Tree Of Life Amulet

TUTORIAL

Aletha Tjaden, copyright 2016

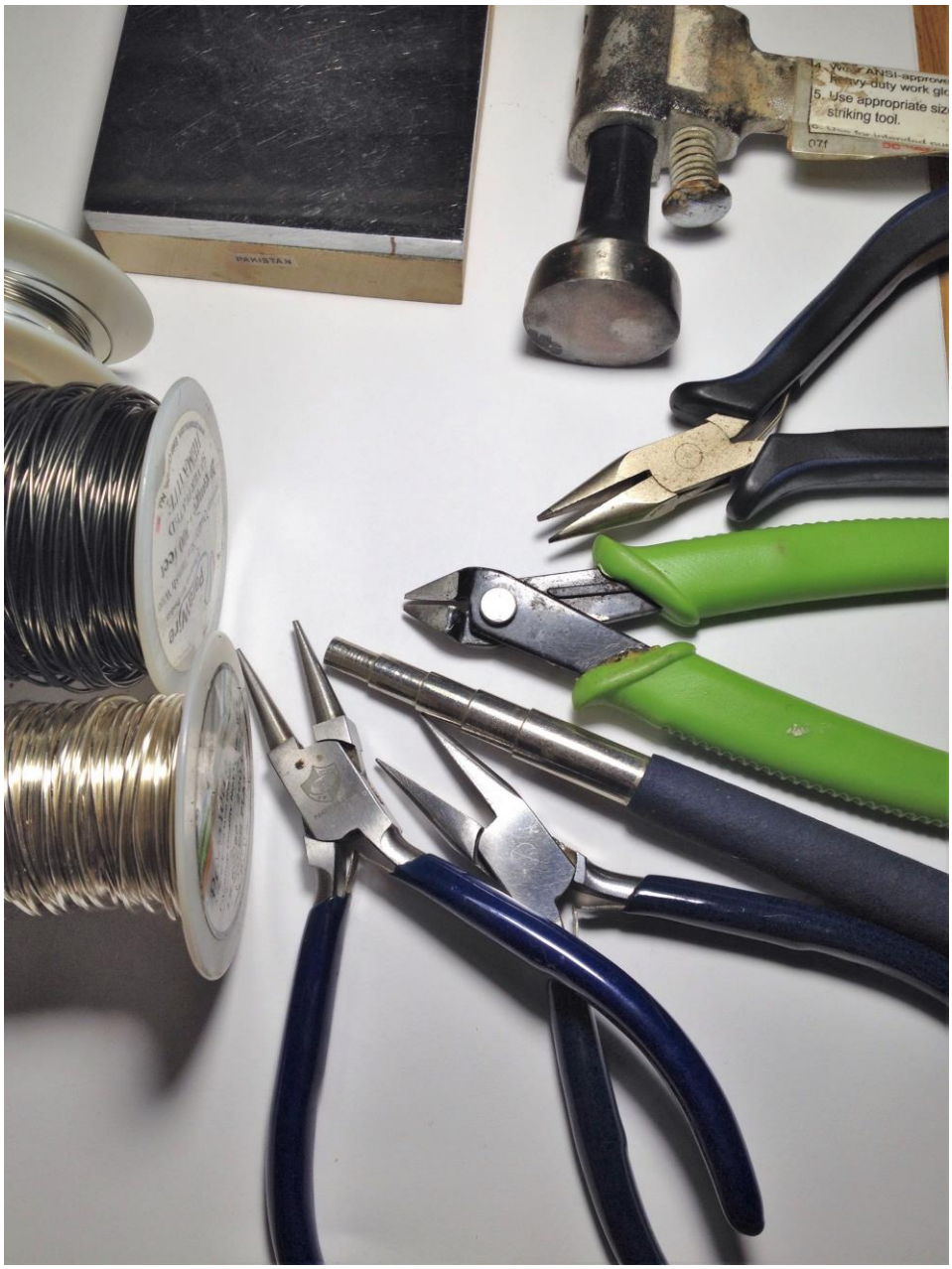


Figure 1

These are my filthy, well-loved tools that I've used to create this piece, don't panic, you don't have to have all these tools to create this pendant. The minimum requirements are 1 pair chain nose pliers, 1 pair wire cutters. I recommend round nose pliers and a second pair of chain nose or any type of pliers without teeth that you can hold wires tight with, but you don't need them if you don't mind weird looking swirls or looser looking trees.

You'll need a minimum of 43 and ¼ inches (110 cm) of 18 gauge wire, 9 and ½ inches (24 cm)of 20 gauge wire and 237 inches (602 cm) of 24 gauge wire and a 25mm (1 inch across) round Cabochon, this will work with low dome and higher domed cabochons. I recommend using dead soft wire. This pendant is easier than it looks, just pay close attention and take your time, the worst thing that will happen is you'll make some scrap wire.

I'm not a teacher or any sort of professional, I'm just a person that loves rocks. Are you ready to take this journey with me? Let's go!

The materials used in the pictures are:

18 and 24 gauge non-tarnish fine silver-plated copper Parawire. 20 and 24 gauge Hematite enameled fine silver-plated copper Parawire. www.Parawire.com 25mm round by 6mm thick Blackstone cabochon. The colors are used for the sake of clear pictures, you can use any type of wire.

Figure 2

Chapter One

A Sturdy Base

Working from your spool of 18 gauge wire, wrap the wire snug around the circumference of the stone. This wire will be short, cut it just a tiny bit bigger than the circumference.

Figure 3

➔ *The wire pictured is 3 and ¼ inches long, the stone is 25mm.*

Use the stone to shape this wire into a circle the circumference of the stone, the tails should overlap.

Figure 4

Figure 5

Flip your stone over so you're working on the back now.

Gently squeeze your wires together being careful to keep the round shape, you want the wire to sit as close to the edge as possible without hanging over. It's important this wire is shaped right, it will be the anchor for everything.

Once you have it shaped right CAREFULLY curl the ends in. Recheck the shape to the back of the stone, the shape of the decorative weave will depend on the shape of this wire.

Figure 6

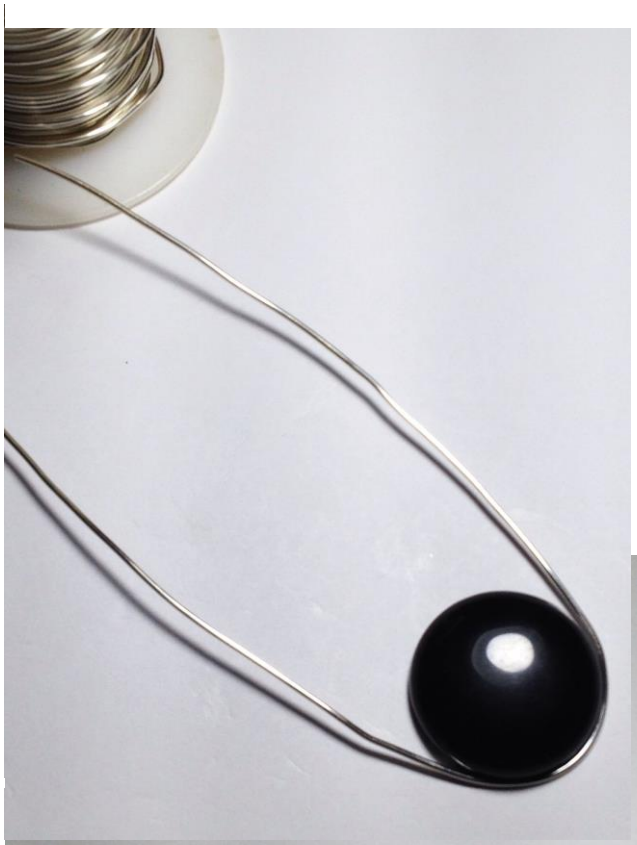
Hammering this wire is optional but I recommend it, it stiffens the wire making it less likely to bend out of shape. If you hammer it hold the curls together and start hammering on the opposite side. If you don't hold the curls hammering will straighten out the perfect circle you just made and you'll have to reshape it.

→*Through the rest of the tutorial I will refer to this wire as "the hammered wire".*

Figure 7

If you don't hammer this wire you'll need to wrap some 24 gauge wire around the loops to prevent the circle from pulling apart. Make sure the tails of the wrap wire are both on the front, they'll be covered by the stone later.

Figure 8



Chapter Two

Sunburst Weave

➔ *Through the rest of the tutorial I'll be referring to the 18 gauge wires that we'll be weaving around as "base wires".*

Working off the spool, bend your 18 gauge wire around the stone, leaving generous tails on each side. The length of these wires will determine the length of the bail. Cut three more wires the same length as the one you measured for size. For a total of 4 base wires.

➔ *The 18 gauge wires pictured are each 10 inches long, I suggest using at least 10 inch wires your first time making this pendant.*

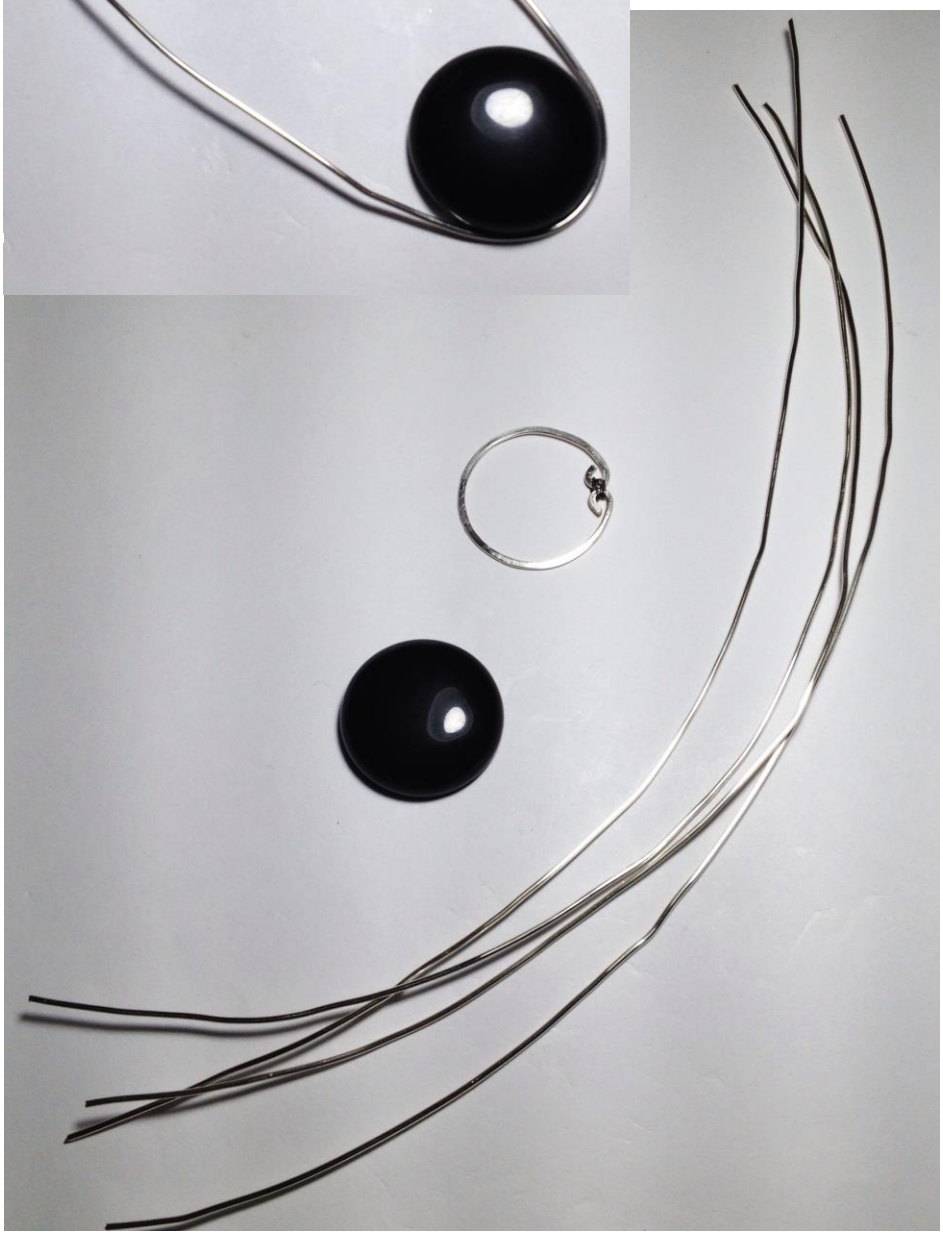


Figure 9

Figure 10

Determine the middle of one of the 18 gauge base wires, sit the stone at the middle point and loosely bend the wire around it. We are determining where to begin the weave while leaving fairly even lengths for the bail. Bend one end of the 18 gauge wire straight up from the top middle.

Figure 11

Using the first wire as a guide bend the other 3 base wires at the same point.

➔ I used my chain nose pliers to make nice even bends.

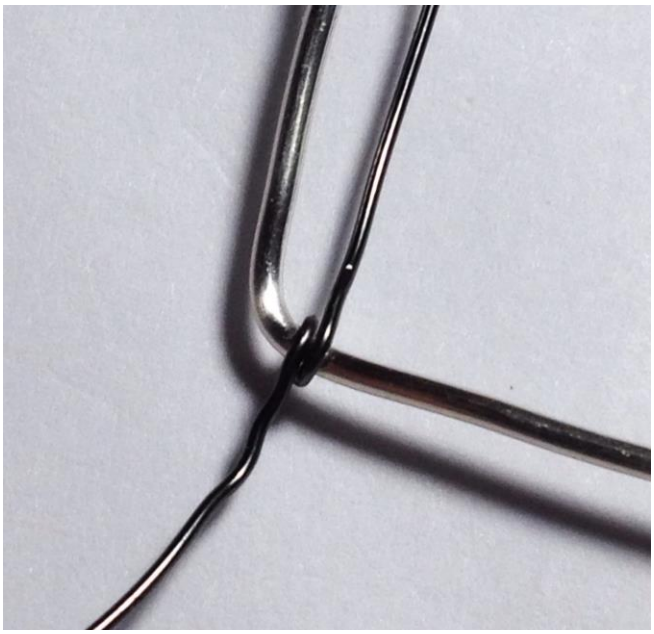


Figure 12

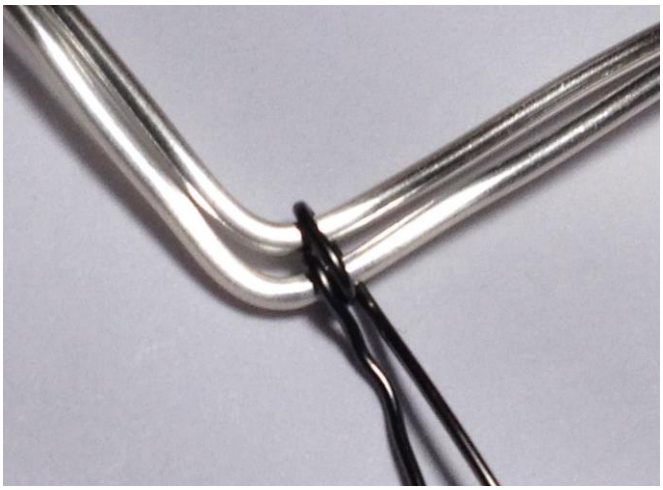


Figure 13

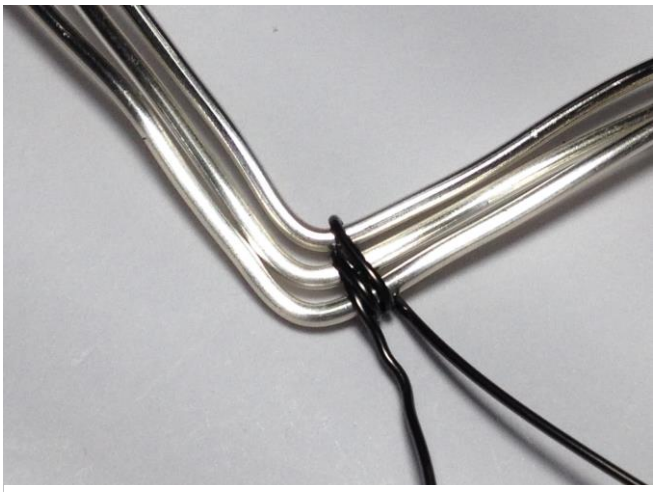


Figure 14

The most difficult part of this weave, as with any weave, is getting it started to the point where it holds itself together. It takes about 3 whole sunbursts before it will hold itself together, don't give up, you can do it!

I usually spool out about an arm's length of 24 gauge wire to weave with, I started with a 30 inch length in these pictures.

1. Wrap the 24 gauge wire around the first base wire once leaving a tail of at least an inch. We'll attach that tail to the hammered wire later.

