us. Set aside thirty minutes or more for the Lotus and the Lily experiences. This gift of time will return to you a thousandfold.

Silence. There is no substitute for silence, because it is in silence that the soul speaks. Turn off the radio; put down your iPod. Make friends with silence.

A media diet. Cut down or eliminate your consumption of fear-filled media. If nothing else, do not watch TV, especially the news, at night. Don't take fear to bed with you.

Prayer and meditation. Spiritual practice is a muscle that strengthens with use. Use those muscles.

Movement. The physical body holds toxins. Throughout this program, you will release many deeply embedded toxic thoughts and beliefs. Help your body release them with yoga, walking, tai chi, massage—something to get your muscles moving.

Water. Drinking pure water helps your body release toxins. Drink a lot of it.

Sleep. Most people report they need more sleep while doing this process. Give yourself the gift of sweet rest. Sleeping more will also give you the benefit of more dreams.

Nurturing. Perhaps that means taking a long walk in nature, staying away from toxic people, walking a labyrinth, or renewing an old friendship with a sacred text. Whatever it is, do it, and notice how you feel.

Personal amnesty. When doing deep soul writing, a woman in Minneapolis was berating herself on the page for yet another failure. The Voice stopped her cold and wrote, "Grant yourself an amnesty. Apply a peace treaty to your heart. You are no longer your own enemy." Take these words to heart. They are a gift for you, too.

You've already given yourself one important gift: you're here. You've heard the call that your soul wants to create life,

and you've shown up, ready to begin. Read on—there's magic waiting for you in the mandala.

What Are Mandalas and Why Do We Make Them?

The moon is most happy
When it is full.

And the sun always looks
Like a perfectly minted gold coin
That was just polished
And placed in flight
By God's playful Kiss.

And so many varieties of fruit
Hang plump and round
From branches that seem like a Sculptor's hands.

I see the beautiful curve of a pregnant belly
Shaped by a soul within,
And the Earth itself,
And the planets and the Spheres—

I have gotten the hint:
There is something about circles
The Beloved likes.

—Hafiz, from "Circles," *I Heard God Laughing*,
Translation by Daniel Ladinsky

At the time I made "My Breakthrough Year," on January 1, 2010, with my conditions on a lily at the center of a circle, I didn't label what I'd drawn a "mandala." But thirty days later, when the bankruptcy attorney told me I'd made so much money I was no longer bankrupt, I stood in front of my round drawing, stared at it, and wondered, "What is this?" I sensed

there had to be something about the shape because I had made several traditional rectangular vision boards in other years, but none of them had been as miraculous as the circular vision board I made in 2006 or this new one in 2010. I searched online and quickly discovered I'd made much more than a round vision board; I'd made a "mandala."

I became hungry to know more about mandalas. I turned to my Voice. "Why," I asked, "does a mandala make such a difference? Show me." Two weeks later, I was awakened in the middle of the night with a picture of my mandala floating in my head. The invisible hands holding it vertically in front of me began to slowly rotate the paper until it was completely horizontal, and I could see only the edge.

