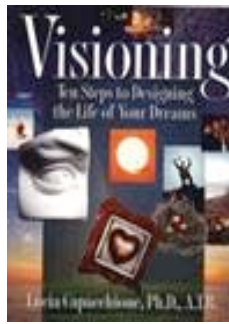


Imago Peace Project

BACKGROUND:

In 2005 the Imago Peace Project committee met at Neil's and my home in Austin, TX. It was our first meeting with so many, (twelve) physically present. The purpose for our meeting was to brainstorm our vision for the Peace Project and how to accomplish that vision.

I had recently attended training with Lucia Capacchione, Ph.D., founder of Creative Journaling and Expressive Arts (CJEA). In her training we created a group mandala based on guidelines from her book, *Visioning: Ten Steps to Designing the Life of Your Dreams*, as well as the idea of one of her students ([www. PeaceMandala.com](http://www.PeaceMandala.com)).



I felt this would be a vital complement to our work in Austin, given that we were all so verbal, it would be balancing and enriching to bring in the nonverbal, more right brain modes of exploring and creating.

Folks really got involved in finding pictures and words from magazines and creating their part of the mandala. Here is the result:



As you see, the mandala is round like a pie and each person made a collage on their “piece of the pie.” Participants shared with the group the meaning of their piece and placed it in the center of our group so that person by person we created a whole pie/vision. The rest of our time together our vision lay in the center of our circle – giving and receiving energy as we continued our process.

Each member took their piece home with them with the suggestion to continue to interact with their part of the vision through journaling and meditation. Several participants have stated that this was one of the most meaningful activities from our time together.

ON TO THE PALESTINIAN/ISRAELI IMAGO GROUP:

When Orli realized that Neil and I would still be in Israel, after our Voice Dialogue training, she invited us to join the Palestinian /Israeli family retreat at the Nahsholim Sea Side Kibbutz. She asked me to guide the adult couples’ group in making a mandala like we did in Austin, while Neil worked with the youngest children’s group (9-14) and helped Orli with the 16-30 group. With excitement and some trepidation we each agreed.

I was concerned that people who are dealing with life/death issues would be put off by the idea of cutting out pictures and think it was frivolous, but Orli felt it was a good alternative to so much talking. I just hoped the magic of the process would carry the day!

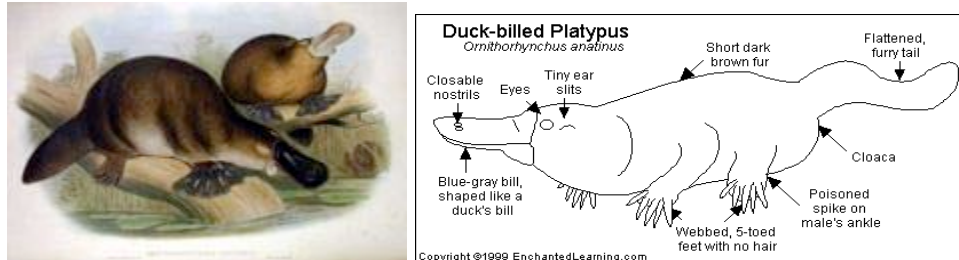
HERE WE GO:

The night before the Saturday mandala making, Neil and I went to the meeting room to cut out the pie pieces. We discovered that the size of the paper was too small for us to be able to make a circle with eight pieces (for the eight “couples). We realized it would have to be shaped like an egg – “Oh dear”, my left brain thought, “That’s not the way it’s done. This is terrible!” My right brain came to the rescue with a wonderful metaphor, “Out of an egg comes life and this is part of their giving life to their vision.” Synchronistically, the night before I’d read in a National Geographic magazine I had hauled from Texas an article on the Duckbilled Platypus and how they hatch from eggs. I was familiar with some of the history of the platypus from my visit to the Sidney zoo in 1995. A wonderful story began to form in my mind.