2. Stack the next base wire on the first and wrap the 24 gauge wire around both.

➔ *When wrapping this weave be careful not to over-tighten the weave wires, remember your 24 gauge wire has to be able to fit between all the base wires, including the bottom wire.*

3. Stack the third base wire on top of the first two, wrap the weave wire around all three.

➔ *Throughout the rest of the tutorial I'll refer to the 24 gauge wire as "the weave wire".*

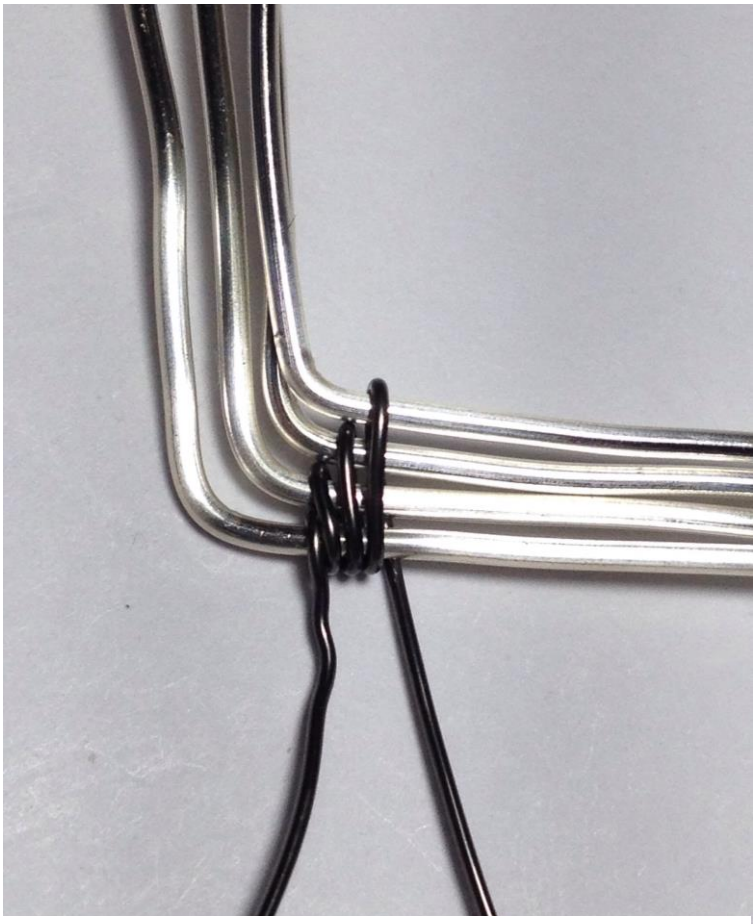


Figure 15

4. Stack the fourth base wire on top of the other three and wrap the weave wire all the way around.

➔ *Keep the weave pushed up as close to the bends in the base wires as possible. At this point the base wires and the weave wire will slide around, just push them back in place*

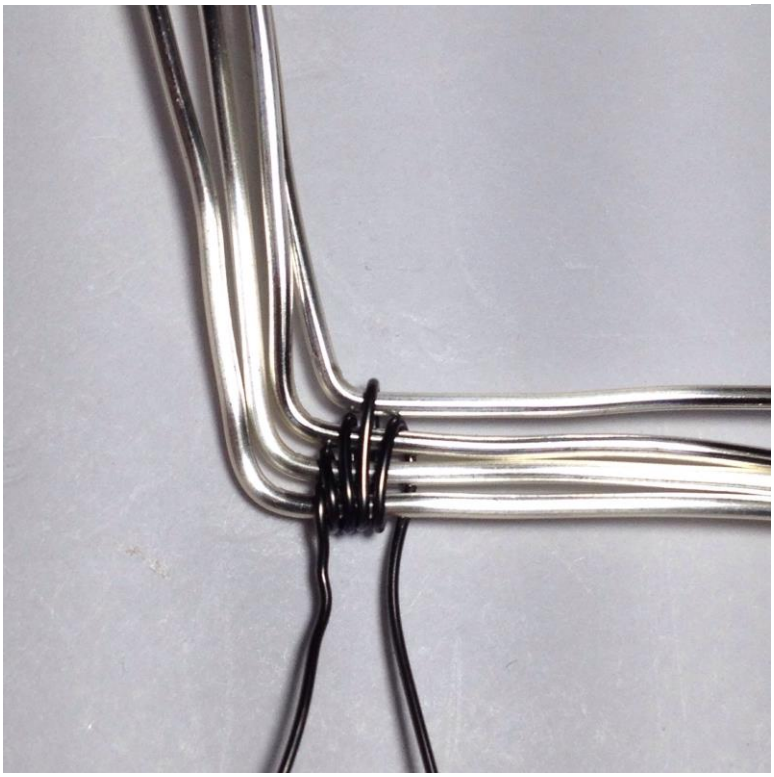


Figure 16

5. Wrap the weave wire around the bottom three base wires being careful not to wrap too tight.

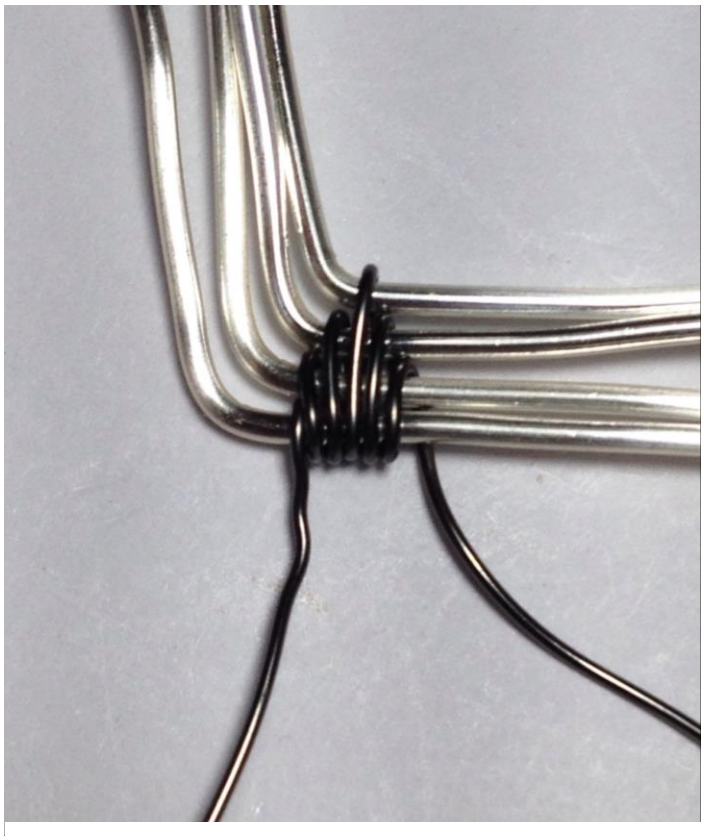


Figure 17

6. Wrap the weave wire around the bottom two base wires being extra careful not to wrap too tight.

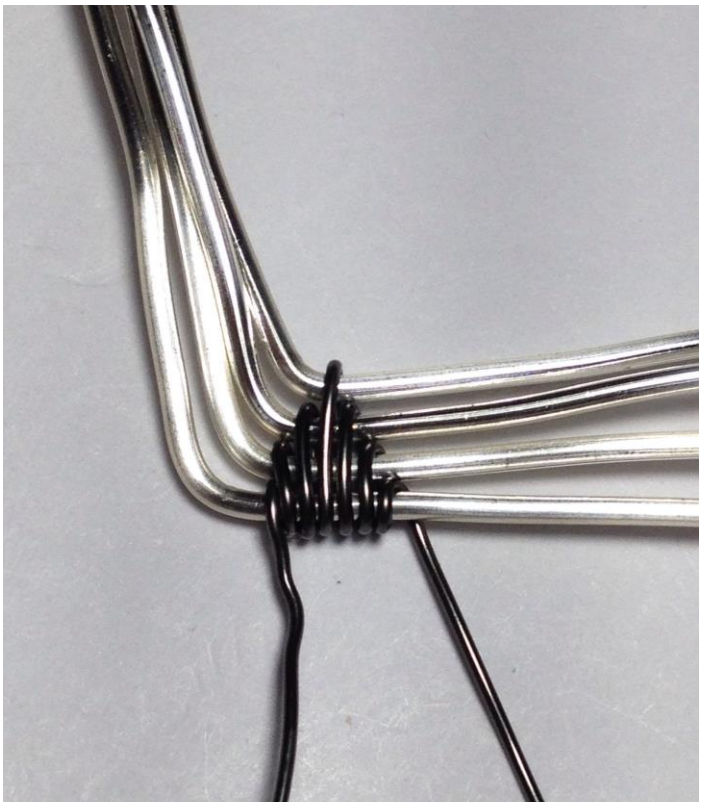


Figure 18

7. Wrap the weave wire around the bottom base wire and you've made your first sunburst!!

➔*At this point you may realize you wrapped too tightly and the last wrap won't fit snug against the rest. You can wiggle it, jiggle it and try and try to jam it in there. If that doesn't work you can try backing up a few wraps and loosening it. If that doesn't work I suggest you take the wrap wire off the base wires and try it again, take a deep breath, they get easier!*

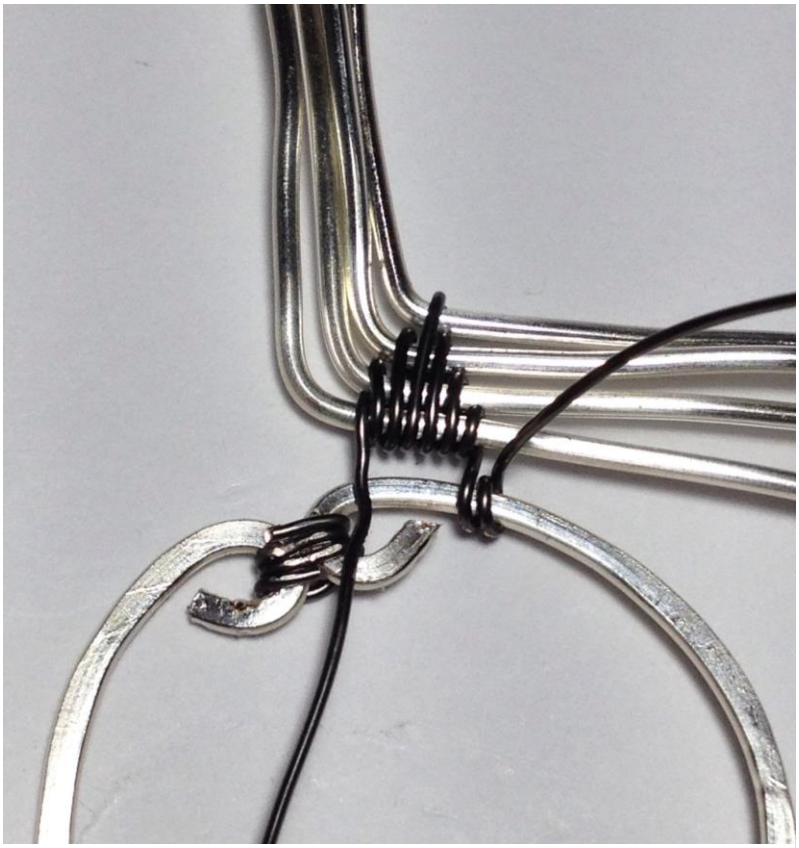


Figure 19

Now we're going to do a figure eight weave around the hammered wire. The weave wire goes between the bottom base wire and the hammered then around the hammered wire twice and back between the bottom base wire and hammered wire.

➔ *A figure eight weave wraps around a base wire then goes between it and the next wire around the second and back between again making the shape of an eight.*

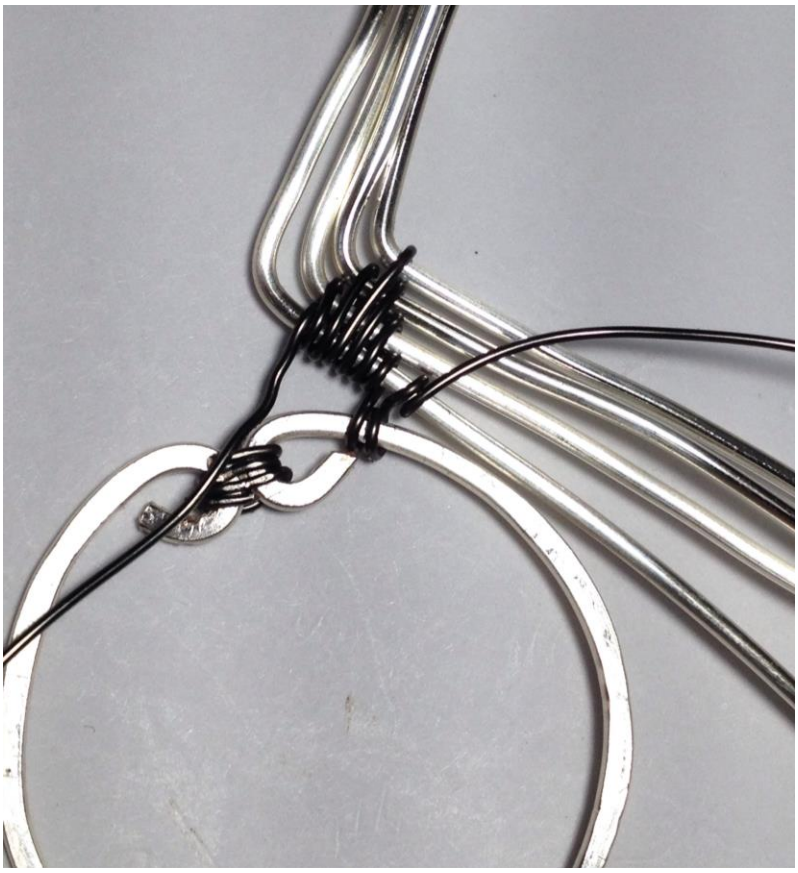


Figure 20

Take the weave around the bottom base wire once and continue with the sunburst weave.

➔ *We use the figure eight weave between the hammered wire and bottom base wire to maintain a gap between the bottom base wire and the hammered wire large enough to fit the 24 gauge tree wires through later. It's very important to maintain a consistent gap all the way around.*

Figure 21

After about three sunbursts the base wires should slide around a lot less and be more manageable.

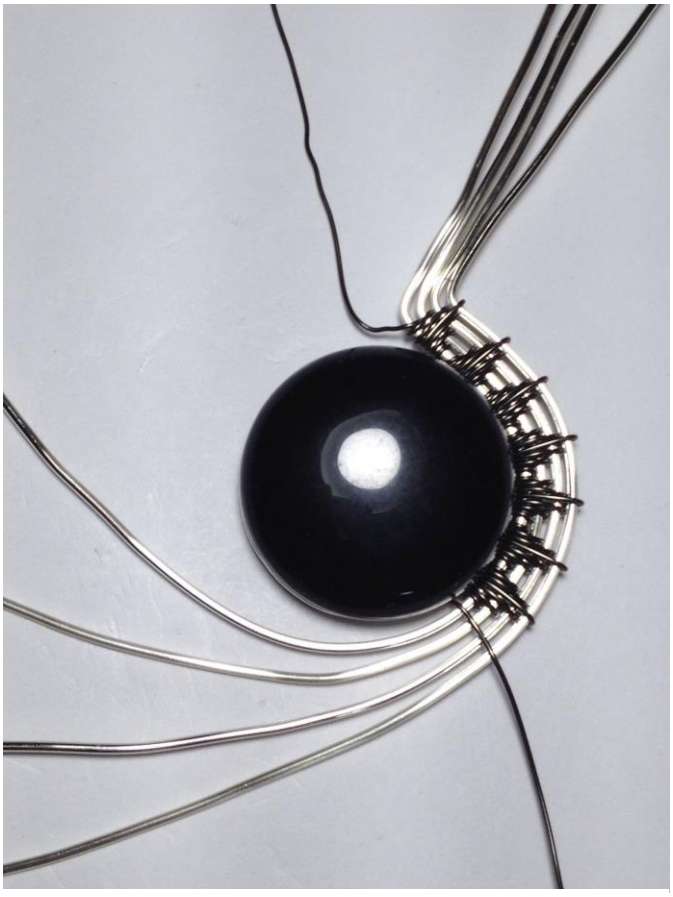


Figure 22

Continue with the sunburst attaching it to the hammered wire with a figure eight weave between each burst.

Gently curve the base wires to the shape of the hammered wire as you weave.

