Tangling from the Edge: A Collaboration in Mindfulness

by Jane Dickinson, CZT
This book is dedicated to every Tangler and soon-to-be Tangler (I know it’s only a matter of time...).
I can’t wait for you to discover the wonder of this lovely meditation.

There are many, many people to thank for the production of this book. All the contributors, as you will see, are thoughtful teachers and accomplished practitioners of Zentangle® drawing. For a list of contact information for every contributor to this book, see the Index.

Special thanks go to Katy Abbott for her support and assistance, from inception of the original postcard swap to the organization of participants for this compendium, to insightful comments and unwavering positivity.
Bette Abdu is the finest proofreader and most patient Index creator an author could wish to have. Many, many thanks.
Great appreciation goes to the talent at Status Guo Design. SGD contributed a sleek professionalism I’m so proud to share with you.

Learn more about Zentangle® at Zentangle.com where you can read about the founders, Maria Thomas and Rick Roberts, and their creation of Zentangle.

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When I consider the edginess of Zentangle® drawing, I recall the way in which Zentangle encourages us to take a gentle leap into the unknown. We step to the edges of our doubts and fears, and are invited to enter a state of Mindfulness. Mindfulness is being in the present moment, observing without judging, living independently of both past and future. Each stroke of the pen builds a Zentangle drawing that we allow to flow from us without expectation of the finished result. The world and all its demands fall away and we are free to lightly skip along the edge of possibility.

Each of the contributors to this book is a Certified Zentangle Teacher™, or CZT™. This means we have studied directly with renowned calligrapher Maria Thomas and former monk Rick Roberts, founders of Zentangle®. Zentangle grew organically from their personal and professional partnership. You can learn more about them and about Zentangle at Zentangle.com.

Each CZT learns the drawing and philosophy of Zentangle® and then expresses it through her distinctive creativity. We strive to introduce our students, with integrity and joy, to this beautiful art form. Zentangle is so much more than drawing simple patterns. Each CZT has discovered, explored and practiced the depths, the simplicity and complexity, of Zentangle. Only a CZT can guide your first steps (and so many more!) on the journey of your personal and artistic Zentangle discoveries. When you learn from a CZT, you will claim your artistry and have so much fun! You will gain the balance with which to mindfully and confidently dance your own edges.
The process of writing this book represents my own healing from a traumatic brain injury of December, 2012. The personal and creative isolation of being unable to write, draw, use the computer, talk much, eat solid food, drive, concentrate, and deal with all the attendant emotions were immensely, sometimes overwhelmingly, challenging. I would get better, then I would get worse and on like that. 2013 has not been the year that in any way I anticipated it would be! It has been an intense practice in mindful recovery.

When I first started drawing again I was very discouraged as my fine motor skills had been on hiatus. In so many ways during my recovery, I needed to “start over”. As I began creating this book, I needed to set limits for myself, to ease off on my perfectionism, ask for help and practice self-care and kindness. I needed to forgive myself for the frustrating setbacks along the way. None of those comes easily to me. This book is a personal victory.

It has been an honor to work with each of the talented artists and teachers who are the CZTs™ you will find within. When Katy Abbott, CZT, first proposed a swap of Zentangle® postcards on the subject of Mindfulness, I knew I wanted to document the process. I am, after all, The Mindful Drawer, and it seemed like a perfect fit. Katy spread the word among the participants, and the artists within these pages responded with their art and thoughts.
The drawing parameters for the postcard swap put forward by Katy Abbott were to use only tangle patterns beginning with the letters M-I-N-D-F-U-L, on a sturdy paper of 6” x 4”, and with a willingness to mail 4 such original drawings to 4 other participants by the deadline (which deadline at least one of us, ahem, missed in a chasm-like way…). Tangle patterns used were to be listed on each postcard, which is why you will see them listed below each image in the book. You can find most of these patterns listed alphabetically at Tanglepatterns.com, compiled by Linda Farmer, CZT.

As many participants note, and I certainly found, this limitation on tangle patterns actually expanded our usual repertoire to include patterns we may not have drawn for years, or maybe ever.

My further requirement for this book was that each participant write a statement on mindfulness in whatever way she wished. As you will read, some reflected upon mindful practices in their own life challenges, in working with their students, and as a way to stay present in the world. I hope you will find their words as inspiring as I have.

Enjoy!

