

Dr. Gil Noam

Peter H. Reynolds

Sara Smith



BUILDING BELONGING: THE POWER OF CIRCLES IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Poll Question



Do you use circles in your classroom?

Times of Crisis

Translates into urgent need to support teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

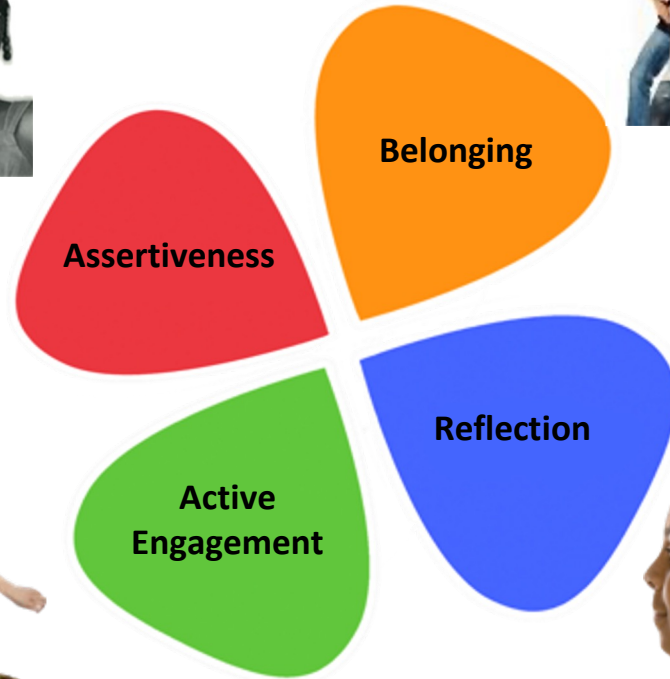
- Pandemic
- Learning loss
- Mental health surge
- School shootings
- Climate crisis
- Economic uncertainty
- Authoritarianism and racism
- War in Europe and Middle East



A scenic landscape featuring a winding river, a road, and mountains at sunrise or sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over the scene. The river flows through a valley, reflecting the light. A road curves along the right bank of the river. In the foreground, there are red flowers. The background shows a range of mountains under a hazy sky.

**“Go upstream”
Need a positive frame**

The Clover Model



A Developmental Process Theory



Pre-School
Ages 0-5

Elementary School
Ages 6-10

Early Adolescence
Ages 11-15

Late
Adolescence
Ages 16+



Connect
& Thrive!



STORY-POWERED
CIRCLES

Focus:

Belonging & Reflection

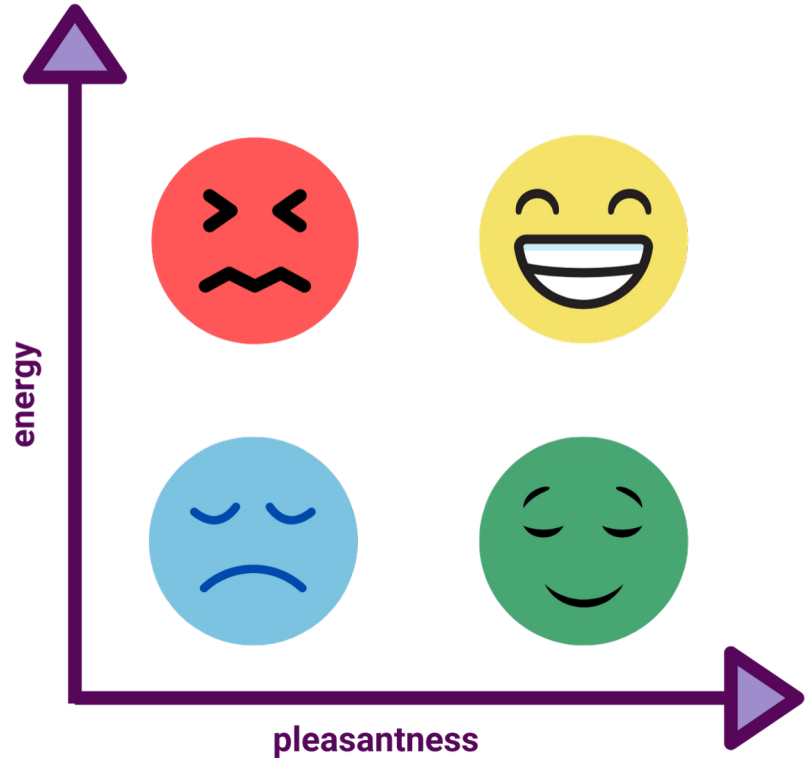
Belonging is about developing strong relationships, group acceptance and group identity. Humans are social, and group belonging is **essential for well-being**.



Reflection describes the human need to create and make meaning. It involves making sense of one's own experiences, emotions and thoughts to create a **sense of personal identity**.

Check-in:
**Mood
Meter**

Which color are you today?