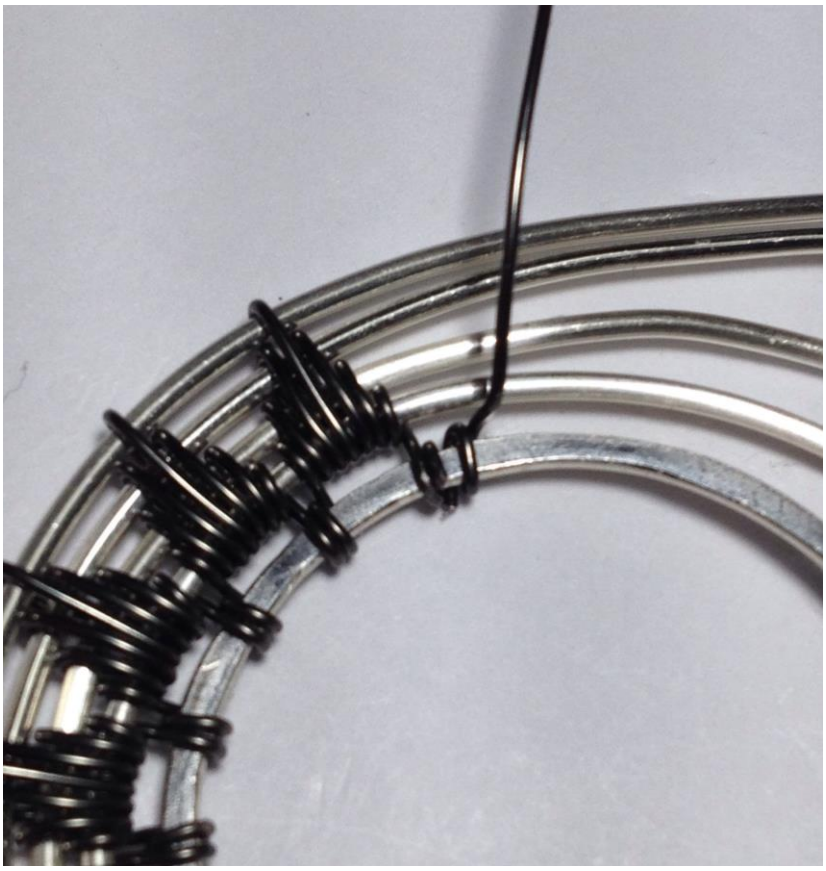


Figure 23

When your weave wire gets too short you'll need to add more. Add it between sunbursts. Wrap the old weave around the hammered wire once, trim and tuck the tail on what will be the front of the hammered wire, the stone will cover the tails. Wrap the new weave wire once around the hammered wire, tuck the tail on the front, and continue your weave.

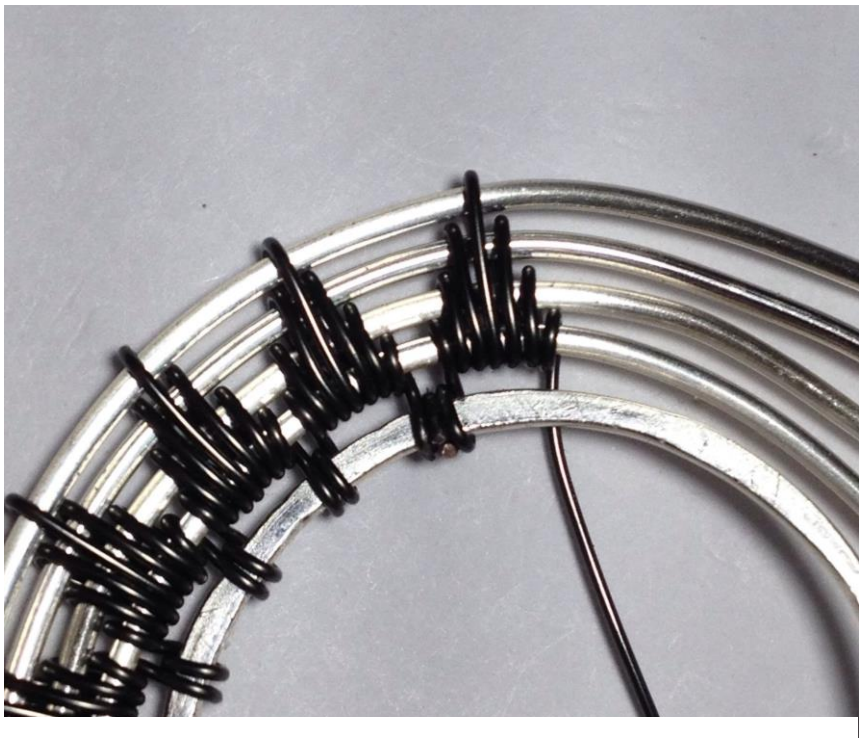


Figure 24

Be sure to push the tails and the next sunburst as close to previous sunburst as possible.

➔ *Remember to keep checking that a 24 gauge wire will fit between the hammered wire and the bottom base wire.*

Figure 25

➔ *As you weave around the curve you'll find the ends of your base wires are getting friendly with the beginning of the base wires making it frustrating to weave….*

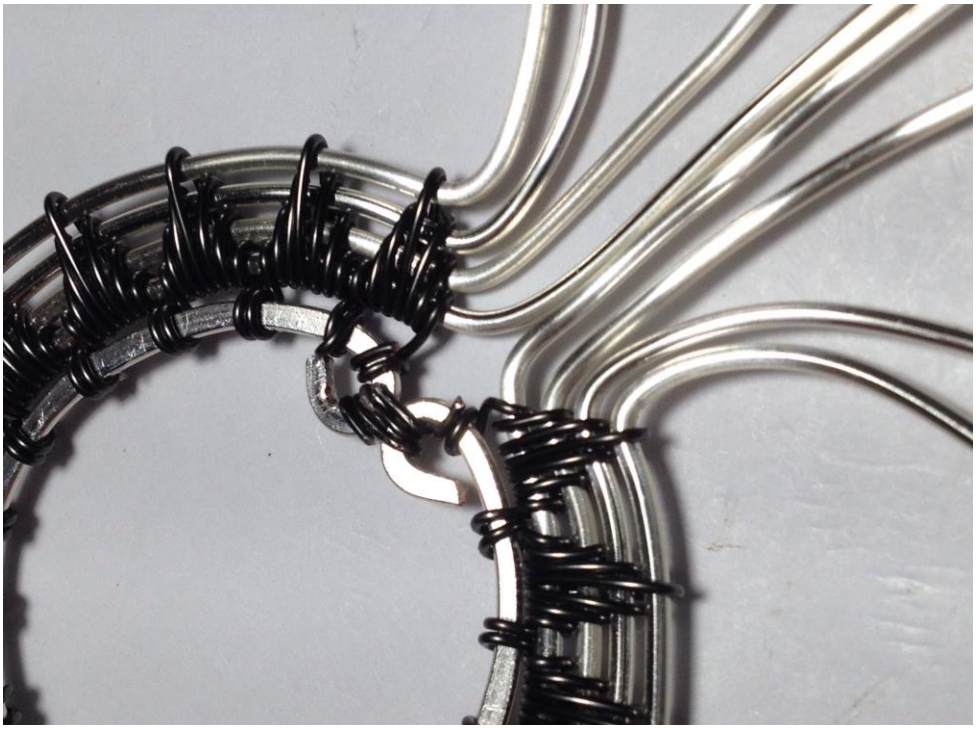
Figure 26

➔ *you can gently curve the ends away from each other to make it easier to weave.*

➔ *You made it all the way around, great job! Look at that beautiful sunburst pattern you made*!

➔ *If the curls of your hammered wire aren't perfectly centered that's ok, they'll only be seen on the back.*

Figure 27



Wrap the tails of both ends of your weave wire around the hammered wire, trim and tuck on the front of the hammered wire.

Bend your base wires so you have four straight up the center and two on each side curving away from the center.

Figure 28

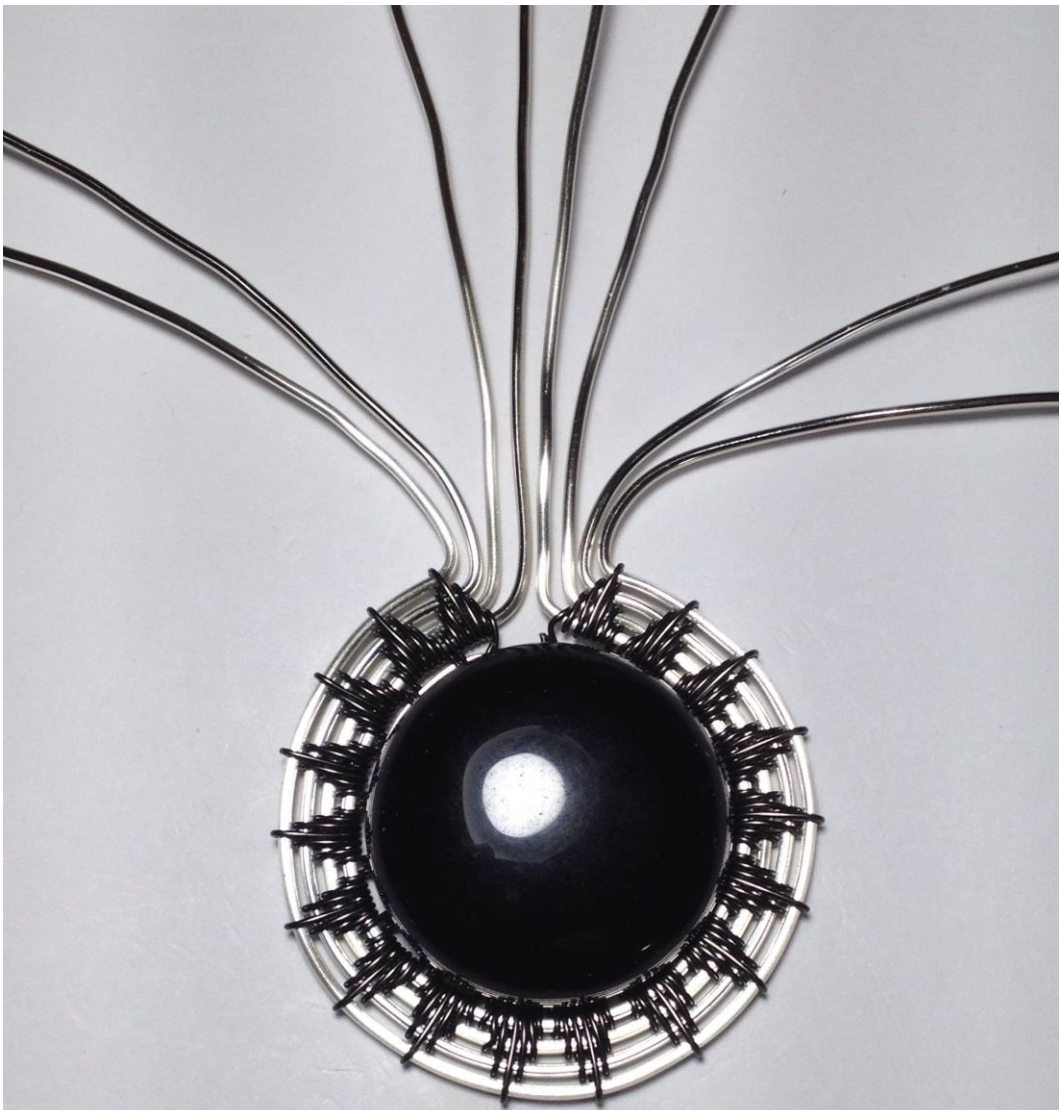


Figure 29

Sit your stone in the center and admire your creation thus far!! Well done!!

In the middle of Asgard, where the gods live, is Yggdrasil. Yggdrasil is the tree of life. It is an eternal green Ash tree; the branches stretch out over all of the nine worlds, and extend up and above the heavens. Yggdrasil is carried by three enormous roots....

The tree we will create next is based on this Viking legend, with full branches and roots in the iconic Yggdrasil shape.

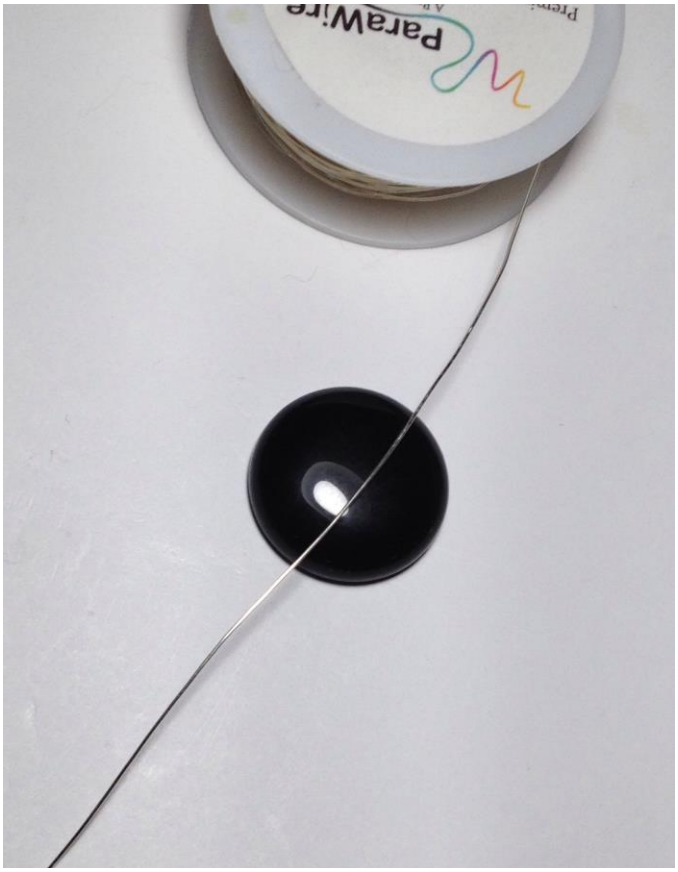


Figure 30

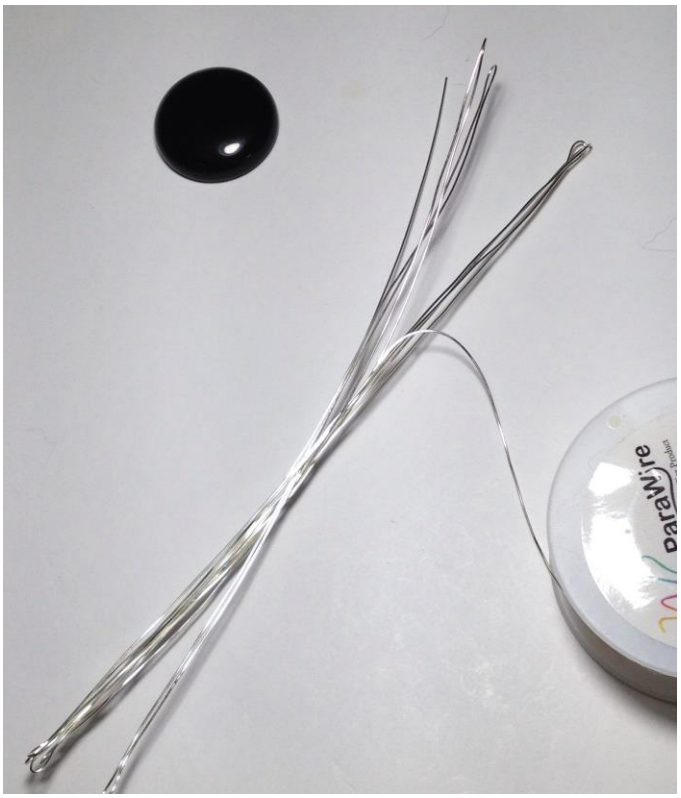


Figure 31

Chapter Three

Building A Tiny Tree

Set aside the weave you just completed it's time to build a tiny tree!

➔ *Check to be sure 24 gauge will fit between the hammered wire and bottom base wire. If it won't fit you can use 26 gauge instead, the tree will look a bit spindly but it will work.*

Working off the spool of 24 gauge wire we need to estimate how long our tree wires need to be. Don't be stingy with the wire on your first try, they need to be long enough to twist into a tree and still be able to work comfortably with the ends. The branches and roots will be wrapped around the hammered wire but they have to be long enough to manipulate. When I'm using inexpensive wire I'll judge the length I need then fold it over the same length working off the spool, until I have seventeen wires folded over like an accordion.

➔ *I'll be using 6 and ½ inch tree wires in this tutorial*.

Trim the ends off both ends of your 24 gauge wire accordion so you have 17 wires all the same length.