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Teacher, Author, Publisher, Speaker, Coach
http://www.TheMindfulDrawer.com

Providence, RI, November 2013
Tangling from the Edge: A Collaboration in Mindfulness

Katy Abbott, CZT
Mooka, munchin, florz, n'zepple, flux, indy-rella, and drupe

Bette Abdu, CZT
Fungees, Flora, Linkd, LinQ, UnYun

Shawn Hayden, CZT
Mooka, Intersection, Neuron, DivaDance, Featherfall, Unyun, LotusPods

Jane Dickinson, CZT
N'Zeppel, Ixorus, Flez
Suzanne Wilka, CZT writes:
Mindfulness is staying present, trusting in the wisdom the universe provides when we take time to listen. One of my favorite quotes (below) is my reminder and inspiration for staying present and aware.

“Mindfulness gives you time. Time gives you choices. Choices, skillfully made, lead to freedom.”

-BHANTE HENEPOLA GUNARATAN
Mimi Lempart, CZT writes:
It is important to me to have a daily practice of quiet creativity. The Zentangle® ritual and structure provide the way and the means to do that. The more I practice, the quicker I get to that 'zen' place while I am drawing. The simplicity of Zentangle tools, the small scale, portability, enhanced focus and the concept of 'no mistakes' are attributes that I emphasize in my classes as well. My classes are intentionally small so that students can immediately appreciate the Zentangle experience.

"The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination"
–Carl Rogers
That is part of being mindful: choosing to give away.

Make it a point to smile at a stranger when you walk by or to a cashier as you check out. Call a friend on the phone and hear that person's voice and give them the gift of hearing yours. Say "I love you" to someone special and look into that person's eyes, I mean really look into them.

I have to be mindful of this because even I take myself for granted. If I have to remind myself that I am an artist, that I have talent, that I am important and valuable, then I better let others know their value.

Suzanne Wilka, CZT
Demi, Ixorus, Umble

Shawn Hayden, CZT
MrE, Inapod, Nippa, Dooledo, Falz, Unyun, Leaflet

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Maylea, Insydout, Lanie, Finery, Doolee do

Jane Dickinson, CZT
ItsyTwisty, Malacca, Loxodrome, Fishnet
Nathalie Marinoff, CZT writes:
I simply try to be mindful to always have a kind word and to try and perform a kind deed everyday - which, I believe, carries through when I am teaching.

The following quote is a continuing source of inspiration.

"Mindfulness is simply being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different. Enjoying the pleasant without holding on when it changes (which it will). Being with the unpleasant without fearing it will always be this way (which it won't)."

- James Baraz
BETTE ABDU, CZT WRTES:
In this day and age of excessive/obsessive ‘multi-tasking’, Zentangle® has provided me with an island oasis. While I have used other methods of meditation (TM, Silva et al) the immediacy of Zentangle to get me into the zone makes it my choice for a daily exercise in mindfulness.

Impermanence is a principle of harmony. When we don’t struggle against it, we are in harmony with reality.

– PEMA CHODRON
I challenged myself to use a tangle only once, but I love Mooka and 'Nzeppel too much to limit myself there. I celebrated that realization and had even more fun.

That is part of being mindful: choosing to give away. Make it a point to smile at a stranger when you walk by or a cashier as you check out. Call a friend on the phone and hear that person's voice and give them the gift of hearing yours. Say "I love you" to someone special and look into that person's eyes, I mean really look into them. I have to be mindful of this because even I take myself for granted. If I have to remind myself that I am an artist, that I have talent, that I am important and valuable, then I better let others know their value.

This postcard swap stretched my creativity. Yes, I was limited by using only tangles that begin with the letters M-I-N-D-F-U-L, but I did not lose the Zen aspect of this exercise. In fact, the structure may have helped achieve that. I chose these particular tangles in part because I had to, but also I wanted to use tangles that I had not drawn for months or years.

When I heard the word "mindful," the first thing that came to my mind was "purposeful." In order to be mindful, you have to closely look at your life. Pay attention to the smell of your tea. Study trees and clouds around you. Be deliberate when hugging your teddy bear. All the little details matter. Just like in Zentangle®.

DIANA HIRSCH, CZT writes:

In order to be mindful, you have to closely look at your life. Pay attention to the smell of your tea. Study trees and clouds around you. Be deliberate when hugging your teddy bear. All the little details matter. Just like in Zentangle®.
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Diana Hirsch, CZT
Ibex, Drupe, Marasu, Finery, Florz, 'Nzeppel, Flukes

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Intersect, Mssst, Marneriana, MaidenMotherCrone

Diana Hirsch, CZT
Umble, Mooka, Fengle, 'Nzeppel, Munchin, Fife

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Dizessa, Frairum
Shawn Hayden, CZT writes:
I have always been a seeker interested in spiritual practice. The practice of meditating or even praying has been a struggle. The art of Zentangle® has given my monkey mind a task to do and has stripped away stress and anxiety. Zentangle drawing has allowed me to enjoy what is going on in and around me.
Being mindful to me means living fully and being present in your life.