Group Agreements



Let's review our group agreements!

Reflect



1. Can someone summarize for the group what happened last session?
2. What are some things that you feel are going well in our circle?
3. Is there anything we want to add or change about our circle?

Group Pledge

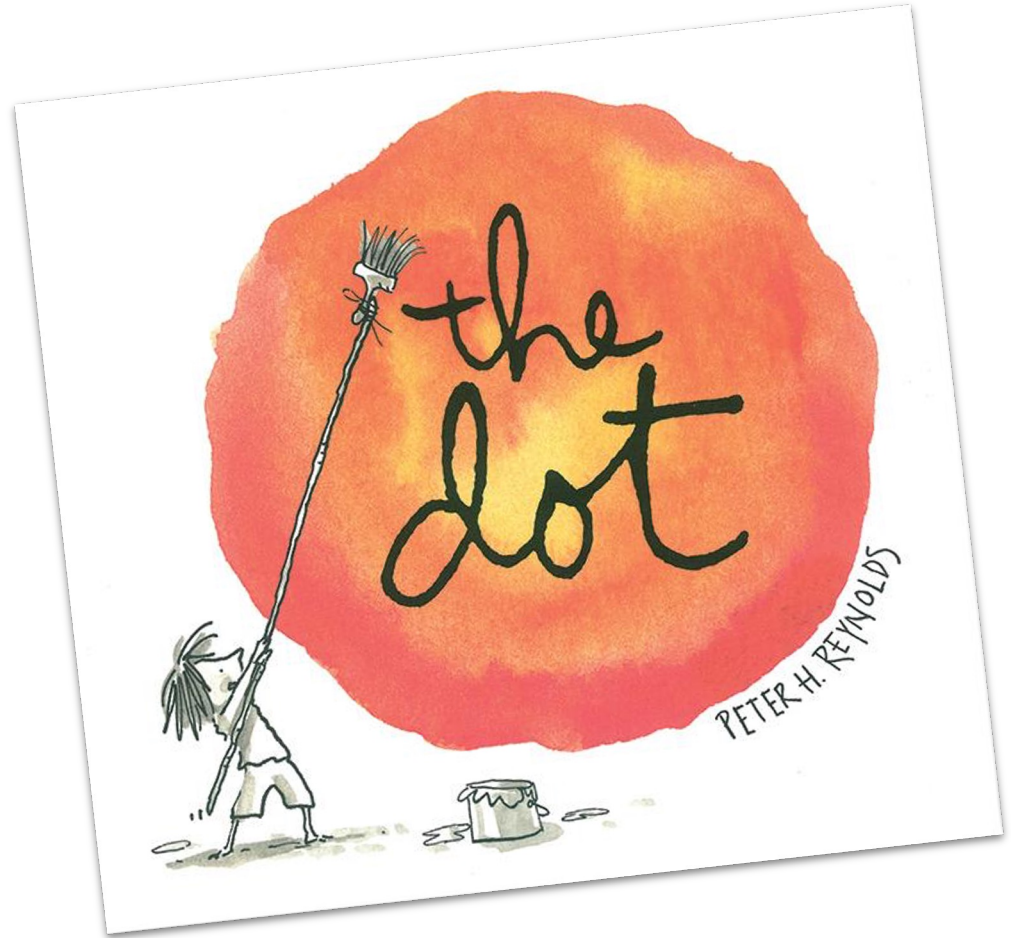


We sit in a circle. We all speak up and try hard to listen. We get to know each other and our teacher to understand each other better.

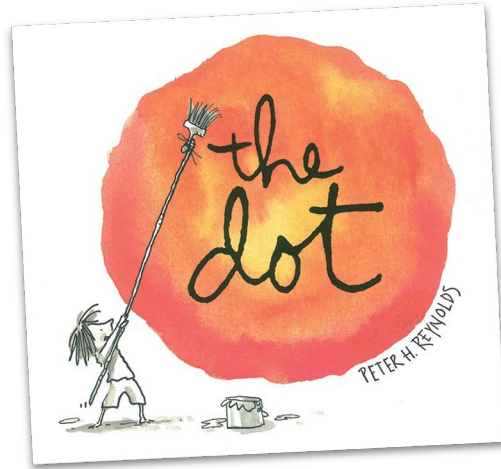
Today's activity is:

Mandala Designs

Book



Book Talk



How did Vashti feel about her first dot right after she made it?

Did her thoughts about her dot change after she saw it framed in gold?

What do you think made Vashti brave enough to show all of her work in the art show?

Let's create and share some of our own work!