➔ *When I use more expensive wire I cut each wire individually measuring the length of each exactly to cut down on waste.*

Figure 32

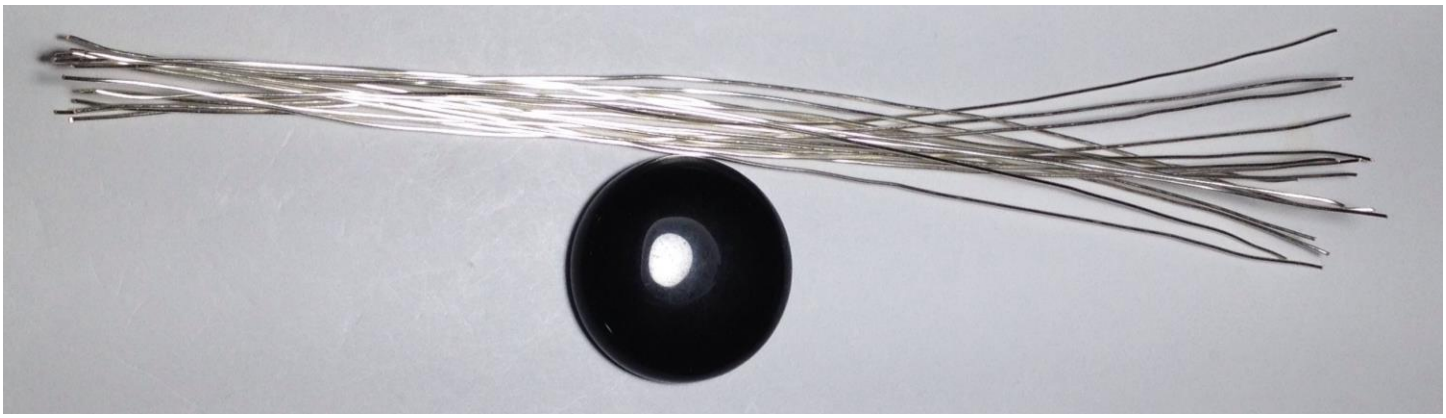


Figure 33

I've tried this tree with more wires and less wires, you can use as few or as many as you want, keeping in mind the tree will be holding the cabochon in place. I've found seventeen 24 gauge wires is the golden number for a full sturdy looking tree on a 25 to 26mm round cabochon.

If your using 26 gauge wire for your tree you might want to add a few more wires to make a sturdier, fuller looking tree.

Figure 34

Make one loose twist in your wire bundle with your fingers, a little off center, the root end being shorter than the branch end. Keep a firm grip on the bundle or it will fall apart. This twist will be used to form the trunk of your tree.

➔ *Here is where two pairs of pliers come in handy.*

Clamp down tight on the wire bundle on the loose wires as close as you can to the twist at each end of the twist. Tighten the existing twist by twisting it 3 or 4 more times in the same direction. You only want to twist the existing twist tighter not make it longer, it should get shorter. The more you twist it the more gnarled the trunk will look

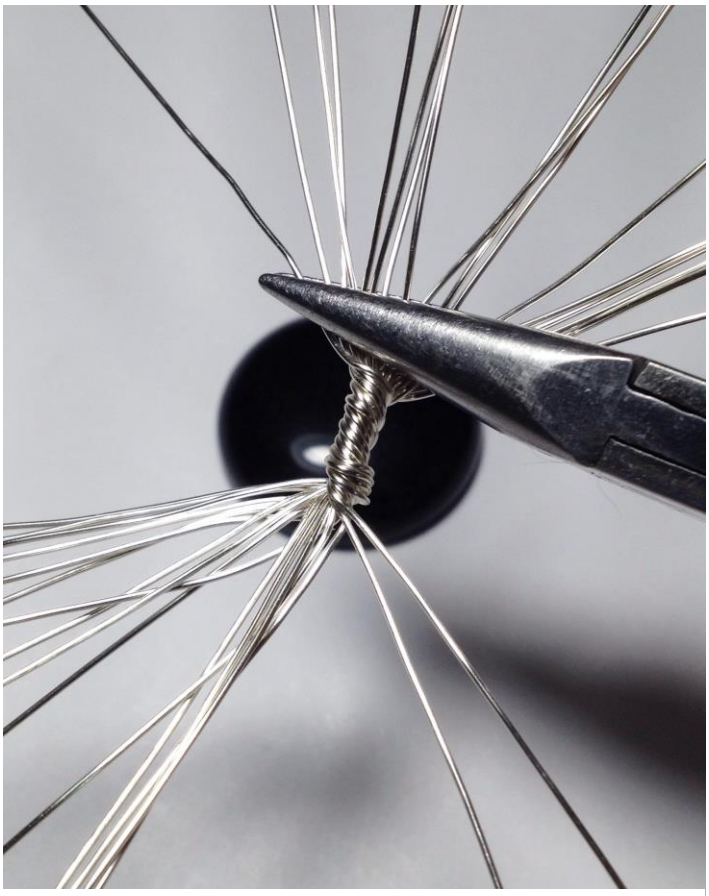


Figure 35

➔ *If you have only one pair of pliers hang onto the bundle with your fingers with all your might! If you have pliers with teeth you can tape over the teeth to protect the wire and use them as a second pair.*

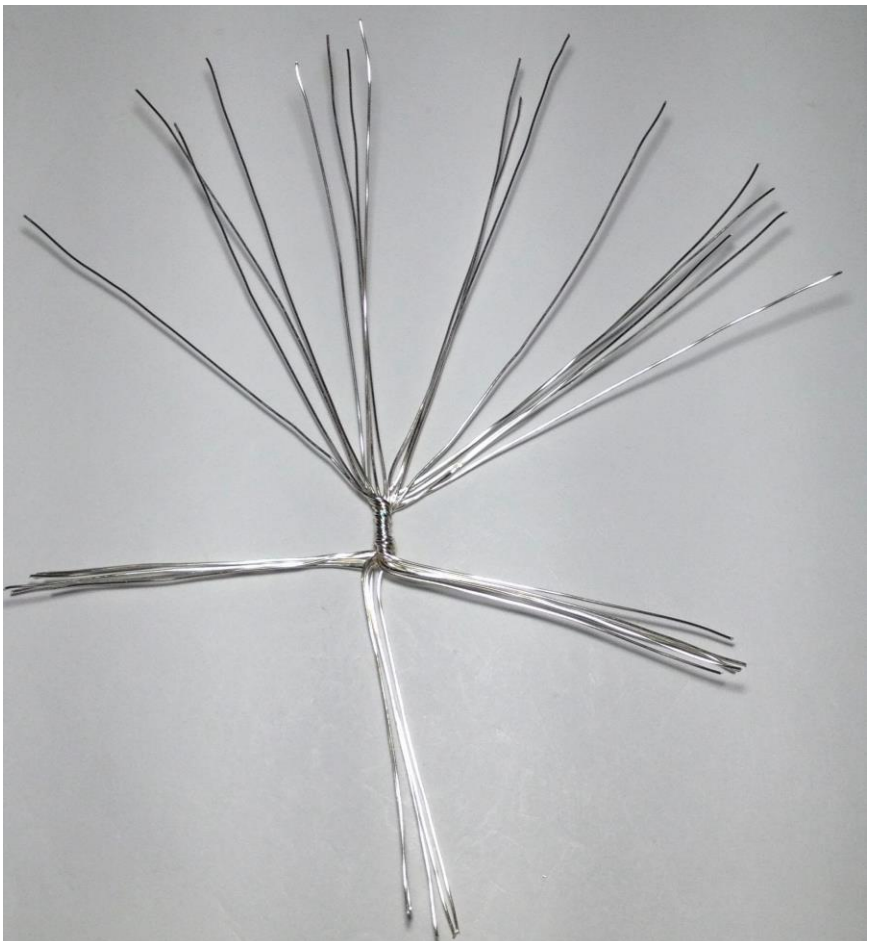


Figure 36

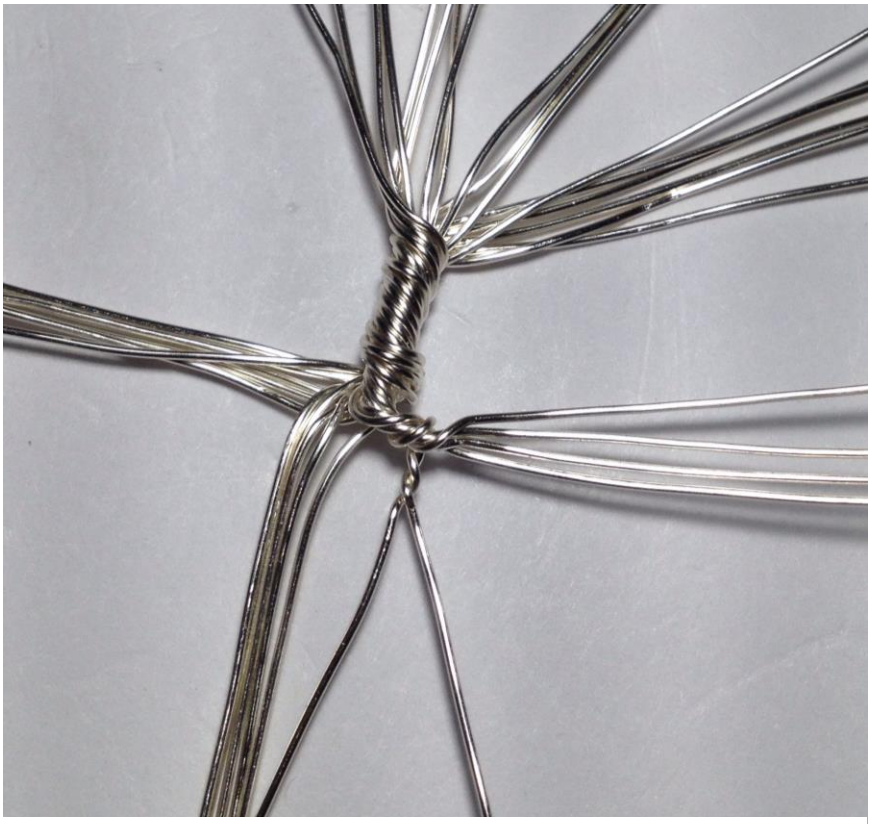


Figure 37

Separate the root wires into 3 bundles, use wires that lay next to each other in the original trunk twist to make smooth even bundles. 6 wires in each side bundle and 5 in the middle bundle.

I'll be saying to "work with the twist" a lot, it means match the rotation of your twist to the original twist.

➔ *ALWAYS work with the original twist, if you twist your roots and branches the opposite direction of the original twist the tree will unravel.*

Working with the original twist, twist a side root bundle 2 or 3 times then separate 2 wires from the same bundle and twist them 2 or 3 times, leave them pointing down.

You've made your first roots!

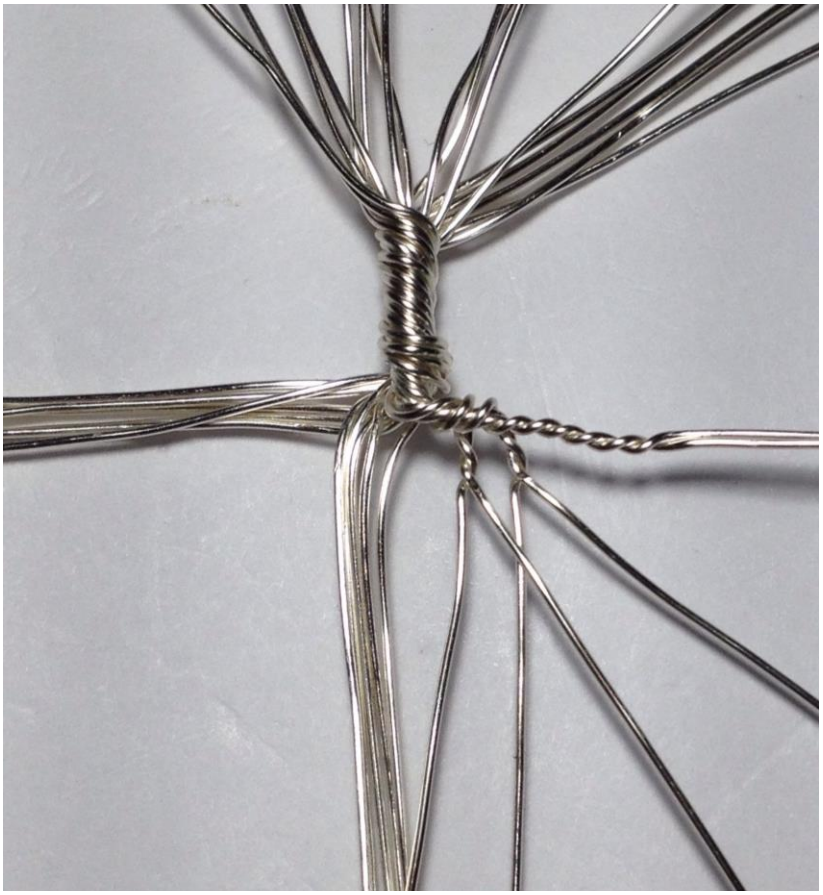


Figure 38

Twist the bundle once or twice more and separate out 2 more wires, twist them once or twice and point them diagonally down towards the outside edge.

Twist the remaining 2 wires and point them straight out to the side.

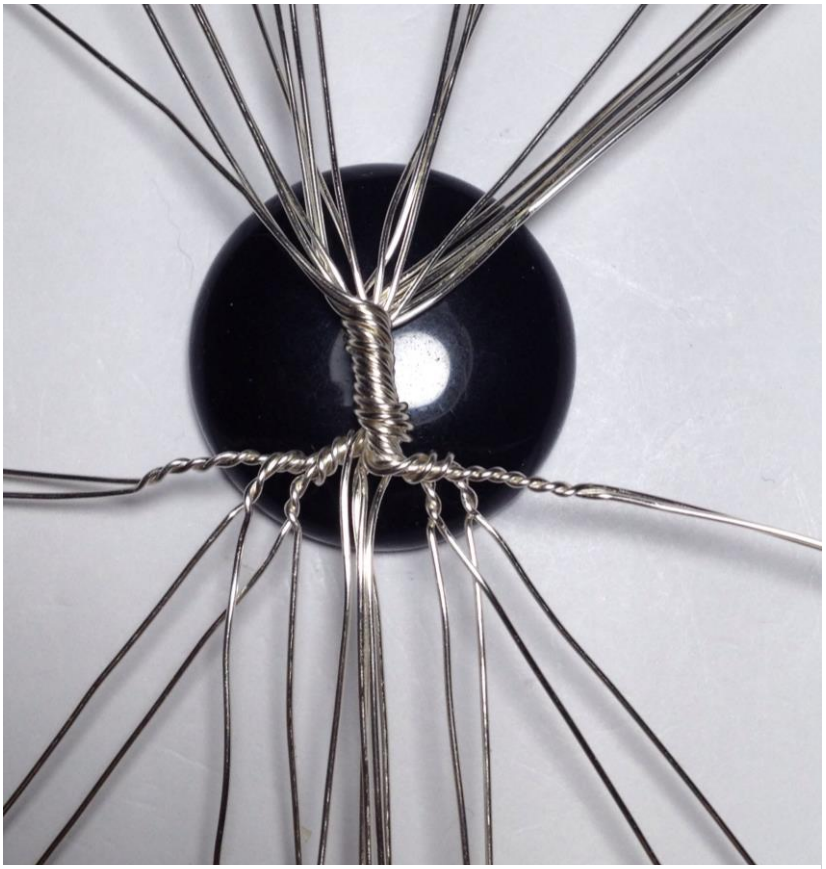


Figure 39

Repeat the same steps with the bundle on the other side.

Check your roots to the cabochon, the twist of the roots pointing straight out to the side should reach the edge of the cabochon. The other four root twists should be short so we'll see the branching of the twists on the front of the stone.

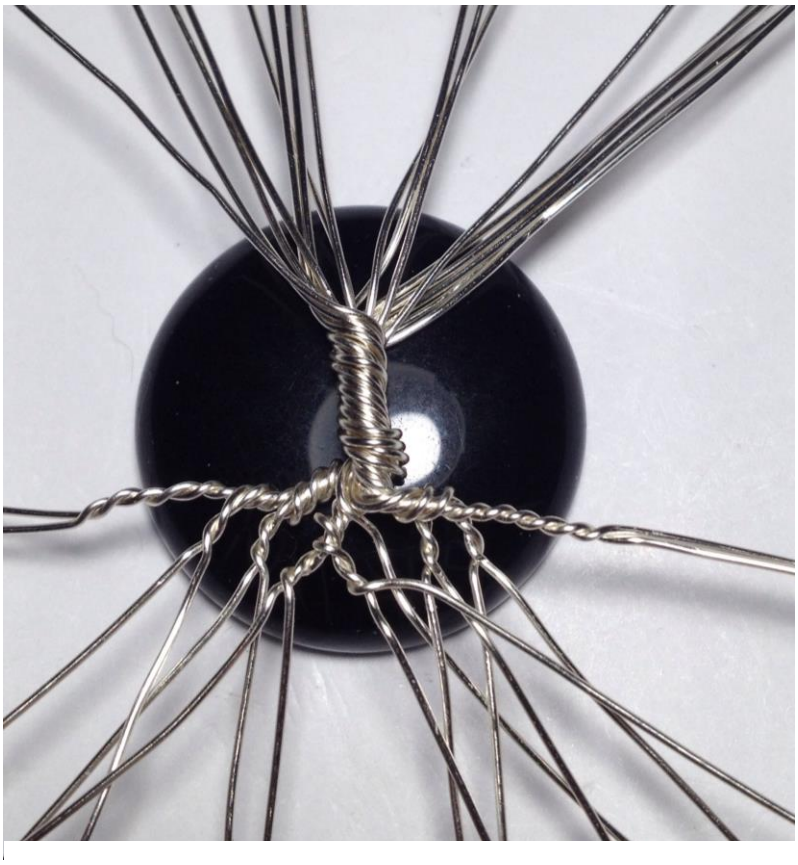


Figure 40

Working with the twist, twist 4 wires of the center bundle 2 or 3 times. Separate them into pairs, twist each pair once or twice. The lone fifth wire will stay lone and just hang down.