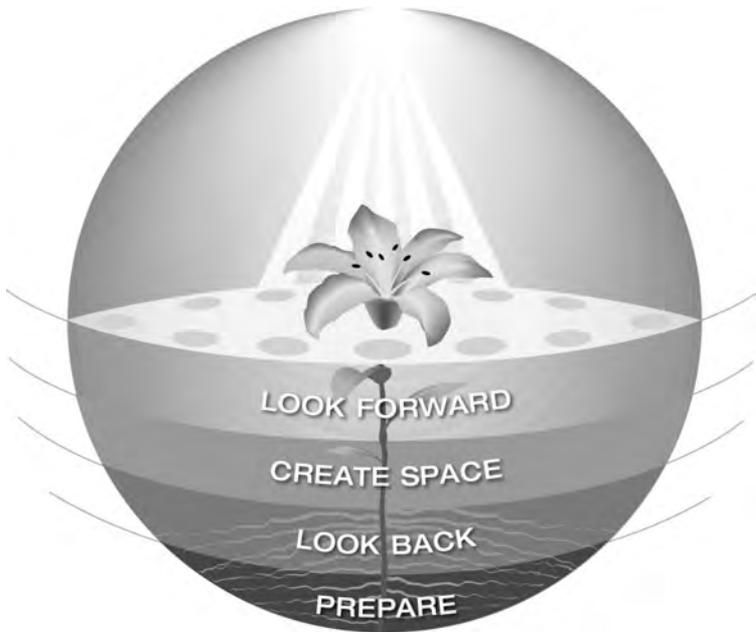
When it reached full horizontal position, I saw that it wasn't a piece of paper at all. It was the central slice of a three-dimensional sphere floating in clear black space. The edge of my mandala was the middle line of the sphere, like the equator on earth. Below my mandala were three slender gold threads, like latitude lines. The three gold threads divided the lower half of the sphere into four sections, which I knew were the four weeks of deep work I'd done prior to creating my mandala.

Above my mandala was a cone of golden light pouring onto the lily from a small hole at the top of the sphere. I felt I was seeing confirmation that our conditions are our connection with the Divine. I could see my desires on the periphery of my mandala, but the bulk of the light was falling on the lily that held my conditions.

I stared hard at the sphere, trying to capture every detail in my memory. When I relaxed my attention, I noticed that the golden threads of my sphere were connected to other spheres, which were connected to still others, reaching into infinity. Everything and everyone was connected in clear black space.

I glanced back at my personal sphere because something was moving. The lily petals were coming to life. A stem began to

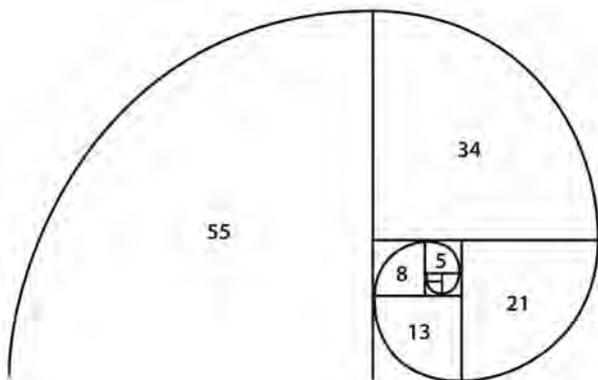
grow down from the petals. Then a couple of leaves sprouted and finally roots spread out from the stem. I could see—literally—how everything in my life had led to, fed, and become my present.



When the vision was complete, I whispered thank you and slipped into a sweet sleep. The next morning, I thanked the Voice for this extraordinary image. On my own, I said, I would never have realized a two-dimensional mandala is really a three-dimensional globe. But I had one question the vision hadn't answered. "How," I wrote, "can I move my mandala—my life and myself—up closer and closer to the Light?" My hand wrote two words in big capital letters: *SAY YES!* I smiled. Of course! I had put my intentions out there; now all I had to do was say yes to everything heaven arranges—yes to guidance; yes to invitations, whether I understand them or not; yes to ideas; yes to intuition; yes to urges; yes to life. I grabbed a

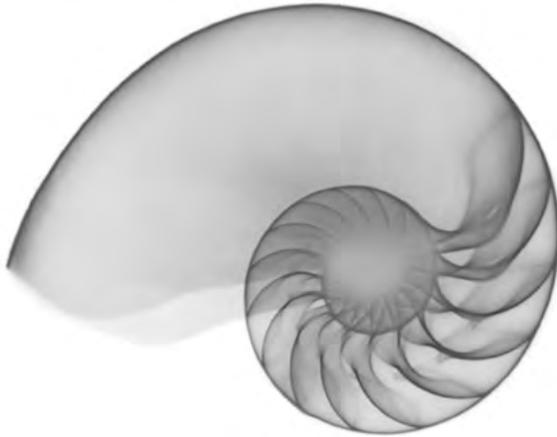
piece of paper, wrote *yes!* in huge letters, and taped it to my bedroom wall. Now, when I open my eyes, I see the call to *yes!*

