



Mandala of learners

Planning, reflecting on and recording learning in a creative way



Aims

- To define and clarify personal/individual learning interests and transfer them into learning achievements
- To get ready for learning
- To recognise, identify and document learning
- To collect learning achievements



Group

- Max 30 people



Needs

- Music for background and individual work
- Colours, coloured pencils, oil pastels etc.
- Round blank sheets of paper (ca. A4)
- Round blank mandalas cut out (ca. A4)
- A large round piece of paper (2-4 flipchart sheets stuck together) for the group mandala
- Stanley knife, scissors
- Glue, tape
- Coloured paper cut into three different sizes



Time

- 60 mins intro + 15 mins/day
- 80 mins conclusion



Step by step

Preparation

- For participants who are not keen on drawing or painting, collect different mandalas of different shapes and sizes and copy them several times
- Stick the flipchart sheets together to create the big group mandala

At the beginning of the training event

- 1). Create a nice, special, calm and inspiring atmosphere with special music – it could be oriental, Indian, Tibetan etc.
 - suggestion for evening sessions: dim the lights and put out some candles - make it special!
 - suggestion for decoration: create a mandala in the middle of the room, using colours, items, objects, natural materials, balls etc.
 - suggestion for starting off: tell a short story about the meaning of the mandala in general and where it comes from and how it works generally or in different countries

This explains the idea of a mandala to participants and warms them up for creating a mandala linked to their learning.

Identifying & documenting

Describing outcomes

Introducing Youthpass

Role of facilitator

- 2). Explain that this is an individual task. Invite learners to sit down where they feel comfortable to carry out the exercise.
- 3). Guideline instructions:
 - Ask the participants to identify what they are interested in learning during the training activity, their learning expectations: what do you want to gain? What do you want to take home?
 - Why am I interested in the topic of this training activity?
 - What do I want to learn at this event?
 - What do I expect out of this event? What do I want to happen to make this event a success? What do I need to make me feel comfortable during the event?
 - Make the participants aware that they are 'the learners' at the centre of their mandala surrounded by different learning interests.
- 4). Invite the learners to draw their own 'learning mandala' (or you can provide blank mandalas for those who do not want to draw). Each learning interest is linked to one 'element' of a mandala. The size of each element should be proportionate to the importance of that particular learning interest: the more important the learning interest, the bigger the element should be. The learners should briefly name and describe their learning interests. They should only draw the outlines of the mandala and its elements - without colouring in the spaces. Keywords associated with their learning interests can then be written into those spaces. Give a quick example of how a 'mandala of learners' could look on the flipchart.
- 5). After the individual preparation (around 30 mins), invite participants to share their learning interests in smaller groups of three (20 mins). Write the following guiding questions on a flipchart or print them out for each group:
 - What are the most important learning interests for each of you in this training event?
 - Which learning interests are related to the topic of the course?
 - Which learning interests are related to your youth work?
 - Are there other fields of learning interest in your group (e.g. on a personal level)?
 - Did you find common learning interests within your small group?
- 6). After the small group exercise, invite participants to have a quick look at the whole group's learning mandalas e.g. put the mandalas in a circle on the floor and invite everyone to go around them. Participants can keep their learning mandalas, but invite them to add more interests during the training if they want to. You can set aside time for this at various points in the programme.

During the training event

- 1). Self-reflection exercise (15 min): Ask the learners which learning interests transformed into learning achievements during the day and to colour these elements accordingly to make the learning visible. A coloured element means that the learning interest is transformed into a learning achievement. This makes the learning visible!
- 2). The self-reflection can also help to identify new learning interests. These can be added to the mandala in the empty elements still available.

At the end of the training event

- 1). Self-reflection exercise (15-20 mins). Ask the learners one last time which learning interests have turned into learning achievements. These elements can then be coloured in. If some learning achievements have not been fully reached, they can just colour in half of the element.
- 2). If the learners come across learning achievements which were not mentioned in the learning interests, they can add them to their mandala and colour them in.
- 3). Invite them to write their learning achievements on the paper cut into different sizes. There are three sizes according to the importance they attribute to the achievement (20 mins).
- 4). When all learners have finished, invite them to sit down in plenary and give each person an opportunity to put the shapes (learning achievements) onto the big learning mandala on the floor. While doing so, they briefly explain their learning achievements. In this way, the learners create a giant collective mandala of learning achievements from the training event (20 mins).



Debriefing

- How was it for you (feelings, first impressions, thoughts, surprises...)?
- Are you happy with the result, with your own mandala?
- Which obstacles did you come across (finding learning interests...)?
- How did you overcome these obstacles?
- Are there differences in understanding of what a 'learning interest' is?
- What challenges and questions do you still see?
- Was this exercise useful to gain a deeper understanding of your own learning?
- Do you have anything you want to add?



Adaption

You can link this exercise to the eight key competences.

When preparing for the giant learning mandala (step three above), ask participants to link their learning achievements to the eight key competences. The facilitator prepares different coloured pieces of paper,



Adaption

each colour representing one key competence. If participants have achieved their learning within one of the key competences, they take a different sized piece of paper in the colour of that competence. The size of the coloured paper indicates how important that learning achievement was for them.