Activity:
**Mandala
Designs**

Relationship
Building Skills:

Sharing ideas
& Vulnerability

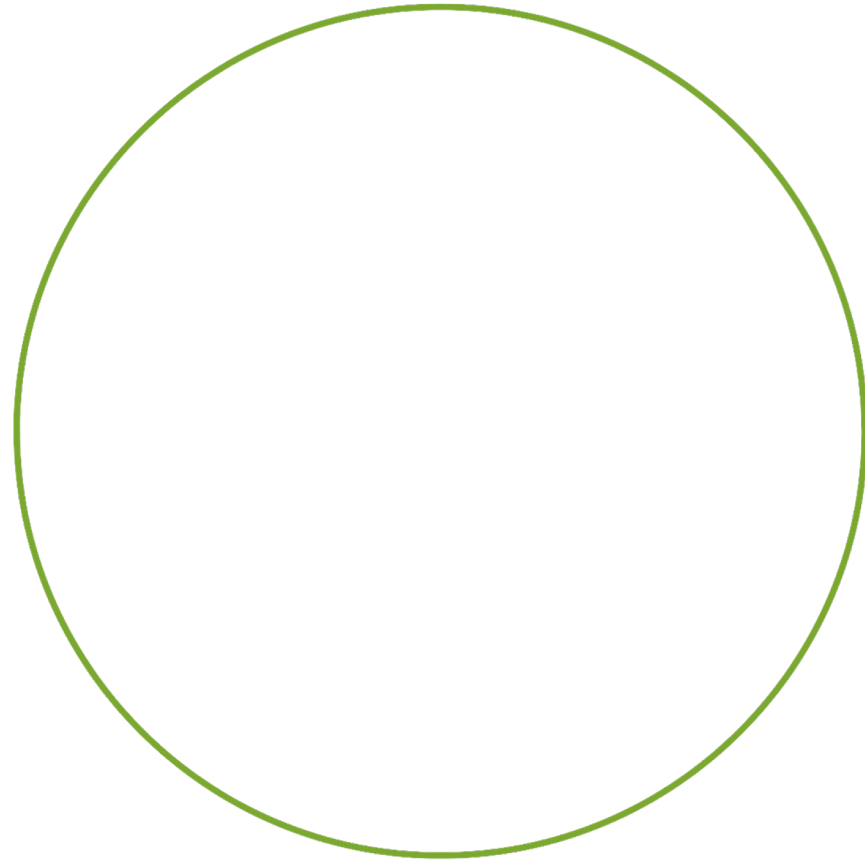


Activity:

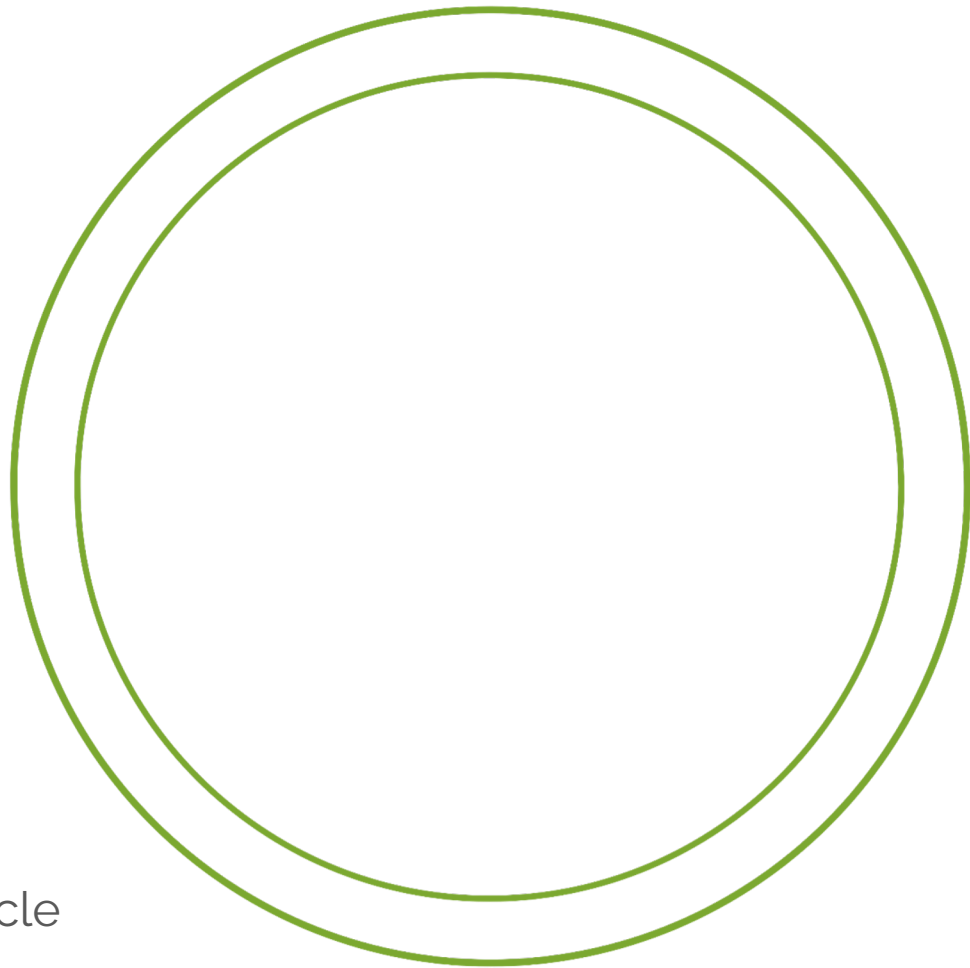
Mandala Designs

A mandala is a kind of art that is shaped like a dot. It is a Hindu or Buddhist symbol of the universe. You can make your own design that looks like a mandala by starting with a circle and adding details.