➔ *Frequently check the size of the tree to the stone to make sure it isn't getting to big for the stone. We're making a very small tree for a small stone.*

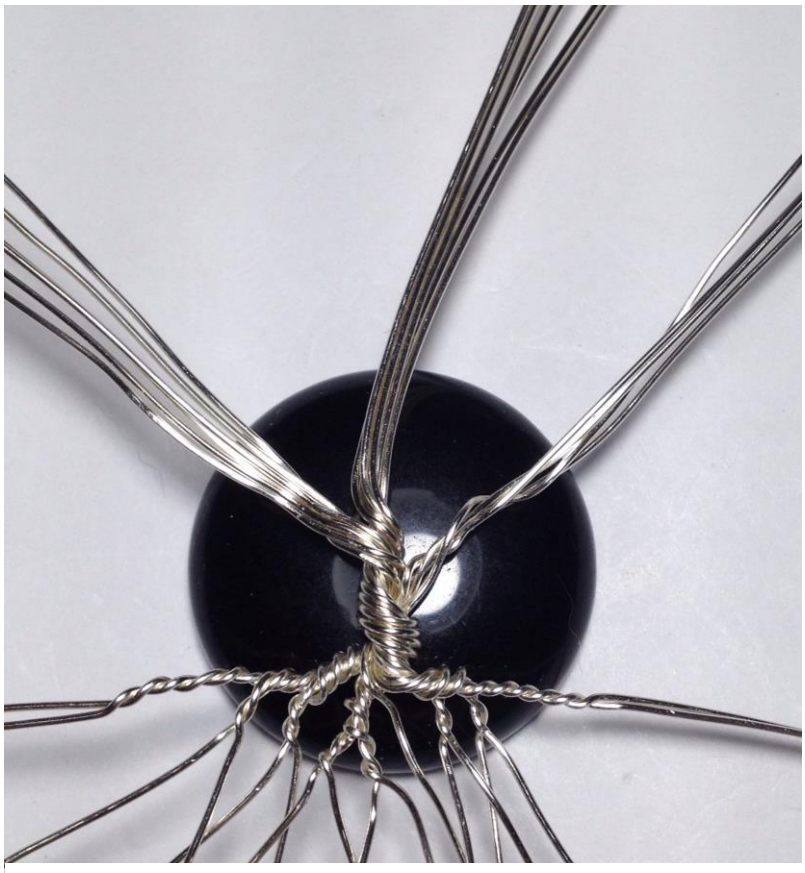


Figure 41

Now we're going to separate branch bundles, I find that the twist of the trunk kind of guides me, as with the roots, you want the bundles to be wires that are next to each other in the main twist.

We want to stagger branches along the trunk for a more natural tree shape. I've made a 4 wire bundle and untwisted it from the trunk to make a lower branch. The remaining wires I separated into a 7 wire bundle in middle and a 6 wire bundle on the left.

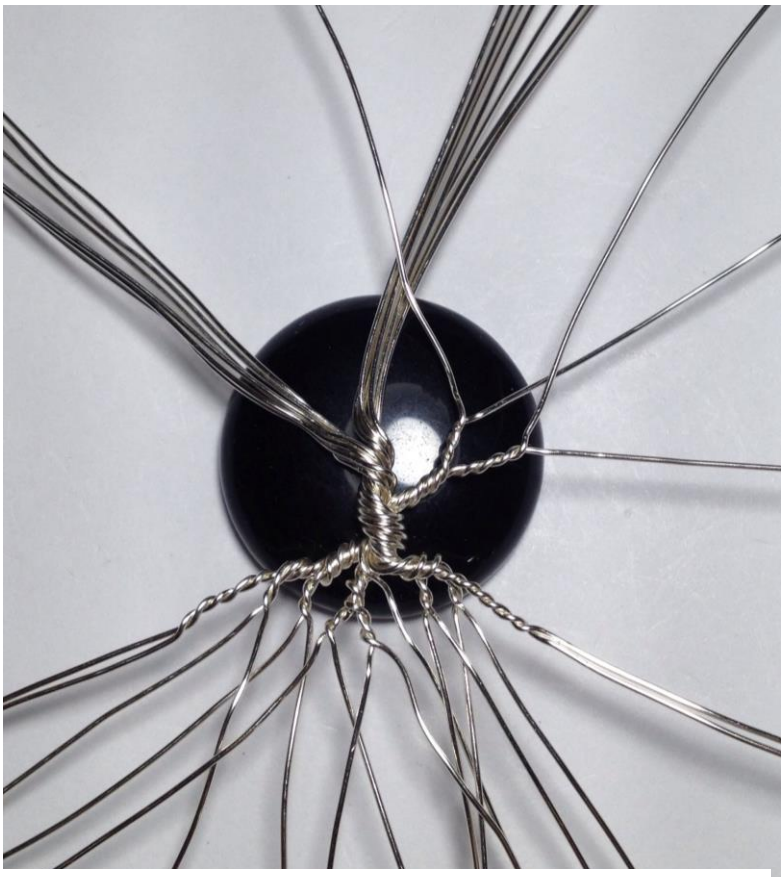


Figure 42

Starting with the lowest bundle, the one on the right in this case, twist the bundle 3 to 4 times.

How tight or loose you twist the wires will affect the look of your tree, I like to keep my twists tight.

Separate the wires into pairs and twist each pair 3 to 4 times.

➔ *Frequently check your tree against the cabochon. Each branch should split into single wires on the face of the stone where they will be seen, making a fuller looking tree.*

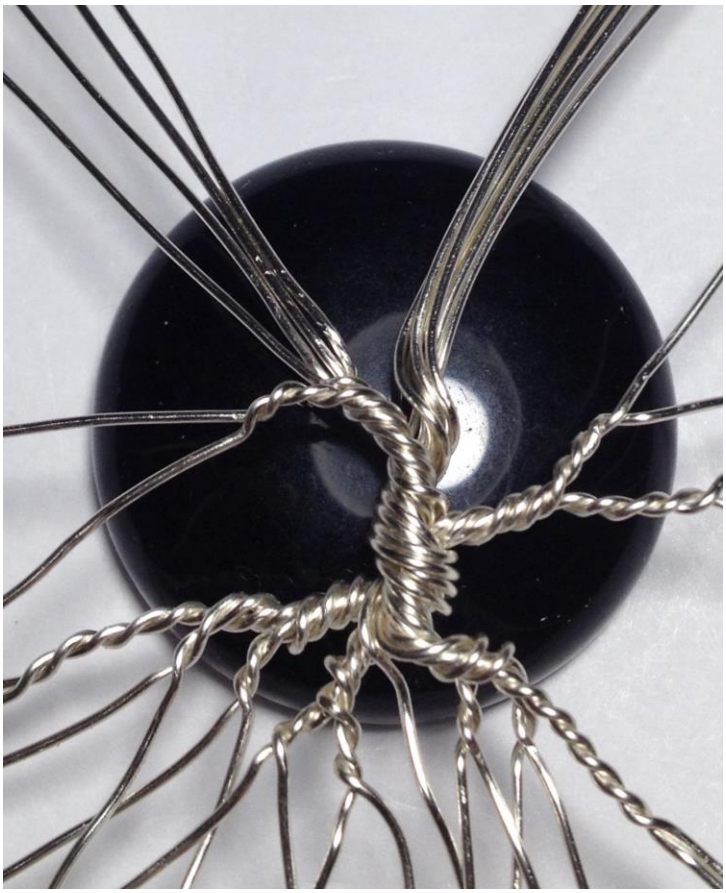


Figure 43

Moving to the bundle on the left, twist the entire bundle 2 to 3 times. Separate 2 wires from the bundle, twist them together 2 to 3 times.

Figure 44

Twist the remaining wires in the bundle 1 to 2 times and then split it into 2 pairs. Twist each pair 2 or 3 times.

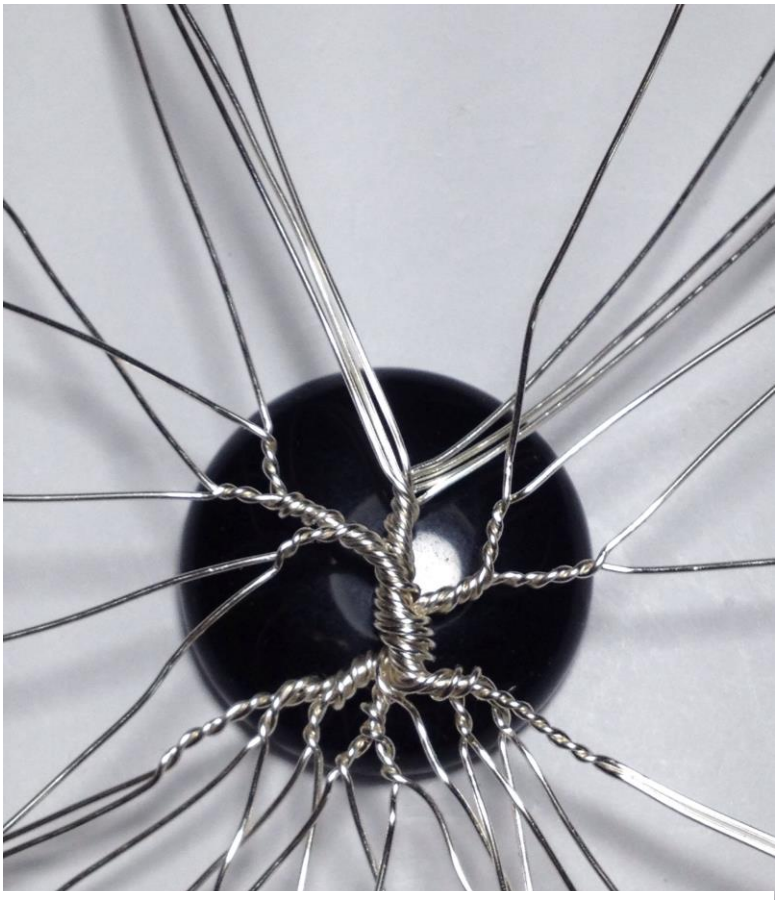


Figure 45

As always, working with the twist, twist the center bundle 1 to 2 times. Split the center bundle into 1 bundle of 3 wires and 1 bundle of 4 wires.

➔ *Reminder! Check the size of your tree to your cabochon!*

Figure 46

Twist the bundle with 3 wires 1 or 2 times. Separate 1 wire and twist the other 2 or 3 times.

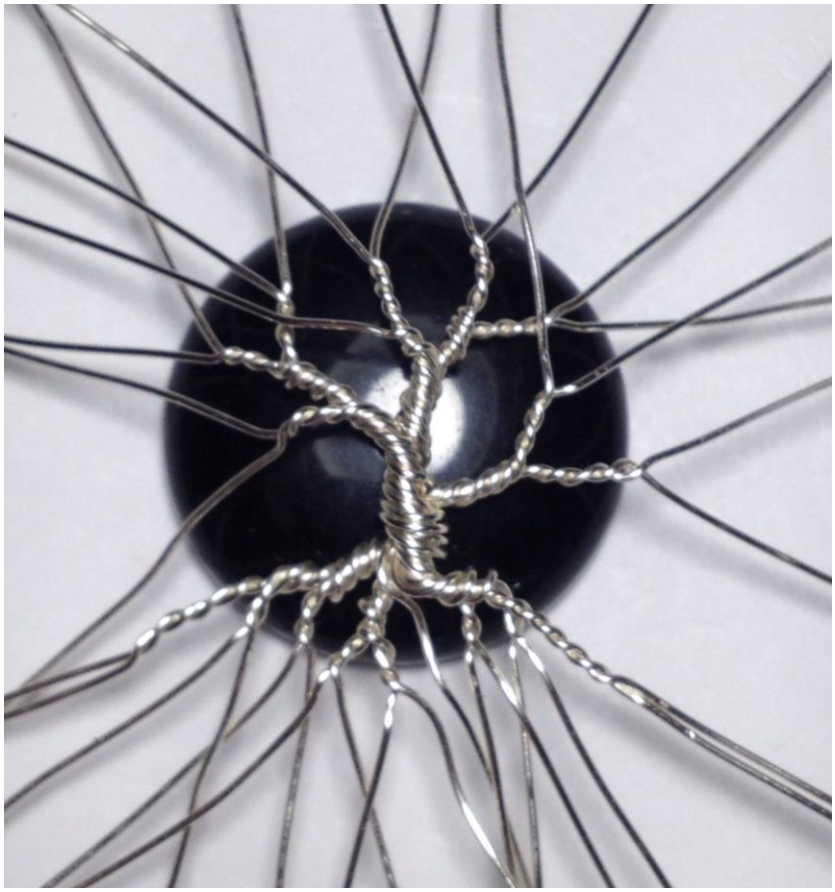


Figure 47

Twist the last bundle 1 or 2 times, split the wires into pairs, twist each pair 2 to 3 times.

Take a few minutes now to adjust your branches however you would like them. I like to spread open the single wires so the tiny branches cross over each other just like a real tree.

➔ *Sit back and admire your perfect tiny wire tree!! Think about how cool a tiny wire forest would look....*

➔ *Ok, think about that later, back to work!*

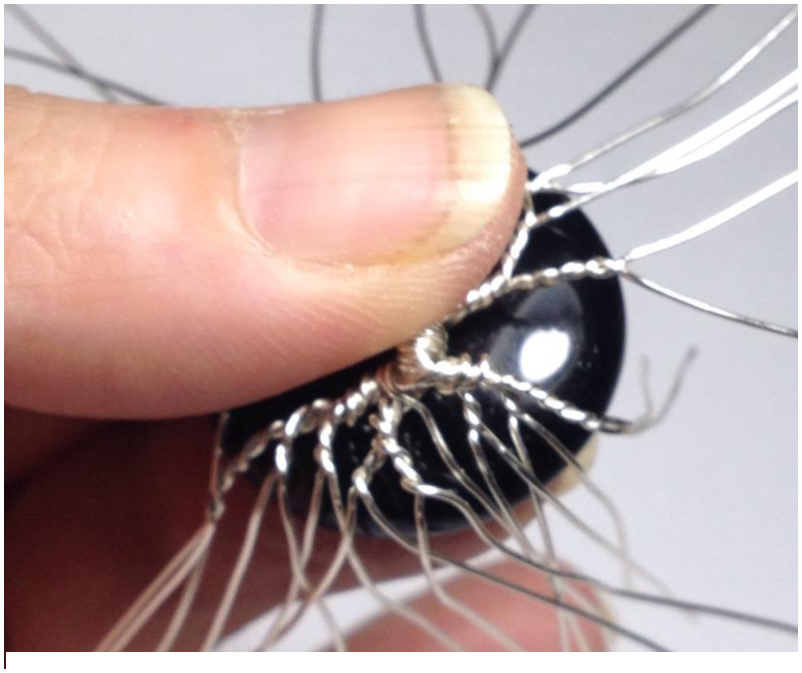


Figure 48

Center your tree on the cabochon and hold onto it tight!

Start bending and shaping the branches and roots around the edges, being careful to keep the tree centered.

➔ *ignore my filthy nails*.