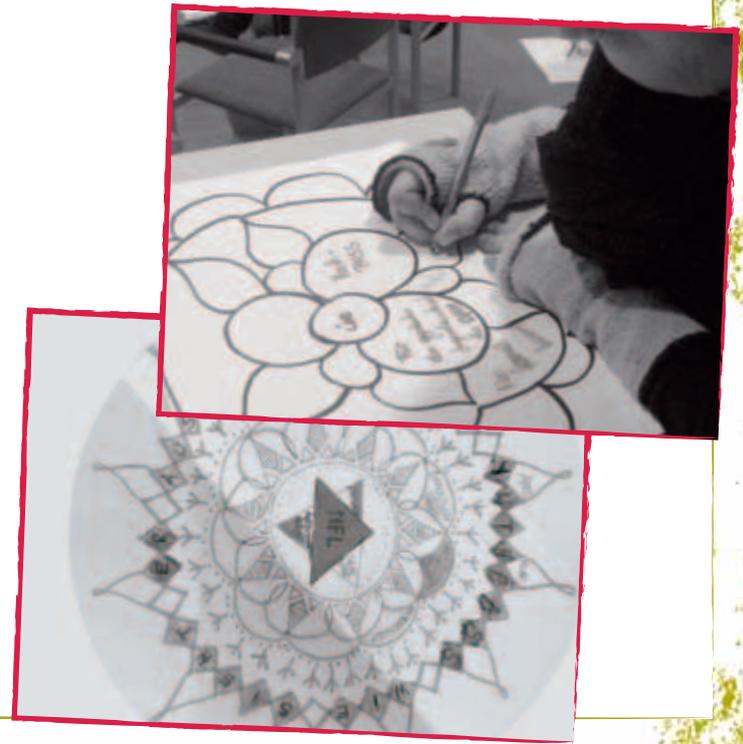
Again, one by one, participants, put their learning achievements onto the giant group mandala and explain why they chose that particular size (why was that learning important for them?) and colour (what key competence have they related their learning to?).