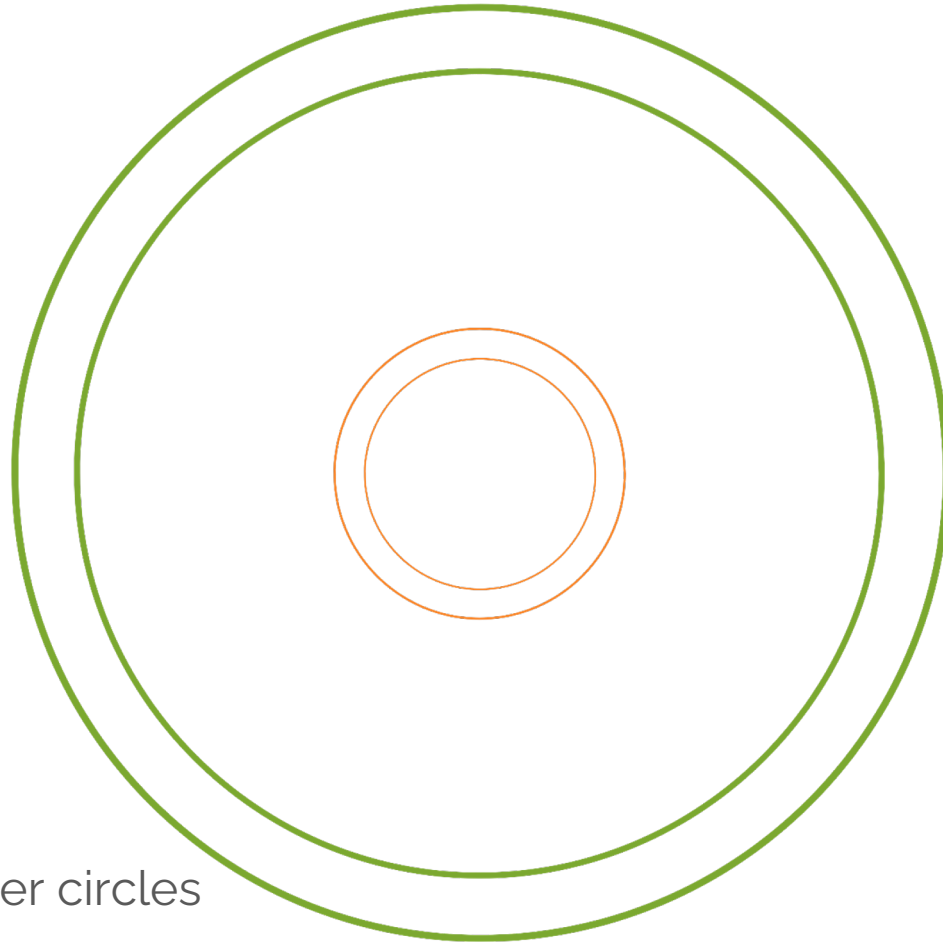
1. Get a piece of paper and pencil.
2. Follow along with the guide, drawing your mandala design on your paper.
3. After each step, we will share our progress with each other.