When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace and love.

– Thich Nhat Hanh
Susan Clark, CZT writes:
To me mindfulness means being present in the here and now. It means to give your mind fully to every moment, instead of letting your thoughts be elsewhere, particularly in the past or future. The present moment is all there really is, but it takes practice to be truly mindful and live in each and every moment. Meditation is a great way to learn and practice being mindful, and so is the art method of Zentangle®. In my classes, I teach mindfulness by telling my students to breathe, appreciate the moment, the wonderful tools, the fact that they are putting pen to paper and being creative when our world is so technology driven, and to focus on what they are doing by making each stroke deliberate. I also emphasize that they should let go of judgment and just enjoy the process. I point out that the Zentangle method of art is a metaphor for life, and if we live mindfully the quality of our life is greatly enhanced.
**Jane Glodoski, CZT writes:**
I chose to participate in the mindful swap on a whim. The last thing I needed was one more thing to do and one more deadline. What I found instead was an inspiring journey where I challenged myself to focus on my Zentangle® practice, be aware of my meditation and concentrate on being mindful. Then, as a bonus, I received beautiful creations from others who had joined in on the journey.

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Mindful and creative, a child who has neither a past, nor examples to follow, nor value judgements, simply lives, speaks and plays in freedom

– Arnaud Desjardins
Katy Abbott, PhD, MGS, CZT, writes: I was initially drawn to mindfulness through my academic career as a faculty member in a School of Nursing. Many research studies show that clinician mindfulness leads to patient safety. As I read more, it seemed that what I experienced while tangling was similar to the benefits experienced from practicing mindfulness techniques. After becoming a CZT™, one of the first classes I taught was to 50 masters prepared nurses. They loved it and immediately saw the application not only to their own lives, but to their patient’s lives. I was thrilled. While I share this story with all my students, I am also using Zentangle® to personally become more mindful. It is something I have to work on each and every day.

Recently, I had oral surgery. This was the most difficult test of my mindfulness practice to date. I found myself reluctantly in the dentist chair waiting for the Novocain to fully numb my mouth and wishing it could numb my fears. I didn't want to acknowledge that I was afraid of what was going to happen. I sent a text message to my husband to say "I'm scared" and thanks to auto-correct it sent him a message saying "I'm scarfed". Ugh. I had to text it to him again. I felt my eyes well up and my body start to shake. I decided to fully feel the fear, and hoped no one would noticed me shaking. Then after a few moments, the fear passed and I was okay. Being mindful helped me recognize the emotion and observe my experience. Then I was able to investigate my fear and ask myself "what do I need right now"? I needed to remember that this feeling would not last forever, that I was safe, and in qualified hands. And that I would heal.

I still have a lot of practicing to do. It's a good thing that I enjoy tangling because it helps me keep working on my mindful awareness.
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Katy Abbott, CZT
Mooka, munchin, florz, msst, n'zepple, nipa, and fescu

Jane Dickinson, CZT
N'Zeppel, Foh-liage, Mobius

Katy Abbott, CZT
Mooka, n'zepple, flux, drupe, nipa, unyun, and Lanie

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Madhats, Dandylyoun, Fricasee
Linda Deedy, CZT writes:
After I signed up for this swap I looked up the definition of mindfulness – this is where my inspiration came from for my designs. The one with no words (upper left), contains only one tangle for each letter of mindful – a mindful decision indeed.

Try to be mindful, and let things take their natural course. Then your mind will become still in any surroundings, like a clear forest pool. All kinds of wonderful, rare animals will come to drink at the pool, and you will clearly see the nature of all things.

– Ajahn Chah
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Bette Abdu, CZT
N'zeppel, Nipa, Laced, Isocher, Doolee Do, Lucky, Funls

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Dugwud, Fescu, Foxtrot, Fricle, U-dezine, Unme

Jane Dickinson, CZT
Merryweather, Fleuve, Mullane, Florz

Katy Abbott, CZT
Mooka, munchin, florz, msst, n'zepple, flux, indy-rella, nipa, unyun
Sacil Armstrong, CZT writes:
The Mindful Postcard Swap came at a time when I needed a reminder on focus on the practice of Zentangle® and not just the business side. Creating the postcards was relaxing and exciting, and I was easily lost in the tangles for days.

