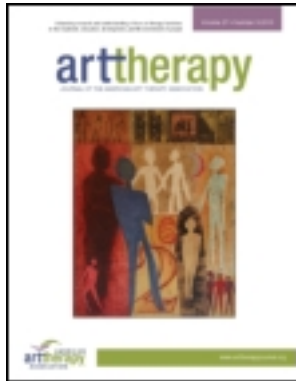


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# Assessing a Couple's Relationship and Compatibility Using the MARI® Card Test and Mandala Drawings

Phyllis G. Frame, Charlottesville, VA

## Abstract

*This paper illustrates the use of the MARI® Card Test, a transpersonal assessment tool which includes archetypal designs and color choices, as well as the drawing of a white and black mandala, or circle picture, for assessing the compatibility of two people in a committed relationship. In an informal pilot research study, 22 couples were given this assessment and interpreted according to seven comparison categories that might affect their relationship and compatibility. Unresolved prenatal and developmental childhood issues, the current primary treatment issue for each person, the dynamics of the couple's communication, areas of conflict or tension, and sexual issues were examined. Areas of commonality between the partners and personal strengths each person brought to the relationship also were identified. These seven categories were then related to the couple's choices on the card test. Two mandala drawings added insights and further information that complemented the interpretation of the test.*

*One couple is presented in this article as a case study to illustrate the assessment technique and to highlight its value in working with couples. The Couple Compatibility Assessment can be helpful at the beginning of couple therapy because it provides nonverbal information that may not be available in a more traditional intake interview. This assessment can also be of use during and at the end of couple therapy as an indication of change in the relationship.*

## Introduction

This report was developed from a pilot study with 22 couples in which the MARI® Card Test was used together with two mandala drawings by each person to assist in assessing the dynamics of the couple's relationship. The early pioneer work of Hanna Kwiatkowska (1978), in developing family art therapy and family art evaluations at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), started the movement to utilize art-based evaluations in family and couple therapy. This paper will describe the Couple Compatibility Assessment, an approach with couples that combines the use of mandala drawings with a personality assessment, relating archetypal images and color. The author's

**Editor's note:** Phyllis Frame, MA, ATR, directs the Round Oaks Creative Center offering expressive therapy workshops including the MARI® Course in Mandala Assessment and transformational sand tray weekends. She is a founding board member of the Association of Teachers of Mandala Assessment, Inc. Further information on MARI® products and courses can be found at [www.mandalassociates.com](http://www.mandalassociates.com).

premise is that this assessment has particular value at the beginning of therapy because it provides current, nonverbal information about each person's inner state and reveals the complex dynamics that might have brought the couple into therapy. The Couple Compatibility Assessment will be illustrated using a case study drawn from participants in this project. To assist in analyzing joint MARI® test results and mandala drawings, the author developed seven categories of comparison which form the basis for the Couple Compatibility Assessment. These categories were derived from extensive use of the MARI® Card Test with her clients over the years, supported by the literature in family, family art therapy, and couple therapy (Ackerman, 1958; Riley, 2001; Wadeson, 1973). The seven categories are:

1. Traumatic prenatal experience, birth trauma, or unresolved developmental childhood issues
2. The current primary treatment issue for each person
3. Communication between partners
4. Areas of conflict or tension
5. Sexuality and sexual issues
6. Areas of commonality
7. Strengths each person brings into the relationship

## Review of the Literature

"Mandala" is a Hindu word derived from Sanskrit meaning circle or center. The circle is the archetype of wholeness and perfection. It is connected to earliest human rituals revolving around worship of the sun and moon, thus incorporating the circle as a source of power and help (Frame, 2000). Jung drew mandalas, or circle pictures, as a personal form of meditation, and found that his patients often drew spontaneous mandalas during times of stress or inner change. He believed a mandala drawing reflects different parts of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious, and that the mandala has the power to heal and unify the personality (Jung, 1965; Slegelis, 1987). Within the circumference of a circle, all content is regarded as symbolic as in a dream. Drawing mandalas yields important additional information about each person that is helpful in the final interpretation of the Couple Compatibility Assessment. Because a mandala is thought to represent a deep level within the psyche, the colors and symbolic images in a mandala enhance and complement our understanding of the MARI® Card Test results (Kellogg, MacRae, Bonny & DeLeo, 1977).