Step 1: Circle

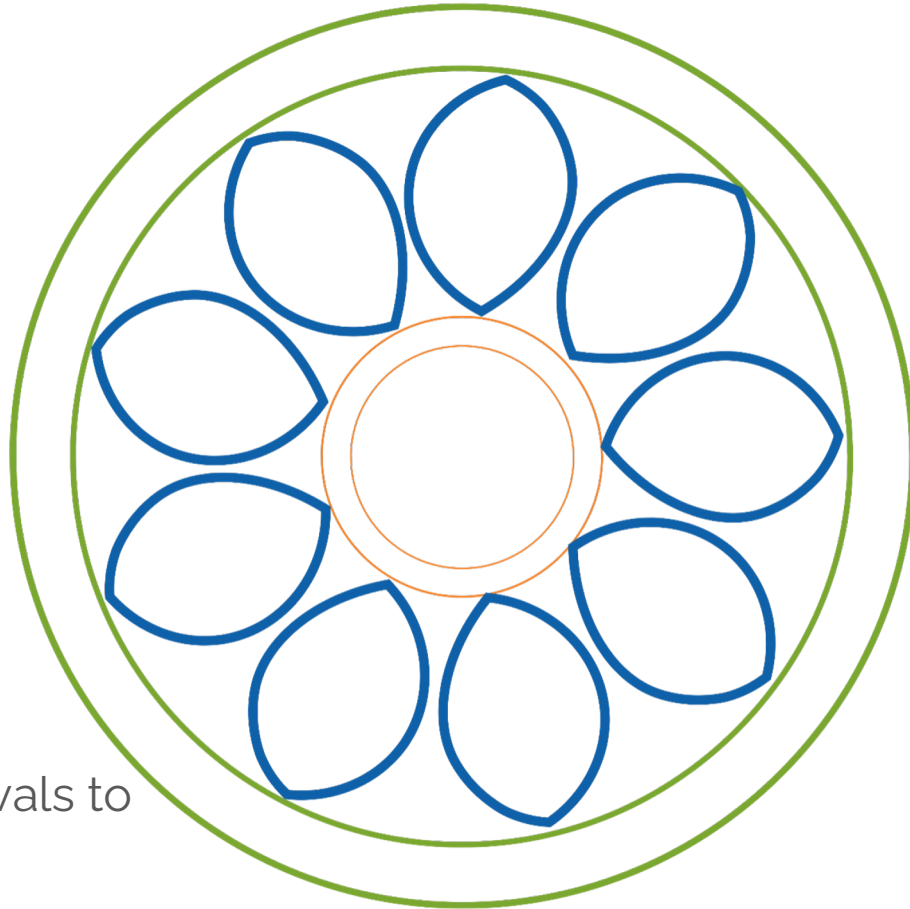


Step 2: Bigger circle

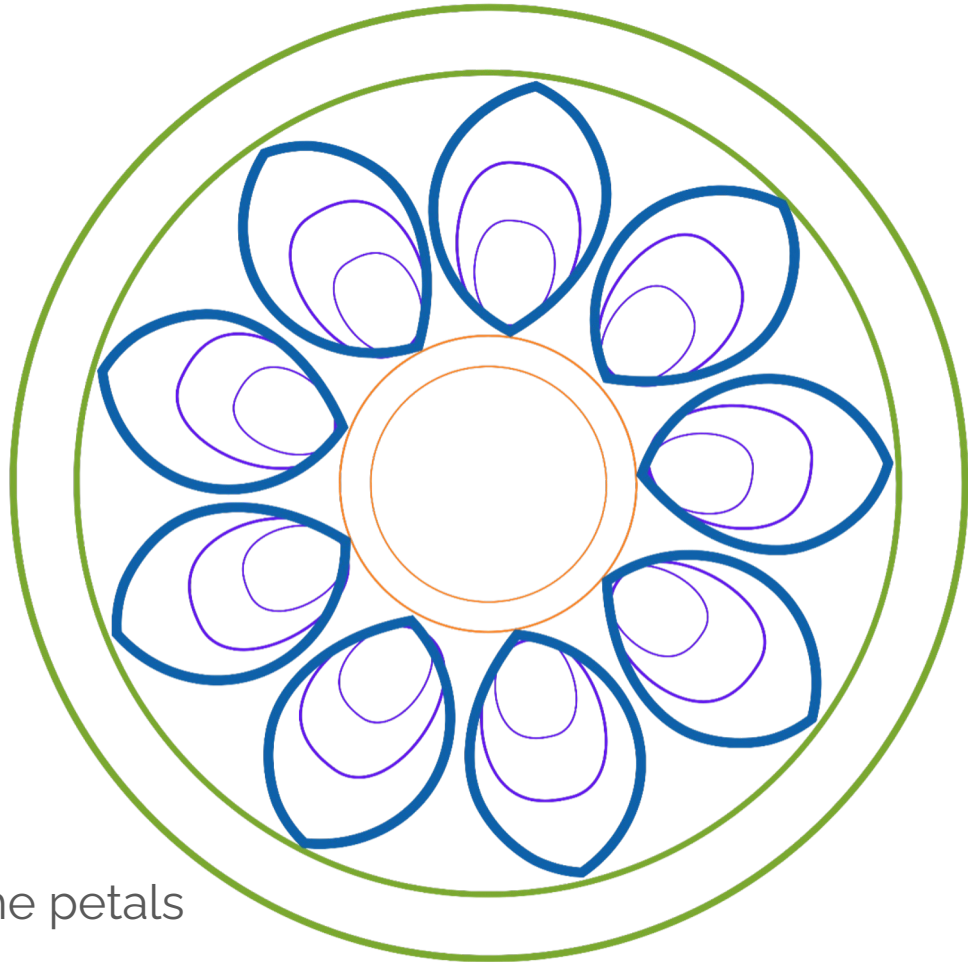


Step 3: Two smaller circles

Your mandala doesn't have to look exactly like the model! Keep going!