My first call to yes was to learn about mandalas. I began with *Mandala: Journey to the Center* by Bailey Cunningham, founder of the Mandala Project. This book, filled with beautiful pictures that demonstrate the presence of mandalas in every form and aspect of life, was the perfect introduction. Look up: the sky is full of giant mandalas—our earth, the planets, stars, galaxies. Look in: our world is constructed of tiny mandalas—atoms and subatomic particles. Look around: everything is a mandala—your eye, a volcano, snowflakes, sunflowers, spider webs. Our world is a mandala, and everything in it is arranged according to the golden ratio, an ancient Indian formula introduced to the West in the thirteenth century by the brilliant Italian mathematician Fibonacci. Have you heard of Fibonacci numbers? They are an infinite sequence in which each number is the sum of the two before. Begin with zero and 1 and then $0+1=1$, $1+1=2$, $2+1=3$, $3+2=5$, $5+3=8$, $8+5=13$, $13+8=21$, etc. This sequence is the structure of the Golden Spiral on which all life is based.



Every living thing follows this sequence. The arrangements of artichoke leaves, pine-cone bracts, sunflower seeds, fern fronds, and tree branches are all living expressions of

Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Spiral. A slice of a nautilus shell displays this geometric form perfectly. Look: life itself is a living, breathing mandala.



From our earliest history, humans have intuited the power and importance of the circle. In her gorgeous *Sacred Geometry Oracle Deck*, Francene Hart explains why: “This most basic of geometric shapes contains within it a doorway to inner realms that has informed and inspired cultures and individuals since the beginnings of humankind.” Our first art, a pattern of concentric circles leading to a center point, was pounded into a rock 50,000 years ago by Aborigines in Australia. Our earliest spiritual gathering places were mandalas. Newgrange, a circular mound of earth protecting tombs and passages, was constructed in Ireland in 3200 BCE. Only in the 1960s did an Irish professor discover that it is aligned perfectly with sunrise on the winter solstice. Our most famous and mysterious Neolithic sacred site is Stonehenge. We do not know why it was built or how it was used, but we can’t miss that it is a massive stone mandala. All spiritual traditions express the union of the human and the divine with this sacred geometric shape. The Native American medicine wheel, the dome of a mosque, the labyrinth and rose

window at Chartres, Celtic crosses, the yin-yang symbol—all are mandalas. But perhaps no culture has perfected the mandala like the Tibetan Buddhists. The intricacy and beauty of a Tibetan sand mandala simply take the breath away.

To paraphrase Hafiz, there is something about circles that *humanity* loves. Why? Because the circle has no beginning and no end. It is the picture of wholeness, of unity, of endless potential. But it's not a static picture. The mandala is alive. As Bailey Cunningham says in *Mandala: Journey to the Center*, the mandala "is both a symbol and *manifestation* of creation" (emphasis added). C. G. Jung was captivated by this manifestation ability. He spent a lifetime exploring the transformative power of the mandala. In his memoir, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung described how he began to work with mandalas in 1916:

I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time. With the help of these drawings, I could observe my psychic transformation from day to day.

Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is: "Formation, Transformation, Eternal Mind's eternal recreation." And that is the self, the wholeness of the personality, which . . . cannot tolerate self-deceptions.

My mandalas were cryptograms In them I saw the self—that is, my whole being—actively at work.

Jung wrote several books on the transformative power of the mandala, including *Psychology and Alchemy* and *Mandala Symbolism*. After working with hundreds of clients and their mandalas, Jung observed that the mandala is

a kind of central point within the psyche, to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy. The energy of

the central point is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to *become what one is* [Jung's italics]. . . . Although the centre is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the self—the paired opposites that make up the total personality.