The theoretical basis for the MARI® Card Test was developed by artist and pioneer art therapist Joan Kellogg and is described in her book *Mandala: Path of Beauty* (Kellogg, 1978, 2002). The word MARI stands for the Mandala Assessment and Research Institute which was formed by Kellogg in 1989.

During the 1970's Kellogg served as a consultant to psychiatrists at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center in Catonsville, Maryland, using mandala drawings as part of a research program on the use of new psychotropic drugs in the treatment of mental illness. Dr. Stanley Grof and other psychiatrists studied various states of consciousness resulting from the drug therapy administered at the center (Grof, 1985). From many thousands of mandalas drawn by patients at the center and by her private clients, Kellogg conceived and constructed the theoretical and visual concept of 13 stages in a circular form which she called the "Great Round of the Mandala."

Building upon theories of early childhood development (Freud, 1949) and of the life cycle (Erikson, 1968), Kellogg created a theory that also integrated prenatal theories of personality development (Grof, 1985) and its transpersonal aspects (Jung, 1965). Each of the 13 stages reflects a step in the cyclic pattern of growth and change in one's developing consciousness. The Great Round is comprehensive and includes psychosocial, physiological, and spiritual perspectives. These dimensions relate the human connection to the universal rhythms of birth, life, death, and rebirth or reintegration, common to all cycles. Kellogg identified and grouped designs found at each stage in the Great Round, theorizing that they represented common archetypal energies or psychic instincts (Cox, 2002).

Administered by knowledgeable and trained practitioners, the MARI® Card Test is a personality assessment tool dependent only on the client's ability to choose designs and colors. The Association of Teachers of Mandala Assessment, Inc. trains teachers and is the official distributor of the MARI® Card Test. This researcher is a founding board member of the Association and has taught the MARI Course in Mandala Assessment since 1985. She uses the MARI® Card Test and mandala drawings as an integral aspect of her art therapy work with clients in her private practice.

## Method

The MARI® Card Test consists of 39 archetypal design cards printed on clear, 3" x 5" plastic cards with three designs associated with each of the 13 stages. The test includes 40 color cards on paper stock of the same size. Each subject was asked to choose seven designs, beginning with six designs that are placed in order of preference and followed by the seventh choice that reflects the least preferred or "rejected" card. The subject then chooses a color card to place under each design which best reflects his or her emotions and feelings about each design card. For the rejected card, the subject is asked to pick a second color that makes the design appear more acceptable to the person (Frame, 2002). Each color may be chosen only once. The choice of the rejected card with two color choices was

not included in Kellogg's original instructions, but has since been approved and offered as an optional choice by the Association of Teachers of Mandala Assessment, Inc.

In Kellogg's theoretical understanding of colors, the purely saturated, or primary and secondary colors, represent clearer feelings, while the muddy, earthy tones (mixed with brown or black) suggest more primal and less clear feelings. Pastels (colors mixed with white) show less physical energy or connection to the body or a more spiritual energy. Detailed information about the test and color choice is found in Frame (2002), Kellogg's (1992) article, "Color Theory from the Perspective of the Great Round of the Mandala" and in her book *Mandala: Path of Beauty* (Kellogg, 1978, 2002). Susan Fincher has excellent material on Kellogg's hypotheses regarding color in her book, *Creating Mandalas* (Fincher, 1991).

In the MARI® Card Test, when two or three design card choices fall on the same stage of the Great Round, much energy is thought to be focused in that stage. Choices falling in the upper half of the circle may represent a more conscious level, while those in the lower half may stem more from the unconscious. Depending on the colors, stages opposite each other on the Great Round (called axes) can represent conflicted feelings and oppositional energies, or they may complement each other depending on the color choices. According to Kellogg, the color placed under each card shows the emotions and feelings surrounding the energy of that particular design choice. The rejected design card seems to suggest a disowned or repressed part of the psyche that may need to be brought into awareness in therapy. Often, the second color chosen for this stage provides clues to the therapist on how to approach this repressed or denied part of the psyche (Frame, 2002).