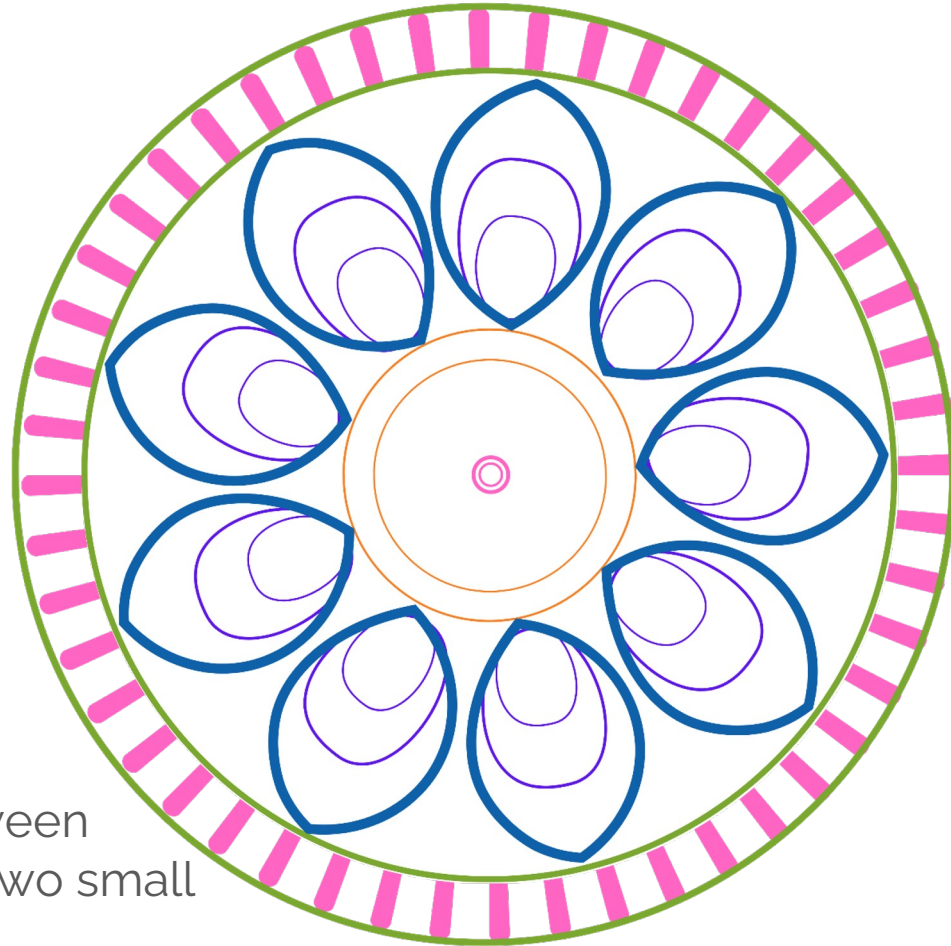


Step 4: Petals or ovals to fill in the space

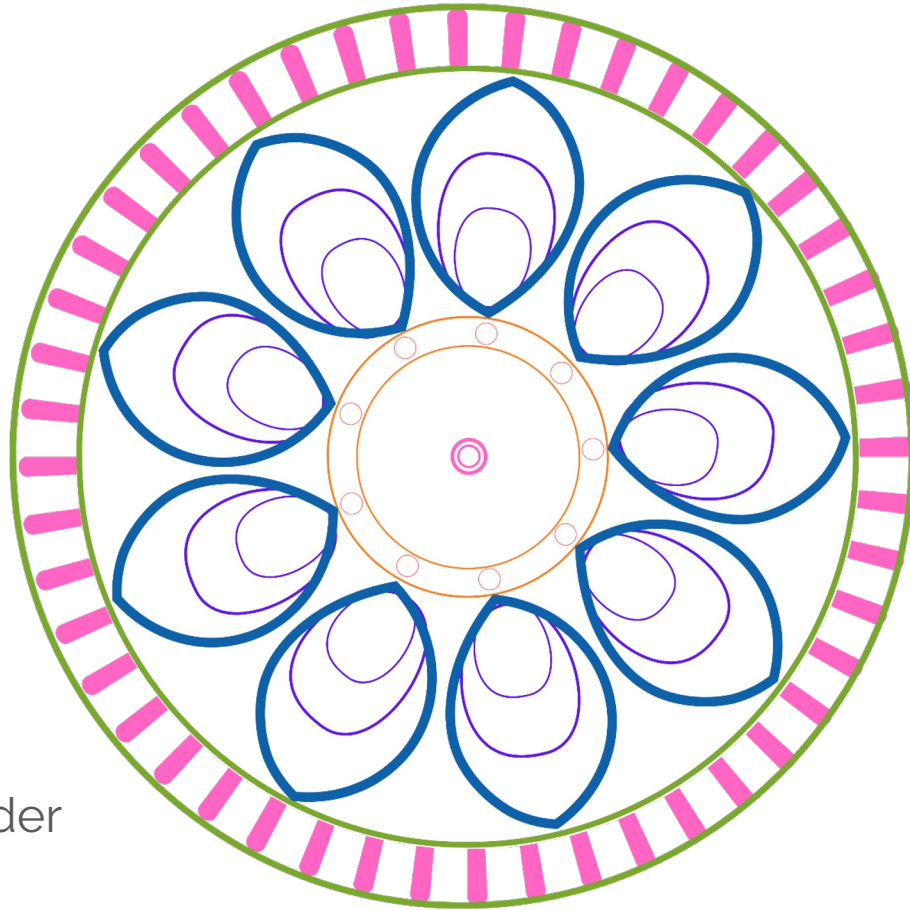


Step 5: Shapes to
decorate inside the petals

What are you enjoying? What are you finding difficult?

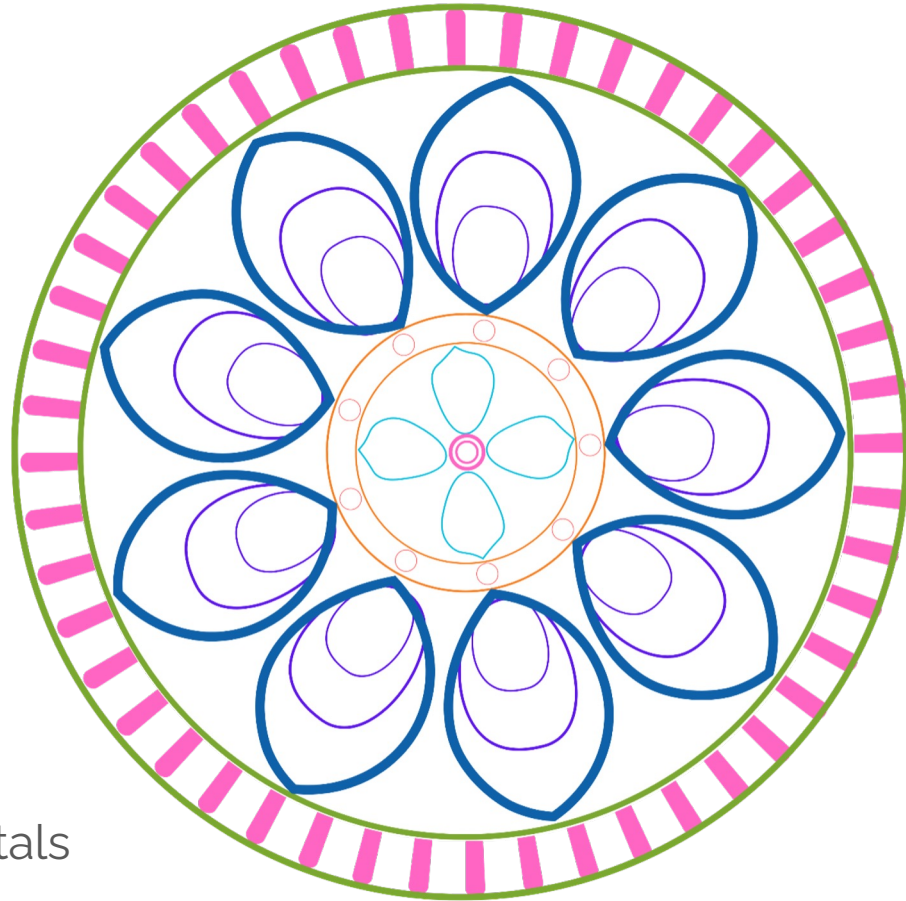


Step 6: Lines between
outer circles and two small
middle circles



Step 7: Circles under each petal

Keep sharing your progress!



Step 8: Center petals

Debrief

How did it feel to share your design with the group after each step?

Was it easy or difficult to share the unfinished versions of your design? Why?

How did it feel to see everybody else's mandalas?

Why is it sometimes difficult or uncomfortable to share things that we have not finished, or don't feel are perfect?

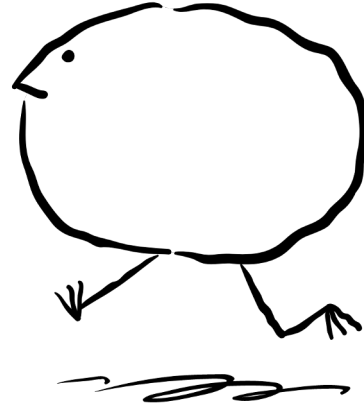
How might it be beneficial to show our imperfections to others?

What are other times when you have had to show imperfections and be vulnerable with others? How did that feel? What did you learn from it?

When you have time, add more details and color your design!

Check-out:
Sounds

Make a sound that expresses how you feel now!