By the time I stood in front of the couples with magazines, scissors, glue sticks, and pieces of the “egg,” I felt ready and eager. I’d participated in their earlier communologue of exploring what each person’s short term and long term goals were, including what seemed possible and what didn’t, and I knew this process would give them a complementary way of communicating and creating.

I gave the background of our mandala making in Austin plus the power of bringing together the right and left hemispheres of the brain and how the whole of the group mandala vision is greater than the sum of the parts.

I then explained about the smallness of the paper requiring an egg shape rather than a circle, and showed them the picture of a platypus which hatches out of an egg. I told the story I'd read at the Sidney zoo of the early explorers bringing back to the King and Queen of England a stuffed platypus and how angry the royalty became as they thought it was impossible for any animal to be built like the platypus and that it must be a hoax.



I related that to the belief many have - that a peaceful resolution between the Palestinians and Israeli is impossible, but perhaps their Imago group was part of making the impossible – possible, like the platypus.

I guided them through a brief visualization to help each reconnect with their original decision to join the Imago group and their hopes, goals, and vision for themselves, their relationship, their family, community, and country.

Next I handed out the pieces of the “egg” to each couple and pointed out that the smallness of the piece was rather appropriate since they were all trying to find a way to live together on a very small piece of land. One Palestinian man was there without his wife, who had to stay home to support their oldest daughter who was taking the SATs for college in the states. So he started picking out pictures for her as well as himself. One of the Israeli couples, for religious reasons, could not tear, cut, or paste on Saturday before sunset. They were there with her aunt, so the three of them bookmarked their pictures and discussed them with each other. Each of the six couples had their own style for co-creating their piece of the mandala and it was fascinating to observe the various processes that evolved.



One at a time each “group” stood in front of the room and shared their collage. Generally the male partner went first and then the female partner and it was interesting to see the similarities and differences as each described their interpretation of their piece. The presentations were given and received with much enthusiasm, applause and laughter.



However, as they began putting their piece of the mandala in the center of the circle, I felt this little panicky sensation in my gut—the pieces were not forming an “egg” rather they were jutting out in various directions! “Oh No, how could this be?”

Neil and I had very carefully numbered the pieces 1-8 so that as people went in order of their number the “egg” pieces would fall into place and fit nicely. If Neil, of Swiss heritage, had been there he would have thought to tell everyone not to use the numbered side of their paper. However, I, Dorsey of French heritage, gave no thought to such details. Consequently we had a mix of numbered and unnumbered sides, hence, pieces that didn’t fit together created a most *unusual* shaped mandala. Since the right side of my brain had gotten me into this “mess” it now came to my rescue with another metaphor.

The ultimate Palestinian/Israeli Resolution would be uniquely Palestinian and Israeli and not look like anything ever created before –truly outside the box or in this case the “egg.” This resonated with the group who feel strongly that the ultimate solution must come from Palestinian and Israeli people. Cameras began clicking and a decision was made that everyone would turn the mandala photograph into their computer screen saver to be seen and nurtured each day.



I then took out of my pocket a beautiful seedpod, (it looks like the brown heart on the front cover of Lucia's book—see above), that for many years I have carried everywhere with me. Holding it up to the group, I talked about the reality of the “seed” the group had planted and the need to water and nurture what was growing from within their relationships, and now included the children joining them, and to be patient and let the group and their vision evolve organically and true to who they are -- allowing the invisible to become visible at its own pace.

Several of the participants expressed a renewed commitment to this Imago group and a refreshed sense of hope. All were eager to share with the children. At the end of our time on Sunday, the mandala was placed in the room with the whole group with a brief sharing of the experience. As the group broke up I saw several of the children go directly to the mandala and study it with a look of alive curiosity on their face. I hoped in the next gathering that they would be making their own mandala and I hoped I ‘d be there to experience it with them.

EPILOGUE:

After we left the Nahsholim kibbutz; I discovered that my seedpod, which I had carried with me for so many years was missing, my left brain was upset and confused, yet, my right brain was confident and comforted in knowing that, “Yes indeed, a seed was truly planted”

M. Dorsey Cartwright, May 20, 2007