In drawn mandalas, the center is believed to reveal a person's sense of ego-self. Sometimes a certain part of the mandala may seem completely unrelated to the overall picture. These areas may represent something that the unconscious is bringing to the subject's attention. Designs in drawn mandalas may correlate with archetypal stage designs on the Great Round in the test, and one, two or three stage designs may be represented in one drawn mandala. When this happens, there is added emphasis on that stage when interpreting the test results.

## Relating Mandala Quadrants to the Couple Compatibility Assessment

To begin to understand the Great Round, we need to divide the mandala into four quadrants. The implications of each quadrant will be outlined and related to the Couple Compatibility Assessment.

The Center and the Lower Left Quadrant: The center (Stage 0) and lower left (Stages 1-3) are believed to represent the body's earliest pre-birth or cellular memories. These prenatal influences can affect one's later ability to respond to change, to enter fully into life, and to trust in the universe. Stage 0 represents the person's core, the earliest cellular awareness, connection to the transpersonal, or the deepest

level of the unconscious. Stage 1, the Void, represents the initial experience of duality, the first “knitting” onto the womb, and a place of constriction and darkness. Stage 2, Bliss, represents fluidity, or a non-ego state, as in early intrauterine experience. Stage 3, the Spiral or Labyrinth, represents the id and primary process, and the first focused movement toward an unknown and uncertain goal.

**The Upper Left Quadrant:** This area is believed to represent developmental stages of birth, the building of boundaries, the struggle with what Jung referred to as the shadow, and the development of sexual identity and desire for a relationship. This quadrant describes the process of self-determination, development of an ego identity, and beginning involvement in the outerworld. Stage 4, Birth or New Beginning, represents the oral stage of development and reflects the early mother/child relationship or the beginning of something new developing in the person. Stage 5, the Target, represents the anal stage and the beginning sense of self with its need for personal boundaries. Stage 6, the Dragon Fight, represents the oedipal stage with its need to let go of negative internalized parents, and the struggle with the “shadow,” or those parts of self that are denied or repressed. Stage 7, Squaring the Circle, represents the genital stage, readiness for a relationship, and uniting of opposites within.

**The Upper Right Quadrant:** This area reflects the integration of opposites, sexual identity, the ego self, current issues such as job or relationships, and completion of goals. Stage 7, Squaring the Circle, represents the readiness for relationships and the union of the masculine and feminine parts of the self. Stage 8, the Functioning Ego, represents the here and now, ego identity, work and career. Stage 9, Crystallization, represents the functioning within the family or institutional system, the need for support from others, and the actualization of goals.

**Lower Right Quadrant:** This area reflects painful times, the loss of the familiar sense, the breaking up of old patterns of adaptation and the need to let go of outmoded behaviors. Stage 10, the Gates of Death, represents the letting go and pain of change and a sense of loss and mourning. Stage 11, Fragmentation, represents the loss of ego self or perhaps a painful fragmentation with no end in sight. Stage 12, Transcendent Ecstasy, represents energy for change and a new reintegration within the psyche.

## Research Protocol

All 22 couples in this study were in a committed relationship or marriage of at least six to fifty years. Some participants were in couple or individual therapy at the time of the study or had been in the past. Each couple was seen for two to three hours during which the MARI® Card Test was administered. Each individual also completed a mandala drawing on white paper with the dominant hand, and a mandala on black paper with the non-dominant hand based on the theory that it may reflect deeper, unconscious material and access the right hemisphere, non-linear function of the brain (Capacchione, 1988). Using a set of 36 oil pastels, the mandalas were completed on 14" x 17" white

drawing paper and 12" x 18" black construction paper with a pre-drawn 10 1/2" circle (approximately the size of a human head) as a guide. With the circle as their starting point, participants were instructed to fill in shapes and colors in whatever manner they desired.

Upon completion of the card test and drawings, the card choices were laid on two laminated MARI® posters imprinted with the Great Round designs (see Frame, 2002, for a detailed illustration). The mandala drawings were put next to the posters for easy visibility. The test and mandalas were first viewed individually, and then together, using the seven categories for comparison. Because of the complexity of this material, it was sometimes more productive to meet a second time to discuss the results of the assessment with the couple.