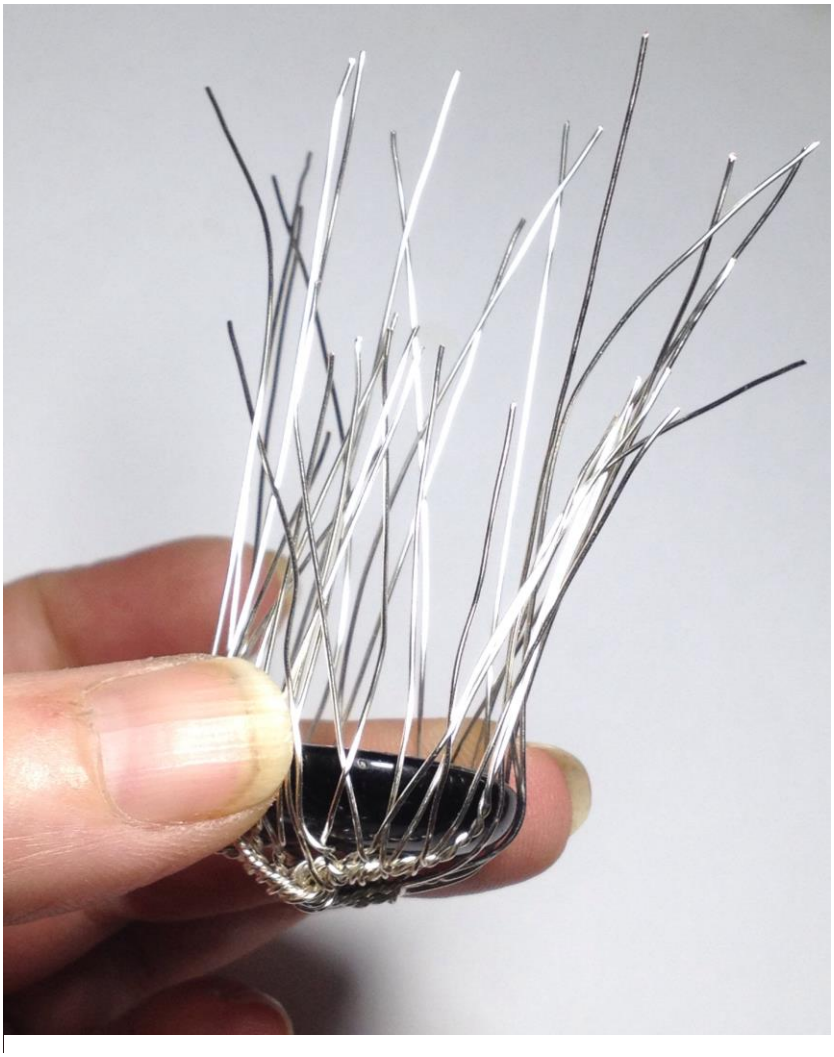


Figure 49

Bend them all so they're sticking straight out the back. Check your tree, adjust roots and branches as needed.

➔ *Look a comet!*

Figure 50

Gently gather all the branch and root wires together to roughly the center of the back. Don't bend them flat against the back, as pictured is fine.

➔ *You've made a weird tree faced jellyfish!*

Figure 51

Take a look at the front, double check the tree is centered, roots and branches are well placed.

➔ *On the 25mm cabochon pictured the roots cover the bottom 5 to 6mm the rest is trunk and branches.*

Admire your tiny tree on it's background, pretty cool!

Figure 52

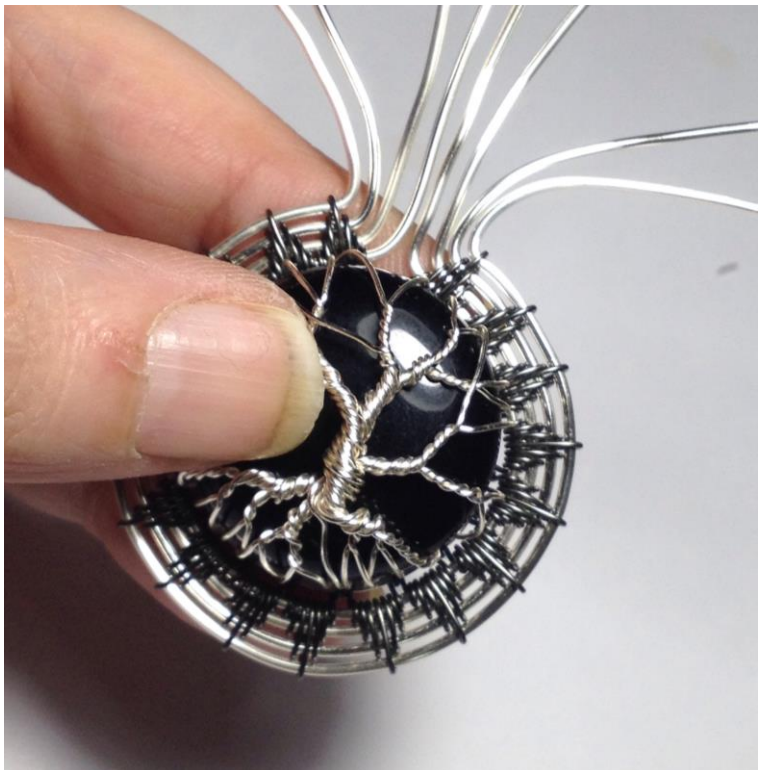


Figure 53

Chapter Four

Coming Together

Find your weave that you set aside earlier, it's time to merge weave and tree.

Make sure the front of your weave is facing forward. The front has the wire tails that will now be covered by the stone.

Feed your loosely gathered tree wires through the center of the weave as far as they'll go. Don't squish the wires around the cabochon trying to get the stone flat on weave. There's going to be a gap between the stone and weave. We want it loose right now, we'll tighten it down in later steps.

Look at the front, make sure your tree is centered with the bail wires and centered in the weave.

➔ *Throughout the rest of the tutorial I'll be referring to the four center 18 gauge wires pointing straight up from the weave as "the bail wires".*

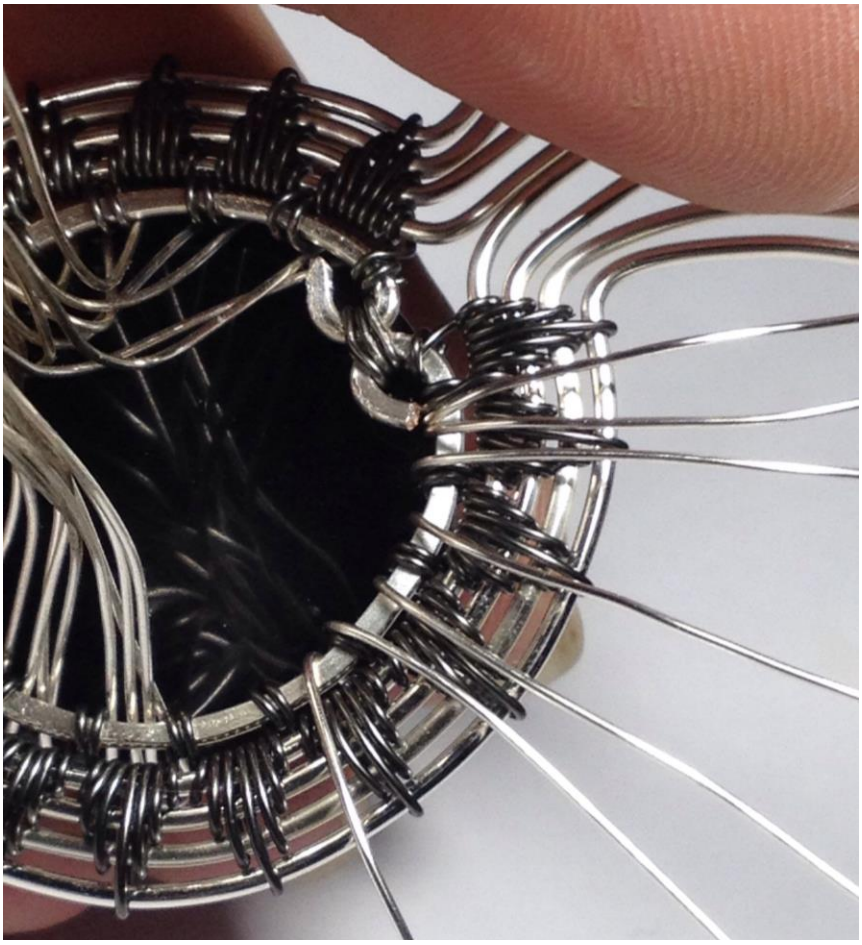


Figure 54

Push the cabochon close to weave and hold it in place.

Don't crush it in place, there will still be a gap, we'll tighten it and close the gap in later steps. (gap picture on next page)

Start bending the tree wires out over the back of the weave.

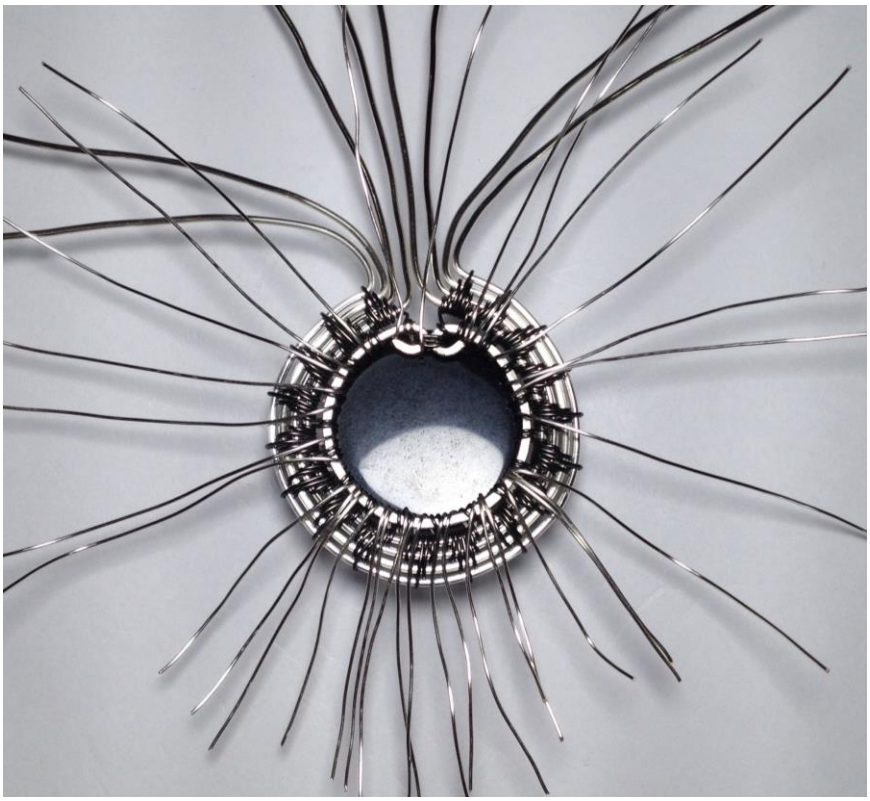


Figure 55

It will look like a crazy wire octopus once they're all bent out.

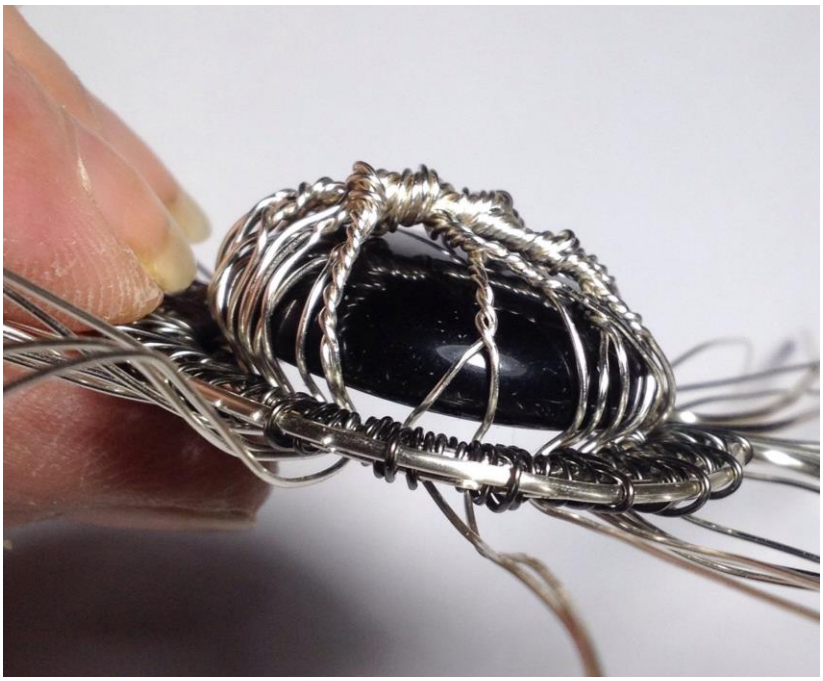


Figure 56

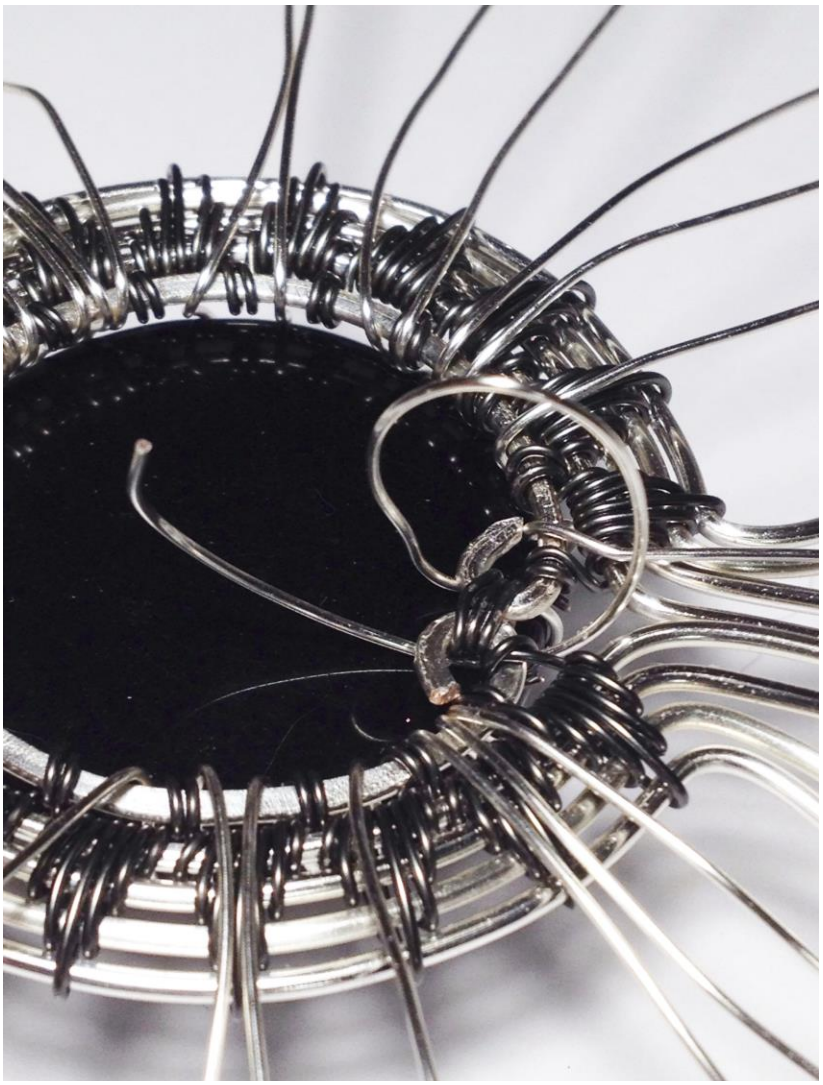


Figure 57

We're going to be lashing all the tree wires to the hammered wire, tightening them down just enough to close the gap between the stone and the weave.

Check the front quick, make sure the cabochon is centered on the weave and the tree is still centered and in line with the bail wires. Make sure your branches are all pointing the way you want.

We're going to start with the top center wire or if your hammered wire isn't centered start wherever the curls are.