Collecting the patterns that fit the rules, choosing the ones to use, even cutting the watercolor paper to the size I wanted automatically took me from the frazzled state I was in to a calmer, happier place. I ended up making extras for friends and I have renewed my practice of tangling almost every day. Playing with patterns by myself is different than tangling as I'm teaching and I need that personal time to maintain my peace.
MARY CARROLL, CZT WRITES:
When I teach Zentangle® classes, I emphasize the meditative aspect of the process, even, and sometimes especially, if some students claim they are interested in getting right down to drawing. They are always surprised to find how calming Zentangle can be! Personally, I have a difficult time with traditional meditation; I lose concentration too quickly. But working on a tangle always helps me become mindful and this is a great gift! I also have a personal example of how Zentangle gives us the courage to do things we “thought we couldn’t do”. I have never painted. At our New England CZT retreat in New Hampshire (Fall 2012) we created a ZIA (Zentangle-Inspired Art) by tangling over a watercolor wash background. Back home, I began experimenting with watercolor. I love my new-found art form. Zentangle gave me the courage to become a painter!
Jean Smeriglio, CZT writes:
The swap provided an opportunity to realize the practice of mindfulness as a valuable tool I have used in my life. Using creativity to express my originality, I never had the title of “Mindfulness” to define how I view and relate to the world. Growing up next to an Indian reservation, “I always listen to the wind – I listen to my heart – that’s how I live my life.” Since I accepted participating in the postcard swap, I have researched several parts of being mindful to create sessions for my Zentangle® students. The first session is “Discover new possibilities . . . Reimagine” where individuals use a practice sheet to merge two patterns [Yoga for the Brain by S. Bartholomew]. Second “Don’t just imitate . . . Express yourself” using the Venn Diagram.

Students put their tangles into sets, forming a union of two sets. They are instructed to follow the principles for creating a tangleation (new pattern) within the intersection. Time allowed each to move into starting a Set of 3 Venn Diagram as well. So my initial knowledge sparked a way to discover a new possibility to express how to be mindful with my Zentangle® students.

In this moment, there is plenty of time. In this moment, you are precisely as you should be. In this moment, there is infinite possibility.

-Victoria Moran
Jane Armstrong, CZT writes:
“Don’t wish your life away.” “It’s not the destination, it’s the journey.” How often have we heard these admonishments to be really present and mindful of the life we’re living? Zentangle® makes being mindful effortless. As you contemplate and focus your attention on the next line, everything else falls away. All cares and worries recede and the pure joy of creating fills your mind and soul! It is mindfulness in its purest form. I am grateful every day for this wonderful art form/relaxation method. With Zentangle, the path to mindfulness is always at your fingertips!

Mindfulness is the gentle effort to be continuously present with experience.

-John Kabat-Zinn
EMILY CLASSON, CZT WRITES:

Life is busy. Sometimes it's easy to get lost in the chaos of work, family, home, and the rest of the world. It can be difficult for me to settle down and just be. While I enjoy meditation, it's often difficult for me to focus enough to achieve the full benefit. Thanks to the Zentangle® method, I am able to let the chaos go while creating something beautiful. I love the calm sense of focus I find, and I think the combination of relaxation and creativity appeals to the multitasker in me. The many positive effects have spilled into the rest of my life even when I'm not tangling. I approach problems at home or work in a more mindful and logical way. With my regular practice, I am calmer, able to slow down, and ready to find constructive ways of facing challenges. I have become more mindful in my daily life, and I am truly grateful!
Patsy Monk, RN, CZT writes:
As a nurse, I am very blessed to share mindful techniques with a multitude of individuals. We approach mindfulness as a path to peace and reduced stress. With eyes closed, we start with a deep breath which helps us to focus and pause. This brings time to a stop and peace begins.

Nothing else matters. We are keenly aware of ourselves in this specific time and space, without being critical, judgmental or rushed. Following a few minutes of quiet, we proceed to an activity. Often, this is Zentangle®-which offers a 'no mistake' zone. Participants learn new Tangles and are then given time to draw Tangles from earlier classes or their own patterns.

We encourage each other to cultivate mindfulness a minimum of 20 minutes a day.
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With fondest gratitude to
Bette Abdu, CZT
for preparing this excellent Index!
Tangling from the Edge:  
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by Jane Dickinson, CZT

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You can learn more about me and my art at my website, The Mindful Drawer.