In analyzing test results, it is important to note that all the stages have equal value and that the colors may have both positive and negative implications. What is important is the information revealed about the individuals and their relationship as a couple using the seven categories as a guide. Certain stages are particularly associated with the seven assessment categories. For example, pre-natal, birth trauma, or unresolved developmental childhood issues may be revealed in choices from the lower and upper left quadrants. The current primary treatment issue is often indicated by the first, most preferred card choice, color, or choice of all three design cards representing one stage in the Great Round. Communication between partners may be reflected in the here and now relationship quadrant, noting colors which represent feelings about the relationship. Alternately, the individual may make all choices in the lower or unconscious quadrants, suggesting that the person is not oriented to the here and now which makes communication difficult.

Areas of conflict or tension in the relationship may be noted with respect to choosing and rejecting the same stage or choices made along an axis (opposite stage). The color choice of the rejected card provides information regarding what each person is repressing or is uncomfortable with in the relationship. Sexual issues may be suggested by the choice of Stage 6 and 7, and also by preferred or rejected color choices like peach, mango, and coral.

Couples can compare their choices to explore areas of commonality, especially where there are corresponding stages and colors chosen. If both partners choose the same preferred card as their first choice on the test, they may be on a similar path of individuation. Strengths that each person brings to the relationship can be found in stages where there is energy and movement in the psyche and positive colors in the here and now.

## Results: Case Study Illustrating the Assessment

The results of the tests combined with the drawings of one couple are presented to illustrate a relationship that is under stress yet having much potential for the future. Pam and John (not their real names) have been together for seven years and married for five. They have no children.

Table 1  
Test Results

<b>John chose these cards and colors:</b>			
Order	Stage	Card Name	Color
1.	12	Transcendent Ecstasy	Primary Yellow
2.	12	Transcendent Ecstasy	Orange
3.	3	Spiral	Royal Blue
4.	0	Clear Light	Violet
5.	1	The Void	Emerald Green
6.	8	Functioning Ego	Red/Red
7.	5	Target (Rejected) Healing Color	Gray Yellow
<b>Pam chose these cards and colors:</b>			
Order	Stage	Card Name	Color
1.	12	Transcendent Ecstasy	Primary Yellow
2.	12	Transcendent Ecstasy	Royal Blue
3.	3	Spiral	Orange
4.	2	Bliss	Turquoise
5.	0	Clear Light	Peach
6.	6	The Dragon Fight	White
7.	11	Fragmentation (Rejected) Healing Color	Brown Yellow

They agreed to participate in this research assessment because both were experiencing intense anxiety when a close friend's husband of many years suddenly left his wife. Both Pam and John have had couple and individual therapy at different times during their marriage.

Pam is 46 and has an older sister. Her father died when she was 18 and her relationship with her mother has always been tense. Apparently, her Catholic upbringing and schooling had a profound effect on her development. She did not become sexually active until her mid-twenties after she renounced her religious connections. She went through a period of sexual acting-out and eventually married a man with three small children. This was a difficult, nine-year marriage with many moves and job changes, often with his children in the home. Her husband had a number of affairs during this time that she denied until his behavior became too painful. They finally divorced, although she had difficulty in leaving him and returned several times before the final break. During this marriage, she began to drink and take drugs and eventually developed high blood pressure. After her divorce, she began a healing process with a major shift in her life that included yoga and a healthier lifestyle. Eventually, she became a hospice nurse and began to teach yoga. It was in this yoga class that she met her current husband, John.

John is 47 and has one younger sister. He described his father as controlling, hostile, and passive/aggressive in his interactions with his family, with continued conflict between his parents. John married at 21 and had two children by this marriage. He developed a law practice and referred to himself as a "workaholic." John said that he had never had a sense of his own identity and indulged in numerous affairs during his 13-year marriage which ended in divorce. He gave up custody of his children and tried to separate himself from his former life. However, his promiscuity continued and his confusion grew. Eventually, John gave up his job and visited India in search of grounding and a new life. It was here that he became interested in yoga and Eastern spiritual practices. Upon his return, he began yoga classes with his present wife and completely changed his lifestyle. At first he was hesitant about marriage but finally made the commitment to Pam. At the beginning of their relationship, they taught yoga together but have since followed separate paths in the working world.