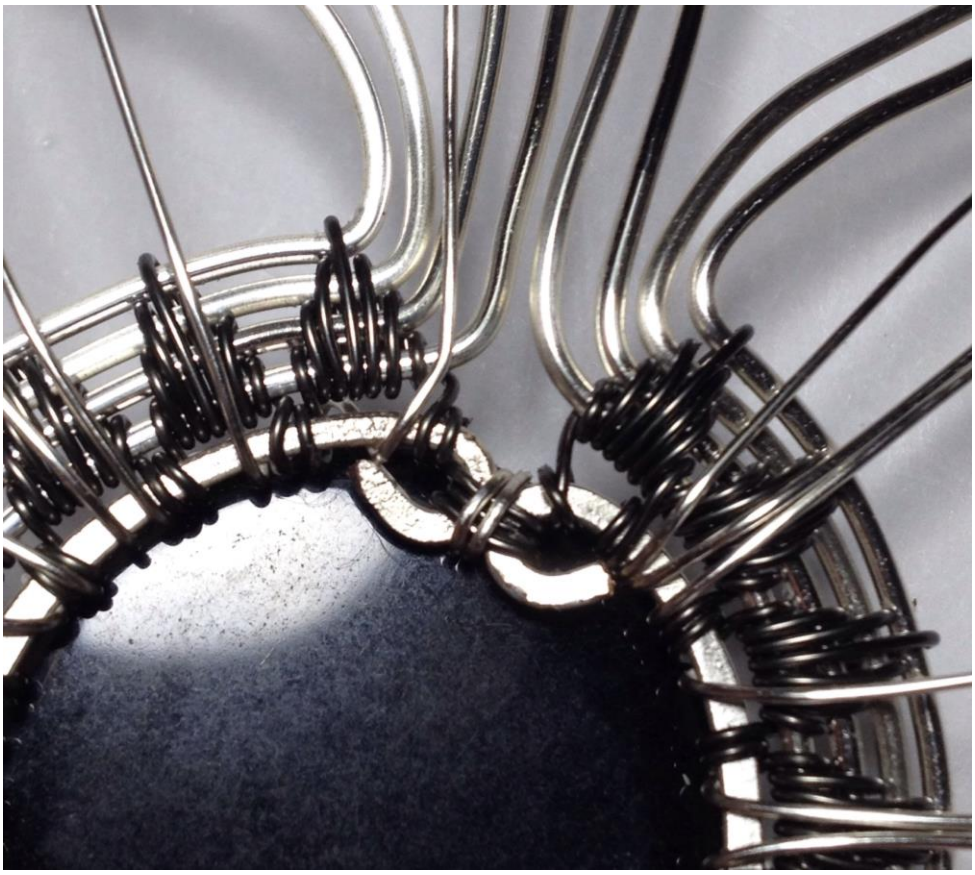
Feed the tree wire over and back under the center of the curls as illustrated by the picture.

➔ *If you didn't lash the curls together at the beginning of tutorial use this tree wire to lash them together now.*

Wrap the tree wire around tight, snugging it down, this is the beginning of anchoring the cabochon to the weave.

➔ *The tree wires don't have to be super tight, each wire will snug the cabochon down a little more. If you pull the tree wire too tight it might snap.*

Figure 58



Trim the tree wire and tuck the tail under the hammered wire.

Figure 59

Figure 60

Locate the tree wire on the opposite edge of the last wire, in the picture it's the bottom center root wire.

1. Feed this wire up between the hammered wire and the bottom base wire.

Figure 61

2. Pull the wire up tight making sure the other end is laying flat on the stone. (previous picture shows the wire standing up from the stone)

3. Feed the wire between the stone and the weave.

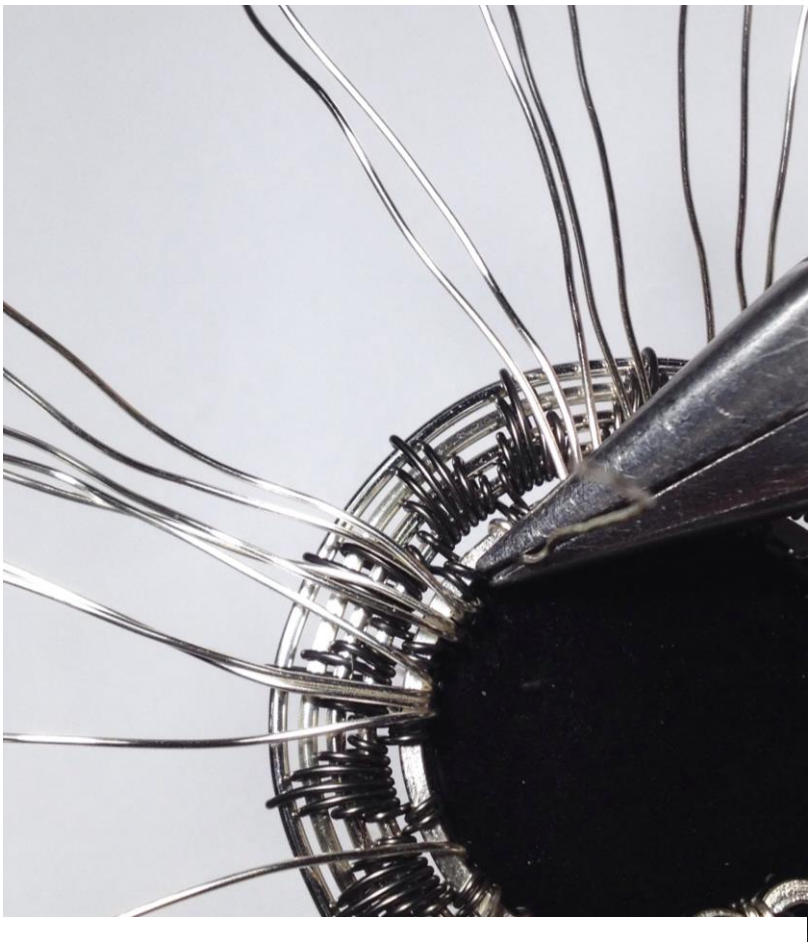


Figure 62

4. Pull the wire snug around the hammered wire.

Pro tip: If you make a little hook on the end of your tree wire you can hook it around the hammered wire and pull it through. Sometimes it saves time, sometimes it just won't work, don't frustrate yourself trying to force it to work.

Figure 63

5. Feed the wire back between the hammered wire and bottom base wire. Leave it sticking out the front, we'll trim it later.

➔ *"Attach" now refers to the the last five steps.*

Move to a wire halfway between the two you just attached and attach it then attach the wire opposite of that one. Leave the tails sticking out the front.

Figure 64

Check the front, make sure the cabochon is still centered on the weave. Nudge it into place as needed.

Take a deep breath, it's just a small pendant, only 30 tree wires to go!

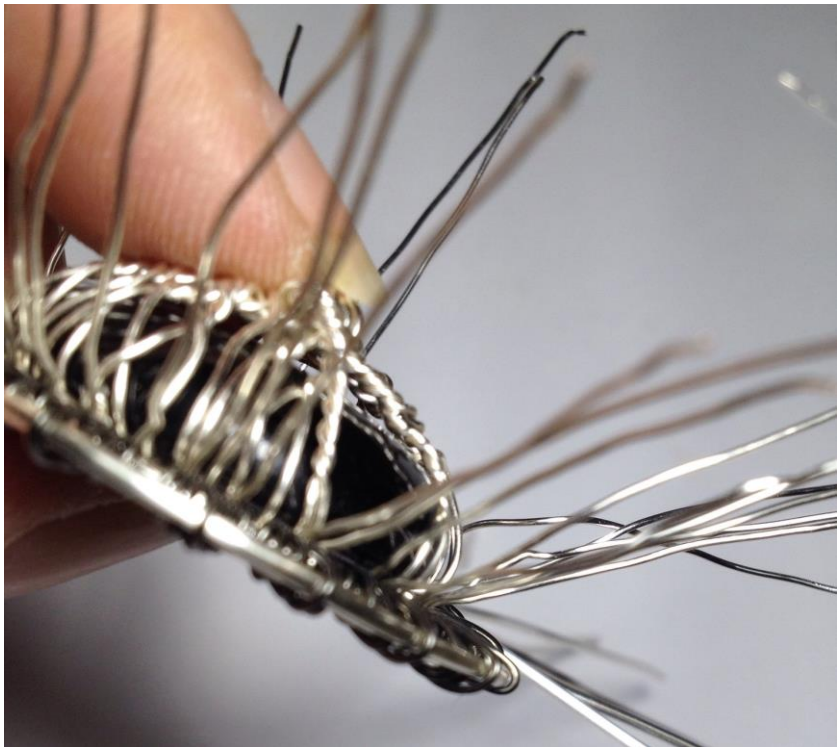


Figure 65

Continue attaching opposite wires until they're all sticking out the front.

➔ *Check the front frequently while you work*.

➔ *If you snap a few wires while attaching them don't panic! There are 34 tree wires holding everything in place, a few less than 34 won't be a problem. Just be sure to tuck the tails so they don't poke anyone.*

Figure 66

VERY CAREFULLY trim the wires as short as possible. Be very careful not to cut any of the tree wires on the stone! It would be tragic if that happened now.

➔ *You could feed the wires back through under the stone and trim them on back. Trimming them on front avoids any chance of weird pokey wires on the back.*

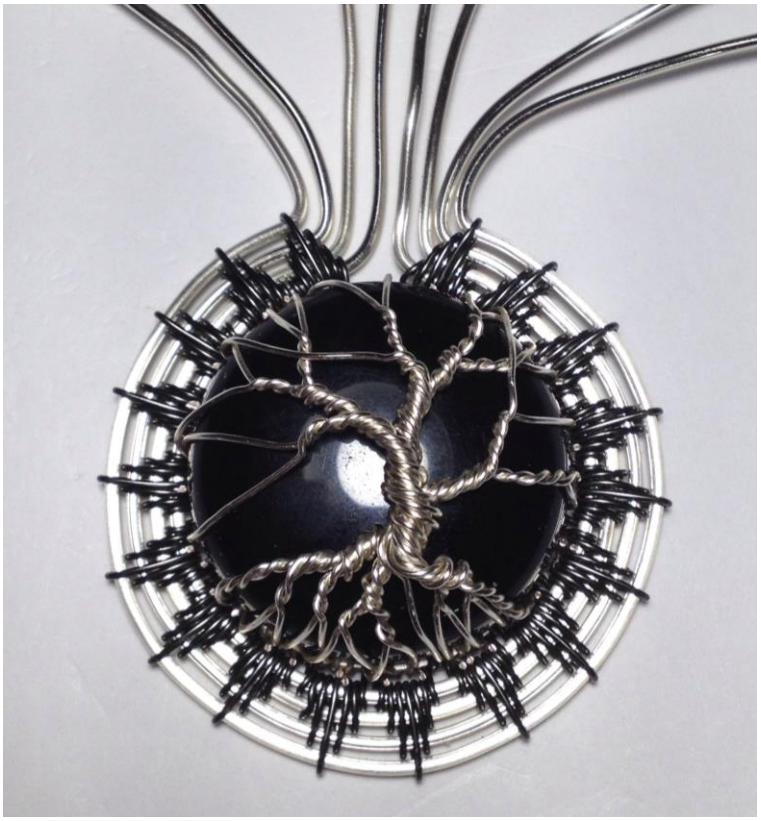


Figure 67

Whew!! You did it!! Well done!

Next we'll tweak the tree, making it look a little more realistic.

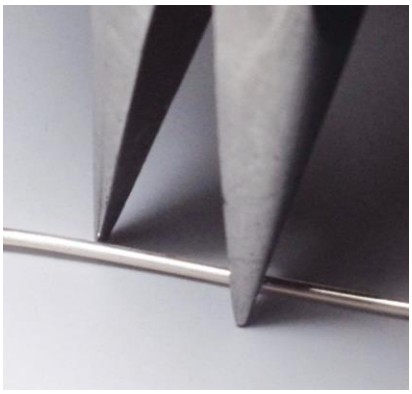


Figure 68

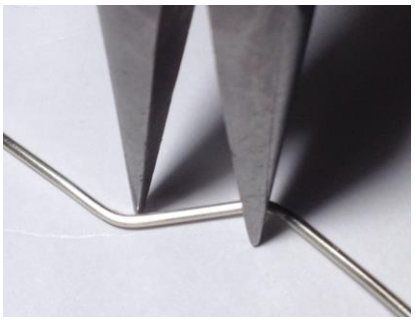


Figure 68a

Put 1 or 2 bends in the branches by placing the jaws of your pliers on opposite sides of the wire and give a little twist. We're going for a realistic look so we only want 1 or 2 slight bends in the branches. Roots tend to look a little more chaotic so add all the bends that will fit.

Figure 69

Figure 69a

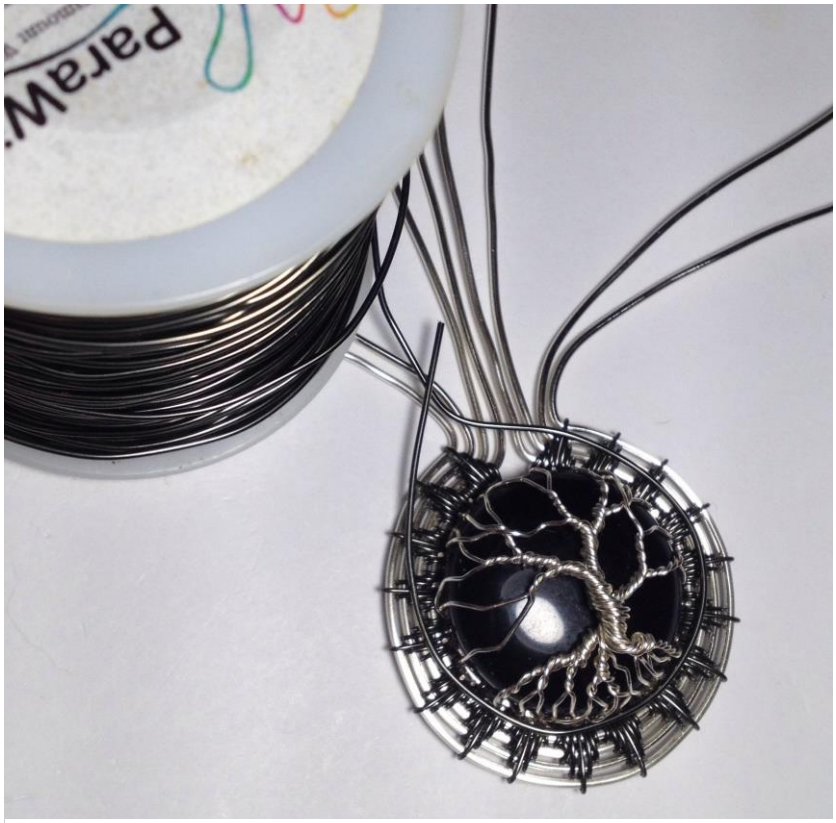


Figure 70

We're going to make a decorative trim to cover the area where the stone meets the weave.

Working off your spool of 20 gauge wire, lay the wire around the circumference of the cabochon. We'll be twisting two wires together so you want this first estimate to be at least an inch longer than the circumference. Still working off the spool fold the wire over to twice the length and cut.

➔ *The wire I'm using in the picture is 9 and ½ inches long.*

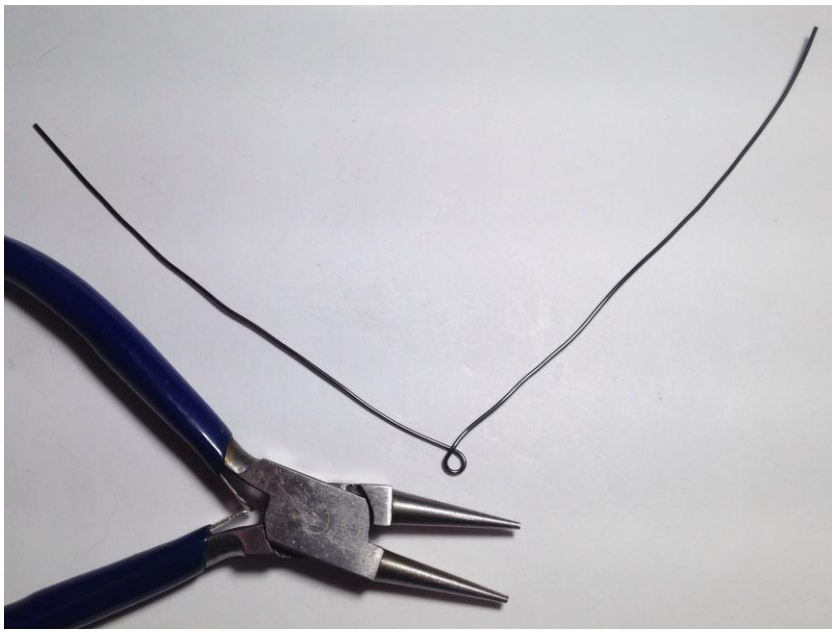
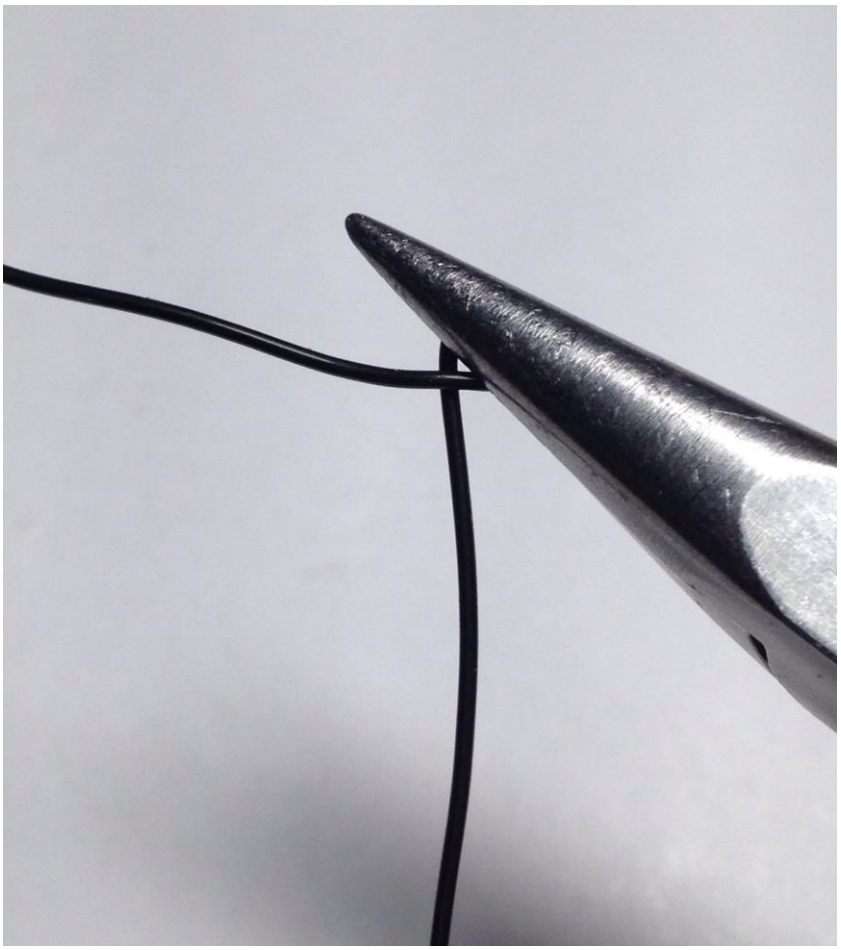