“I loved how easy it was to see the visual of the activity and you had written directions. I spent maybe 2 minutes looking this over and still felt prepared. The kids were engaged for the whole time... They were encouraging to each other and they worked together.”

CONNECTION



OUR TABLE

JOY of MUSIC



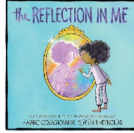
PLAYING FROM THE HEART

PATIENCE



ROSE'S GARDEN

SELF-VALUE



THE REFLECTION IN ME

RESILIENCE



HAPPY DREAMER

COLLABORATION



GOING PLACES

VOICE



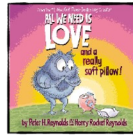
SAY SOMETHING

BRAVERY



THE DOT

LOVE



ALL WE NEED IS LOVE
AND A REALLY SOFT PILLOW

CONFIDENCE



ISH

BALANCE



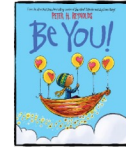
SO FEW OF ME

CREATIVITY



SKY COLOR

INDIVIDUALITY



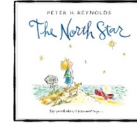
BE YOU!

JOY of WORDS



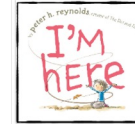
THE WORD COLLECTOR

POTENTIAL



THE NORTH STAR

EMPATHY



I'M HERE

PETER H. REYNOLDS COLLECTION THEMES

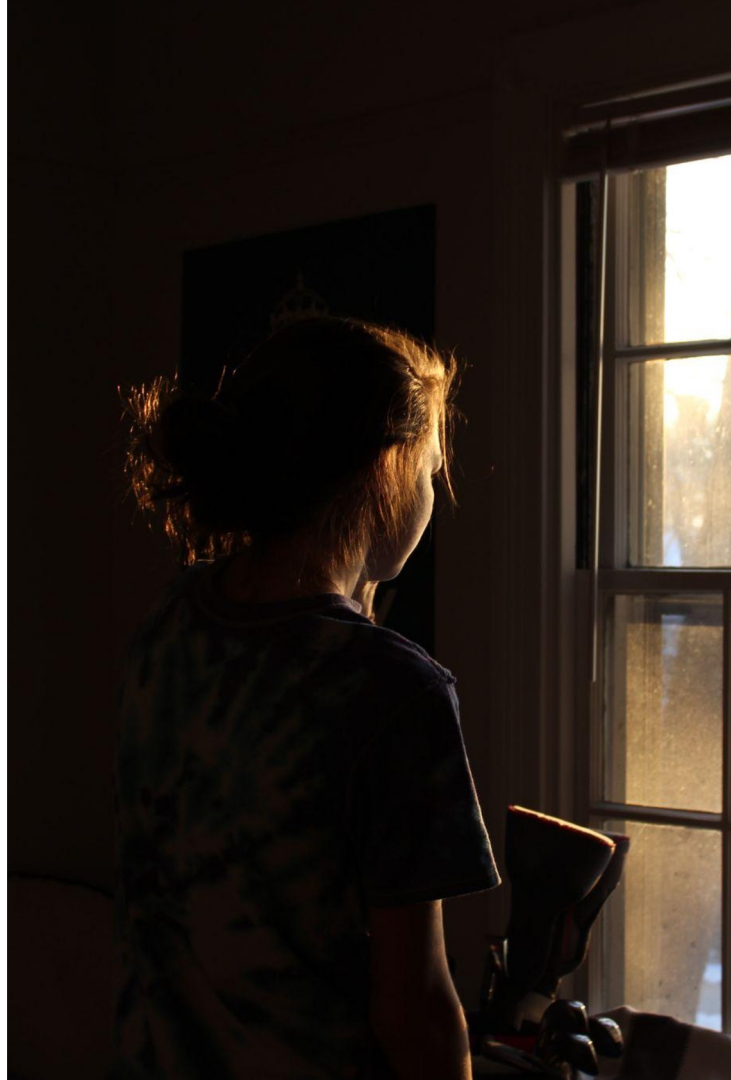
Important Research

- Relationships & belonging
- Mentoring
- Peer dialogue



When We Don't Belong

- A recent research review, published in *Nature Neuroscience*, suggests that social disconnection may be processed in the brain in the **same way as the threat of physical harm.**
- When toxic stress responses occur continually, or are triggered by multiple sources, it can have a cumulative toll on an individual's physical & mental health, **for a lifetime.**



Belonging Can Make the Difference

- Feeling socially connected can lead to better health. It is thought to cause the release of stress-reducing neuropeptides such as opioids & oxytocin, which **boost the immune system & protect the body from damage** due to inflammation.
- Oxytocin signaling also plays a key role in modulating social behavior, **evoking contentment, inducing trust, generosity & bonding.**
- Research also indicates that supportive, responsive relationships with caring adults as early in life as possible, can **prevent or reverse the damaging effects** of toxic stress responses.





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