Both of these individuals came from difficult family backgrounds with little opportunity as young adults to separate from their parents and earlier life. Their life circumstances, and dysfunctional marriages and relationships caused them both to make major changes in their lives. Pam moved away from her Catholic upbringing and left her first marriage, while John interrupted his pattern of unsatisfactory affairs and also left his first marriage. These shifts brought significant changes in direction and outlook to them both. Pam acknowledged that her issue was victimization and addiction to marriage. John's problems seemed to stem from his attraction to women and his inability to maintain appropriate boundaries with them. This may have contributed to the couples' level of anxiety about their friend's marital situation.

## Analysis of the Seven Categories with the MARI® Card Test Results and Mandala Drawings

**1. Pre-natal, birth trauma, or unresolved developmental issues:** John's choice of violet on Stage 0 could represent a reluctance to become embodied, and the checkerboard design card on Stage 1 suggests a life-or-death threat at the prenatal stage of knitting onto the womb (Kellogg, 2002) perhaps with an unconscious wish to remain merged with the "great mother or cosmic womb." John may be one of those "reluctant souls" who have a hard time feeling comfortable in this world. He may wish to return to an earlier, more passive and loving state. Yet the emerald green on Stage 1, a positive sign, suggests that this early trauma has lessened. John broke into deep sobs when discussing these early stages and color choices. The choice of both Stages 0 and 1 often represent very deep trauma at the start of life. This was an important insight for both Pam and John to contemplate.

It may be that Pam was born with an innate sense of her body and sexual nature (peach on Stage 0). The turquoise on Stage 2, an early womb state, reflects a positive early womb and pre-natal experience. But her current prob-

lems seem to come more from her childhood experiences. Her choice of white on Stage 6, the Split or Dragon Fight suggests unresolved oedipal issues, possibly reflecting denial and refusal to deal with her shadow or conflicted parts of herself. Pam admitted that it is always easier for her to push problems away and not face them.

**2. The current primary issues for each person:** Both Pam and John's first and second choices were Stage 12, Transcendent Ecstasy, thus reinforcing the importance of the energy of this stage, which for each partner is directed toward a new more integrated self and continued inner growth. Stage 12 with yellow suggests the path toward expanded consciousness and individuation, sometimes called the Hero or Heroine's journey. It indicates willingness to fight the inner dragons in order to find a greater wholeness of self (Campbell, 1973).

**3. Communication between partners:** John's choice reveals a great deal of assertive and physical (libido) energy (orange on Stage 12, Transcendent Ecstasy and red/red on Stage 8, Functioning Ego). His communication seems more on an energetic level than a verbal one. He is in touch with his feminine, intuitive side as suggested by his choice of royal blue on Stage 3, the Spiral. From his card choice in the here and now (Stage 8, Functioning Ego) and also from a less conscious level (Stage 3, The Spiral) there is an indication that he may be able to communicate on many levels but that he may be felt as overpowering at times to his wife. This is suggested by the choice of red on 12 and orange on 3.

Pam reveals less ability to deal with problems or conflict by choosing Stage 6, the Dragon Fight with the color white (denial), yet she has inner resources to help access her intellectual and rational side with yellow on Stage 12, Transcendent Ecstasy once she resolves the denial in Stage 6. This is an example of an axis that is causing tension and difficulty within a relationship. Pam also has no preferred choices in the here and now quadrant which may make communication difficult.

**4. Areas of conflict or tension:** John said he worried about where his wanderlust and need for multiple relationships with women had originated. He worried about his lack of boundaries in relationships. This is one of the reasons it was hard for him to commit to this present marriage. He rejected Stage 5 with gray, which is related to boundary formation and perhaps to guilt about his past behaviors. Since he rejects this stage, it is an area that needs to be addressed, with setting limits as an important task for John. His choice of gray suggests that he wants to let go of his guilt and bring in the healing color of yellow, the color of intellectual awareness and consciousness. These qualities would help in building the needed boundaries.

Pam is feeling anxiety and tension about her relationship with her husband which has become more intense after what happened to her friend's marriage. She is denying her feelings of fragmentation, pain, and low self-esteem with her rejection of Stage 11 with brown. The choice of the color brown often speaks of a negative father relationship. Because her father died when she was 18, Pam may have been trying to resolve her father issues through her

two marriages. Yet, she has been unable to deal with the issues of Stage 6, the Dragon Fight, which would make it possible for her to do this. Pam admits to being afraid of some aspects of her shadow, and acknowledged that she has serious financial difficulties which she often denies or does not wish to address.