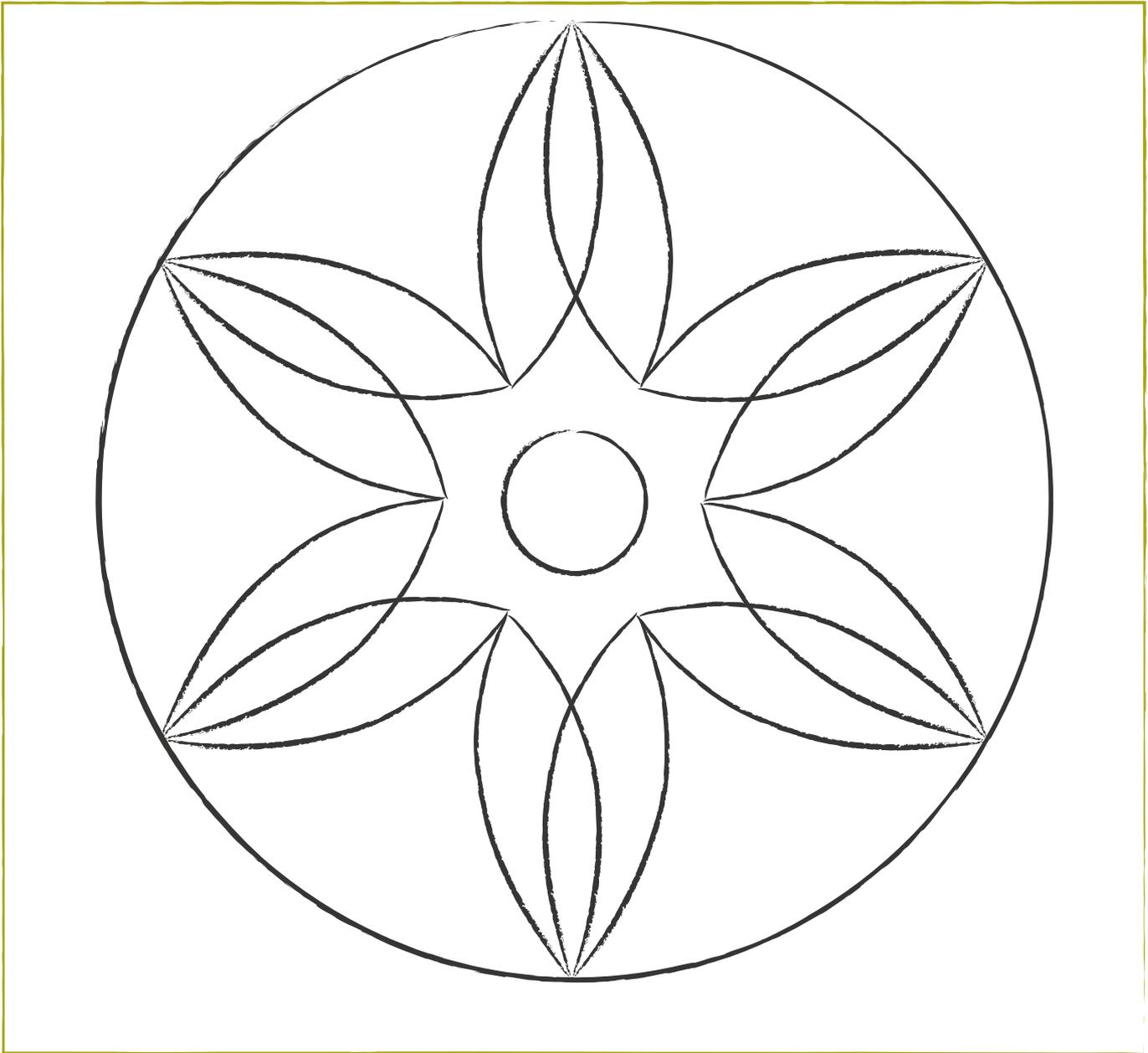


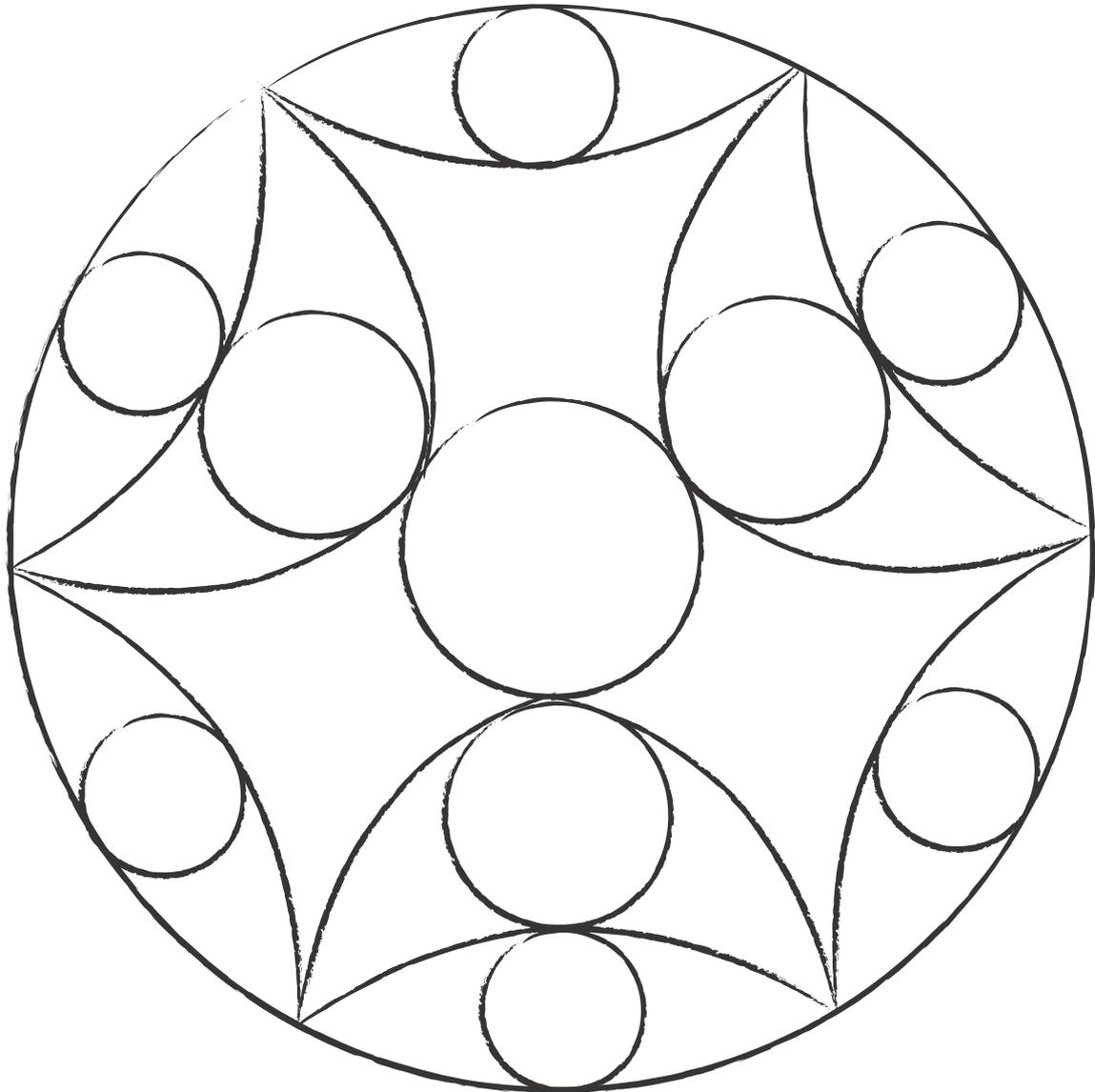
Handouts

Additional preparation

- Eight different coloured pieces of paper with the eight key competences written on them
- Paper in three different sizes in each of the eight key competence colours







Method developed by Julia Kastler, Paola Bortini and Torben Grochol. Mandala drawings by Julia Kastler. www.free-mandala.com