I can attest that there is a driving force to become what my mandala depicts, both the conditions at the center and the desires at the periphery. But it's not something I consciously manage or control. This is a very important point. If someone had told me on January 1, 2010, as I was completing my mandala, that in thirty-one days I would no longer be bankrupt, I'd have said it was impossible. But on the soul level, it was not only possible, but it was also easy and perhaps even inevitable.

Jung explained this miraculous power: "Most mandalas have an intuitive, irrational character and, through their symbolical content, exert a retroactive influence on the unconscious. They therefore possess a 'magical' significance . . . whose possible efficacy was never consciously felt" (*Mandala Symbolism*). This is a great relief. It means that you do not have to, nor should you, have conscious control over everything you put on your mandala. Lao Tzu knows why:

Trying to control the future
is like trying to take the master carpenter's place.
When you handle the master carpenter's tools,
chances are that you'll cut yourself.

—*Tao Te Ching*, verse 74, Translation by Stephen Mitchell

There is something far greater than individual will at work in the mandala. To Jung it appeared as if "the solution, seemingly of its own accord, appears out of nature . . . felt as 'grace'" (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*).

No one understood this mysterious grace better than Jose and Miriam Arguelles. Their definitive book *Mandala*, long out of print, is my essential mandala resource. Every time I open it, I find something deep to ponder. They begin by explaining the principle of the center, which is the source of the mandala's energy: "The center is the beginning of the Mandala as it is the beginning and origin of all form The center is symbolic of the eternal potential." Then they explain how we work with that eternal potential:

Essentially, each human being is a Mandala . . . ; but this Mandala must be developed and created anew for each individual The Mandala may be regarded as an engine of change, releasing energy to the extent to which the individual using it and concentrating upon it is capable of identifying himself with it. Ultimately, the Mandala leads its user to a visualization and realization of the source of energy within.

I love the term *an engine of change*. It sets my heart singing. But *how* is a mandala an engine of change? For that we need a dose of modern physics. Einstein opened the door when he said, "A human being is part of the whole, called by us 'universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness." In *Science and the Akashic Field*, Ervin Laszlo, the great systems theorist, explains,

[R]esearchers are rediscovering what Einstein realized and ancient cultures have always known: that we are linked by more subtle and encompassing connections [T]here is not only matter and energy in the universe, but also a more subtle yet real element In-formation of this kind connects all things in space and time—indeed it connects all things *through* space and time.

But *how* is it all connected? My dream showed everything floating in black space and connected by golden threads. Physicists call that black space the Akashic Field. *Akasha* is an ancient Sanskrit word for the invisible ether in which everything is connected. In 1907, Nikola Tesla, the father of modern communication technology, first postulated that this invisible element exists. In an unpublished paper, he described an “original medium,” a force field that becomes matter when energy acts on it.

With modern equipment, scientists can now observe the effects of this original medium—a quantum field of energy that remains after all other forms of energy are removed at absolute zero. They call this primal energy the Quantum Vacuum, Akashic Field, or A-field.

It may be a vacuum, but it sure isn't empty. Laszlo explains that the Akashic Field is superfluid, superdense, frictionless, and positively alive with information. Everything in the universe is not only immersed in the Akashic Field, but everything also sends energy and information back and forth to everything else. This exchange of energy is called quantum entanglement, and it means nothing is separate. Laszlo's startling conclusion is that “all matter is conscious . . . there is no categorical divide between matter and mind” (*Science and the Akashic Field*).