**5. Sexuality and sexual issues:** John's choice of violet on Stage 0 may reveal an unconscious desire to return to his source, or an all loving, "cosmic" mother. His sexual exploits seemed to reinforce this deeply felt need. However, orange on Stage 12, Transcendent Ecstasy reveals a powerful sexual and creative drive seeking an outlet. This may be the source of his sexual conflict.

Pam has had unresolved feelings about her sexuality coming from childhood and her early background. She was born with an intensely sexual, physical nature (peach on Stage 0), in direct conflict with her later religious background, and she has had trouble in resolving these two aspects of her life. Her early sexual acting out and her father's and first husband's infidelities have all factored into the extreme anxiety she is feeling about John's "wandering eye." The result has made it difficult to develop into a mature relationship.

**6. Areas of commonality:** This refers to a very strong area for this couple and their relationship. They seem to have an unusually strong early, emotional connection, as both chose two designs in Stage 0, Clear Light, the deep, transpersonal connection to their origins. Both chose Stage 3, showing a willingness to move into the unknown without a defined goal. Both also chose Stage 12 with a primary preference for the same color (yellow). Again, this color can represent the Hero/ Heroine's journey and the wish to seek greater integration and find the sense of fulfillment described earlier. This suggests they are on similar paths toward self-growth and higher consciousness. Information on the similarity of their stage and color choices was unusual and positive for this couple to contemplate. The similar primary colors (yellow, orange, and royal blue) seemed to reflect growing wisdom and positive energy.

**7. Strengths each person brings to the relationship:** Besides the similar choices of stages and colors in their tests, this couple's mandala drawings brought a greater understanding of their relationship issues and strengths. Pam's first mandala (Figure 1), drawn on white paper with the dominant hand, reflects elements of her rejected stage (Stage 6, The Dragon Fight) on the test. At the bottom of the drawing (a deep level of the unconscious) she created a phallic shape in blue and red. These are the "dragon fight" colors and may illustrate the inner struggle with sexual and separation issues. At the top, or more conscious part of the mandala, the red and blue colors move up and are surrounded by a yellow light or halo that suggests a growing awareness. Her second mandala (created on black paper with the non-dominant hand) (Figure 2) shows a spiral movement coming up and ending in Stage 4, Birth or New Beginnings area in the Great Round, a stage which she chose on the test. A burst of golden light explodes in the area near Stages 8, and 9, the here and now, and suggests a peak experience. In analyzing the mandala drawings, they



Figure 1

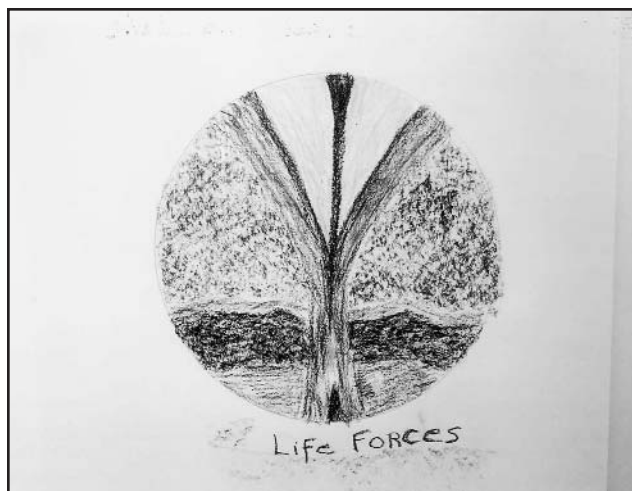


Figure 3

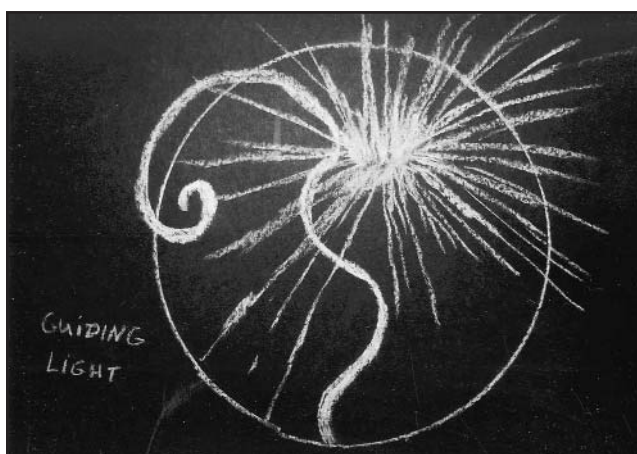


Figure 2



Figure 4

often relate to and enlarge understanding of the test choices. This researcher found that in sharing the results of the test and drawing, Pam related the heightened awareness and inner change she had experienced as she drew the mandala on black paper with her non-dominant hand. This was an important revelation, and Pam and her husband were deeply moved.

