

Let Them Color!

By **Melissa Farrell** | Special to the Jewish News

Most of us have seen the new trend of adult coloring books sweeping social media, promising to relieve stress and anxiety. Amazon now has a category for “Coloring Books for Grown-Ups” on its site and even CNN put together a list of bestselling adult coloring books.

It’s clear that people are willing to at least buy these books to give it a try. However, the question remains for many: Does coloring actually reduce anxiety? Are adults just yearning for the carefree days of youth? Well, I’m sure that everyone has days when we would rather be kids again (especially when bills are due), but many psychologists have known the power of coloring for years.

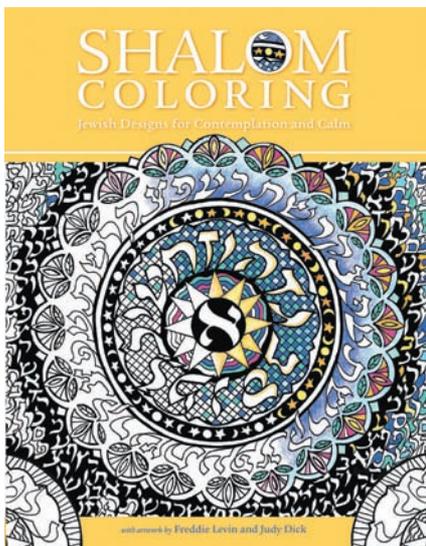
I began using coloring in my practice in 2008 after reading an article about the coloring of intricate and repetitive patterns, including mandalas — spiritual and ritual symbols in Indian religions, representing the universe — being useful in reducing anxiety.

Anyone who visits my office can see what has been dubbed my “wall quilt” where I display my clients’ work. The key ingredient for why coloring mandalas reduces anxiety appears to be the intricacy and amount of attention to detail required for the activity.

Coloring intricate designs and focusing on a concrete task like coloring can help people achieve a state of “mindfulness,” a term most people associate with meditation. Mindfulness is actually defined as “a mental state achieved by focusing one’s awareness on the present moment,” and while meditation is certainly one way to achieve mindfulness, it is not the only way. Studies have consistently shown that coloring allows one to achieve mindfulness, which in turn causes a reduction in anxiety.

While the focus of the research has been on the benefits of coloring for adults, it is important to remember that our kids need ways to be mindful, too.

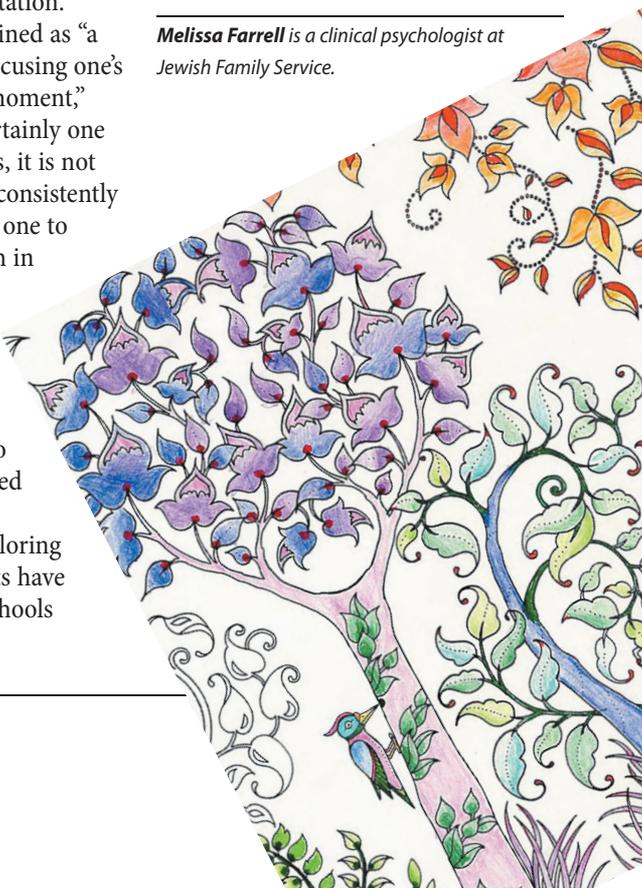
While we all associate coloring with small children, the arts have been diminishing in our schools



and the demands for academics and focused attention have increased. Once our children start to grow beyond “typical” coloring pages of cartoon characters, many of them give up on the pastime. However, this important avenue to anxiety relief should continue to be encouraged.

Buy, print or make coloring pages for your pre-teen or teenager. Supply them with colored pencils and fine point markers. It can also be a great way to foster a connection with kids who so rarely slow down enough to talk with. When they are anxious or unable to settle themselves, color with them! You can even make a “coloring night” or build it into your routine before bed. You need not even speak; the shared activity itself can lead to better connection and calm for the both of you. *

Melissa Farrell is a clinical psychologist at Jewish Family Service.



StandWithUs MICHIGAN FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

5TH ANNUAL GALA

CELEBRATING THE 14TH ANNIVERSARY OF STANDWITHUS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2015 · 6:30 PM

ADAT SHALOM SYNAGOGUE, FARMINGTON HILLS, MI 48334



HONORING
ANNETTE & RUSSELL
MESKIIN

FOR THEIR WORK
ON BEHALF OF ISRAEL



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
HUSSEIN ABOUBAKR

SURVIVOR OF
TAHRIR SQUARE
VIOLENT RIOTS IN
EGYPT DURING THE
ARAB SPRING

GALA CHAIR
REVA ROSEN

RECEPTION, PROGRAM,
AND DINNER

MUSIC
STEFAN KUKURUGYA

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
STANDWITHUS MICHIGAN
248.891.2563
STANDWITHUSMICHIGAN@GMAIL.COM

REGISTER ONLINE AT
STANDWITHUS.COM/MIGALA



StandWithUs is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the story of Israel's achievements and ongoing challenges is told on campuses and in communities around the world. We believe that education is the road to peace – that knowledge of the facts will correct common prejudices about the Arab-Israeli conflict and will promote discussions and policies that can help promote peace in the region.

2045700