Well, if science can point to the presence of the Akashic Field, then perhaps my best sources of information on the power of the mandala and my vision of the floating sphere were the masters and teachers of the Akashic Record. The Akashic Record is a name for the countless traces of information that have passed through that quantum medium throughout time. Many cultures sensed the presence of this unseen library and gave it a special name; the Hebrew Bible, for example, calls it the Book of Life. This information is so precious that it is protected by highly evolved beings called masters and teachers. With training, you can learn to open your own records. Through the brilliant Akashic Record trainer and reader,

Lauralyn Bunn, I asked the masters and teachers to please explain what I was shown. They said:

First and foremost, it has geometric information. It is a mathematical representation through symbology of that which is law. The image contains sacred symbols. The gold lines are the grid of information transfer and communication. The black sphere is not a void; it is black as in the law of photography. Black contains all that is yet to be manifest.

Wouldn't Jung have been thrilled to hear this? As much time as he spent studying the effects of mandalas, he did not know that the mandala is a three-dimensional sphere or that it sends and receives information. This 3-D aspect matters because, Laszlo explains, it means that our intentions, our thoughts, our desires—our mandalas—are not only sparks of information that go out into an information-dense universe, but they also go out as three-dimensional holograms. And those holograms have seemingly magical powers. Laszlo admits this image of information as hologram “boggles the mind,” but, he says, it makes perfect sense in a quantum, everything-is-connected-to-everything universe. “Through the holograms created in and conveyed by the A-field, things are directly ‘in-formed’ by the things that are most like them,” he says in *Science and the Akashic Field*.

This means that my mandala—my 3-D sphere hologram—resonates only with other holograms holding similar information, like a tuning fork that vibrates only with tuning forks calibrated to the same pitch. And because this resonance happens in a fluid universe, it can happen very, very fast. “[T]hrough torsion waves in the vacuum the A-field links things and events in the universe at staggering speeds—a billion times the velocity of light,” said Laszlo (*Science and the Akashic Field*). As I read this, I realized my mandala was not only a hologram, but like a hologram, it also moved. It released

energy and received energy. It released information and received information. My mandala was alive. It was a wheel. It spun. It moved.



With that level of information, energy, and speed at play, I guess going from bankrupt to bankful in thirty days wasn't such a miracle after all. Nor are all the other stories I've heard from people in my Lotus and the Lily telecourses, who tell me about the intentions on their Intention Mandalas coming to pass practically before the ink is dry.

In light of the magical properties of our quantum universe, Jung's poetic description of a mandala now makes perfect sense. Quoting Goethe's *Faust*, Jung said the mandala is "Formation, Transformation, Eternal Mind's eternal recreation." I didn't understand this when I first read it, but now I see that when we create our mandala, we *form* it and, in the process, form ourselves. Then, as we live with it and release its powerful intentions and commitments, we are *transformed*, and the whole miraculous adventure happens according to the playful laws of Eternal Mind.

There was a woman in the sixteenth century who understood the laws of this Eternal Mind better than any other woman of her time or perhaps any time. In *Love Poems from God*, Daniel Ladinsky calls St. Teresa of Avila “undoubtedly the most influential female saint in the Western world.” These lines from one of her poems, “The Grail,” give us a window into her profound understanding of how the world works. It makes you wonder if she saw the universe the way modern science sees the universe.

They are like shy, young school kids—time and space
before the woman and the man who are
intimate with God.

The realized soul can play with this universe
the way a child can a ball.

After spending a few months in deep exploration of the meaning and magic of the mandala, I’ve reached a few conclusions. As you move through the Lotus and the Lily and make and live with your own mandala, you will reach your own. But for me, the Intention Mandala is

Organic: It comes from within; no one can make one for you.

Creative: It generates, releases, and receives energy, information, and potential.

Alive: It moves, it spins, it connects, it attracts.

Mysterious: You make it, but you don’t consciously know what you are making. You use it, but you can’t control it. It creates, but you don’t really understand how.

Paradoxical: It comes from you, but it is greater than you.

Ancient: It holds truths our ancestors knew millennia ago.

Mystical: It illustrates and holds the union of your small one with the One.