John's first mandala, called "life forces," (Figure 3) reflects Stage 12, Transcendent Ecstasy, and suggests a wish for integration and energy for change. He used red, yellow, and black lines that move up to the top of the mandala and into the conscious area. His second mandala (drawn on black paper with the non-dominant hand), called "chaos," (Figure 4) reflects his sense of inner fragmentation. He filled in the mandala with red background and added several spirals suggesting wished-for movement within the psyche. Outside the circle, the tip of an arrow points the way to Stage 5, The Target, on the test. This is his rejected stage and one which he needs to acknowledge in order to build needed boundaries. His second mandala seemed to point him toward this inner work.

These results show how the mandalas can confirm and add new information to the test results. The extent of John's inner pain (red background) was not as clearly shown on

the test alone, and Pam's sense of a peak experience with new insights came through very strongly in her mandala drawn on black paper and the idea of a new beginning.

In conclusion, Pam and John are in a period of major change and flux. They need to work on issues raised by their rejected card choices, which for John is Stage 5, the building of boundaries, and for Pam is Stage 11, the letting go of negative programming from her early environment. Their choices on the test and their drawings indicate enough compatibility to predict that their relationship will continue, and that they each may have a contribution to make in the field(s) of their choice, as a couple or individually. This can begin to happen as they both move more deeply into self-discovery and release old patterns of behavior. In a letter received from Pam a year later, she wrote, "I feel us being easier with each other and ever so much more understanding." Later, she reported that the relationship is much stronger. Each of them is individually pursuing a satisfying career. In this case, the Couple Compatibility Assessment seemed to create a stimulus for improving their relationship. Both Pam and John were able to use the session therapeutically and then follow through with changes and new insights that have strengthened their relationship.

## Conclusion

This case study illustrates the value of the Couple Compatibility Assessment in understanding the elements that affected this couple's relationship. The assessment brought to light current problems, early influences, strengths, weaknesses, future direction, as well as unrecognized emotions that may have affected their relationship. The Couple Compatibility Assessment provides a unique and multi-level assessment technique that helps untangle a relationship very quickly. It allows for a realistic appraisal since it reveals the relationship itself as the third party in the equation. It points to relational strengths and the areas that need work. Sometimes the next steps must be taken separately; at other times there is enough strength in the relationship to proceed together. In this case, the couple's test and drawings indicated that they would be able to develop and grow together. In contrast, another couple that was tested had only one stage in common, and that was stage 9 Crystallization, the locked in self in relationship to the other. The woman picked the vulnerable and childish baby pink and the husband, the gray of depression, denial, and guilt. In their case, there was not enough to hold the relationship together and they since have separated. Hopefully, these individuals can continue to grow, whether together or apart. The goal, from a Jungian perspective, is individuation and a greater sense of wholeness and closeness to the authentic self (Jung, 1965).

Using the MARI® Card Test and mandala drawings in this way opens up the possibility for development of new directions and uses for this assessment. There is even the possibility of expanding its use in workplaces and other situations where relationships are an issue. Therapists who work with couples and who are trained in administering the test can utilize this technique before and during couple therapy as an added source of information and guidance. It can also be offered to couple or family therapists as an adjunctive tool for treatment. There is the possibility of expanding its uses to help in work with families in crisis, especially in regard to a particular child as the identified patient. This assessment could provide new insights and offer help to the family and therapist not normally available from more traditional testing. Many of the couples who have taken this assessment have felt it helped to strengthen their relationship or brought to light areas that were not working for them. Some of the couples are still together, while others have gone their separate ways. Most of the couples in this study wanted to continue with art therapy and other kinds of expressive therapies.

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