

*Mandalas as a Therapeutic Technique for Children and Adolescents*

*Living with HIV and Cancer*

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*Mandala* is *Sanskrit* for the sacred lotus flower. A mandala is a circle drawing created by an individual. It is a tool for expression and self-examination that transcends all cultures. The presenter will describe two procedures for psychotherapists to integrate mandalas as a therapeutic technique in the treatment of children and adolescents about the role of illness in their lives. In the first procedure participants were asked to choose their own personal topic of focus, relevant to their life that particular day; were then provided with a guided visualization; and then given a piece of paper with a circle, using colored pencils. In the second procedure participants were asked 5 questions related to their representation of illness, e.g. "Using lines, shapes, colors, or symbols, draw a picture of your illness."; and then given water-color board folded accordion style into 6 panels, for 5 pictures and a closing mandala, using oil pastels. 34 participants constructed mandalas reflecting issues related to the role of serious illness in their lives. Representative mandalas and interpretations (both therapist and patient) will be shown. Themes related to somatic issues, medications, and fear of death, as well as the desire for a normal life. The presenter will demonstrate how the creation of mandalas is a safe, effective, cost-efficient therapeutic technique to explore the inner worlds of children and adolescents living with a serious illness.