Figure 71

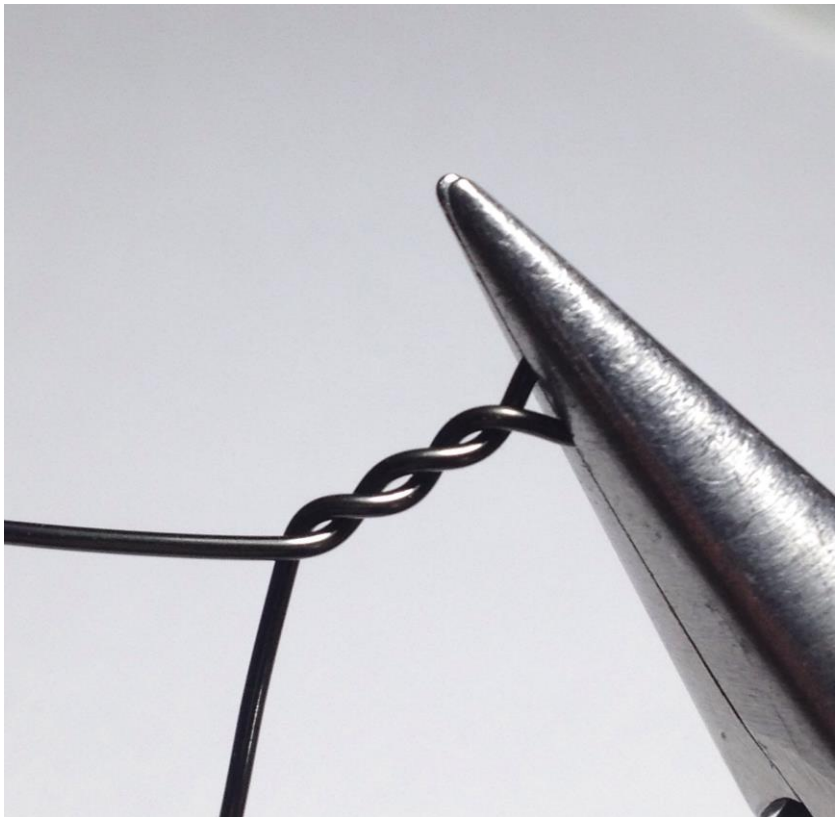
Using your round nose pliers make a loop at the center point of the wire. The loop has to be big enough for two 20 gauge wires to fit through.

➔ *If you don't have round nose pliers you can gently cross the wires making a tear drop shaped loop.*



Hold the loop with your pliers as pictured.

Figure 72



Loosely twist the wires together, you want little gaps in the twist as pictured.

Figure 73

Figure 74

After a few twists gently squeeze the twists flat, try to keep the gaps as uniform as possible. Hold the wire at the end of the twist, loosely twist a few more times, squeeze them flat, hold at the end of the twist…

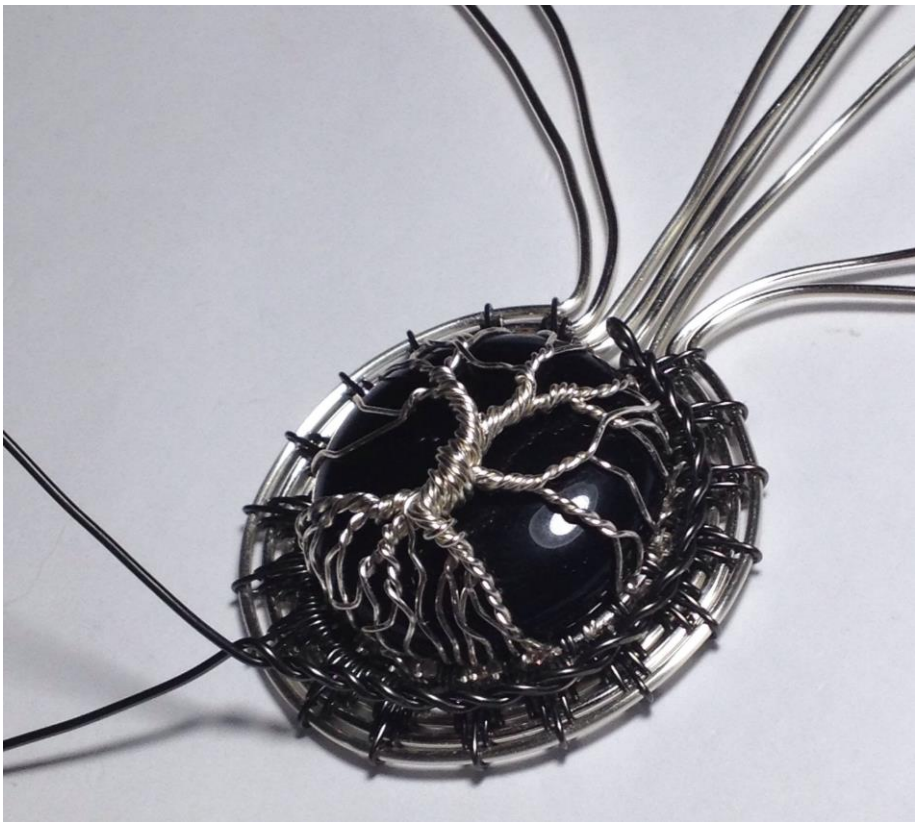
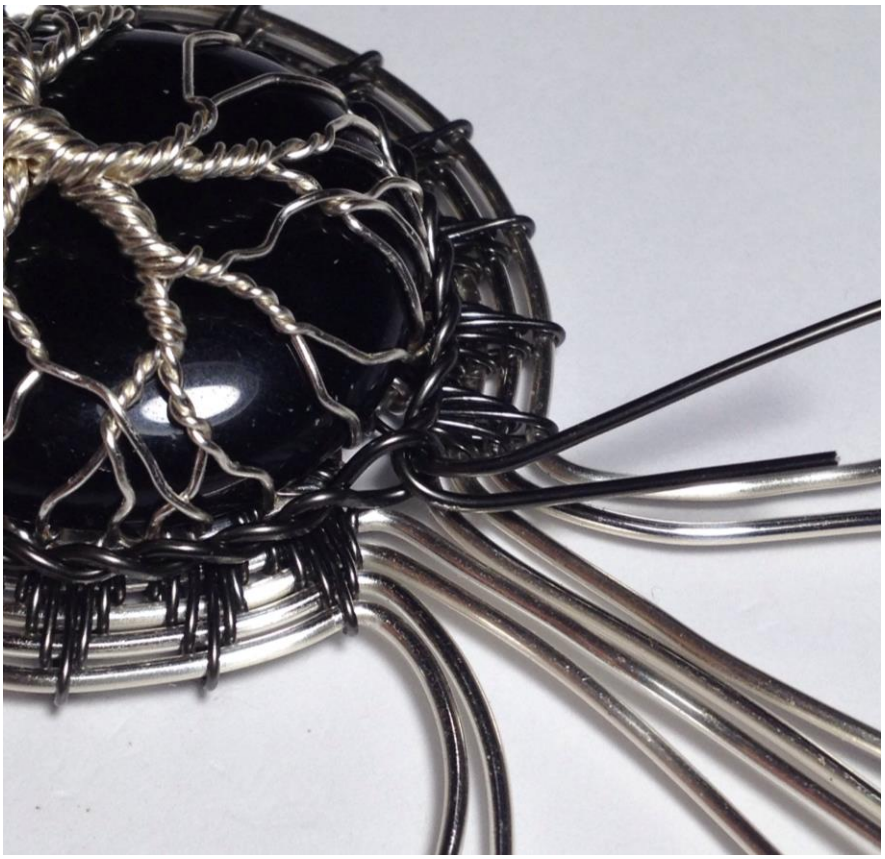


Figure 75

Check the length of your twist to the cabochon as you repeat the twist, squish twist process.

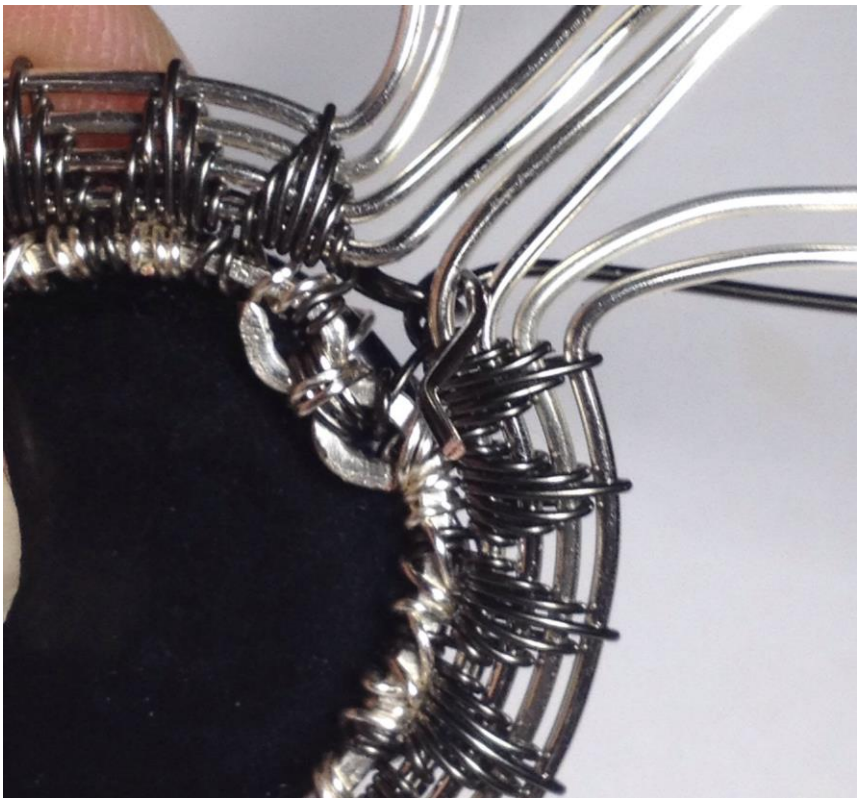
Once you've twisted and squished your wire to the perfect length feed the loose ends through the loop.

Figure 76



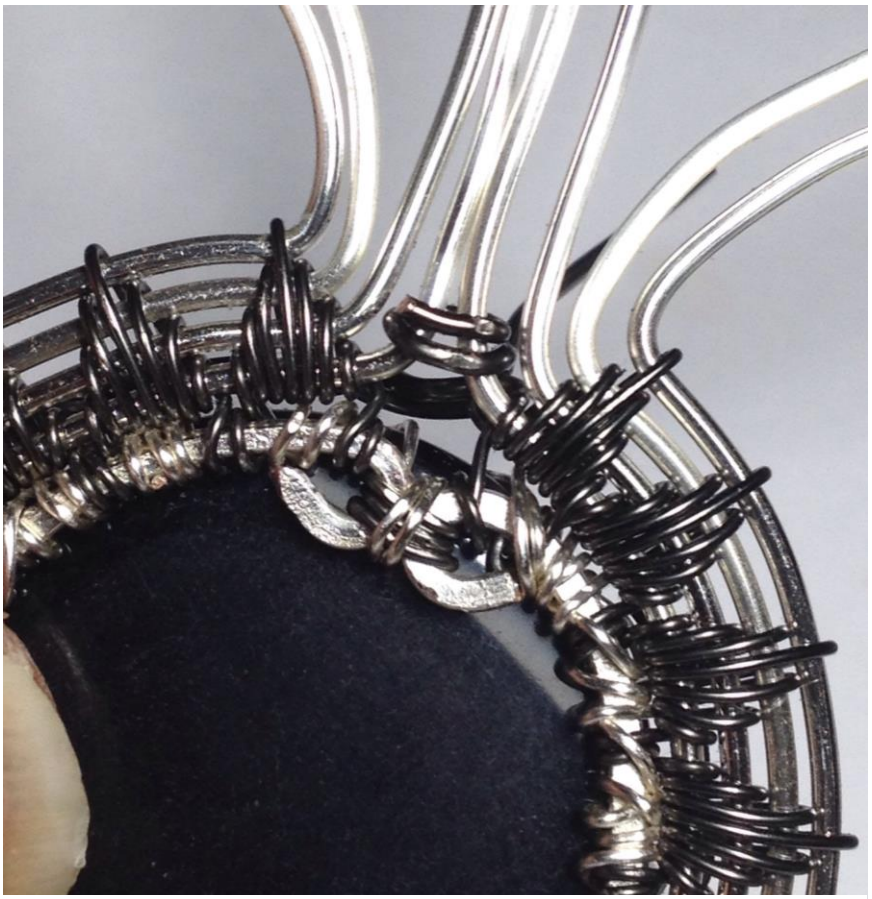
Fit your twisted wire around the cabochon and tighten it up.

Figure 77



Feed one of the tails between the third and fourth bail wires.

Figure 78



Wrap the tail around the center two bail wires once or twice. Trim and tuck the tail.

Figure 79

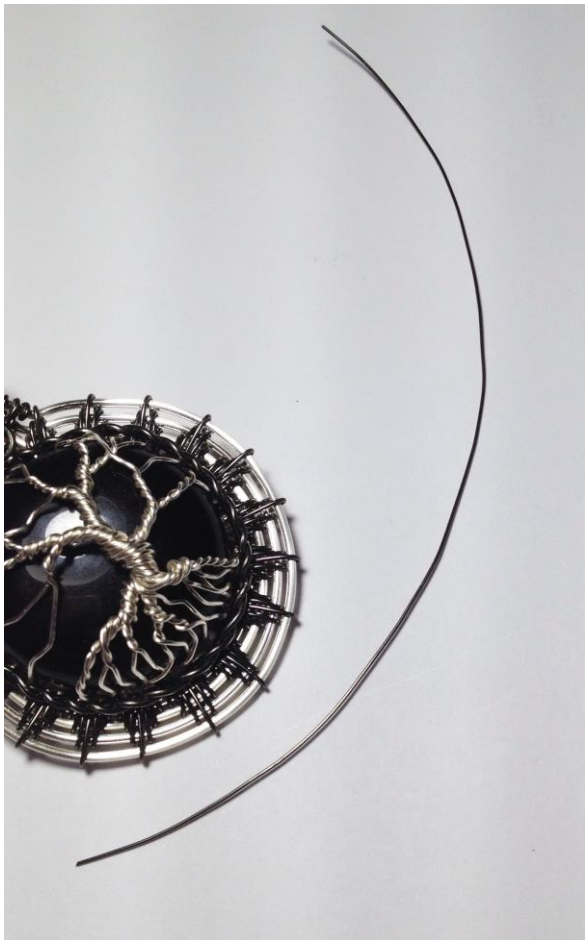
Figure 80

Working with the other tail on the front, we're going to make a swirl, start by making a little hook at the end of the wire.

➔ *The rounder your hook is the rounder your swirl will be, your hook should look like half of a circle.*

Figure 81

Squeeze your little hook to close it up a bit then hold it flat between the jaws of your pliers. You want to grip your little bent hook firmly but not so tight that you damage the wire. Bend the hook so that the wire curls around it, keep going till it's all curled up. Center it to the bail wires.



We're going to tie down the bottom the of this trim piece quick. We don't want it unexpectedly popping up!

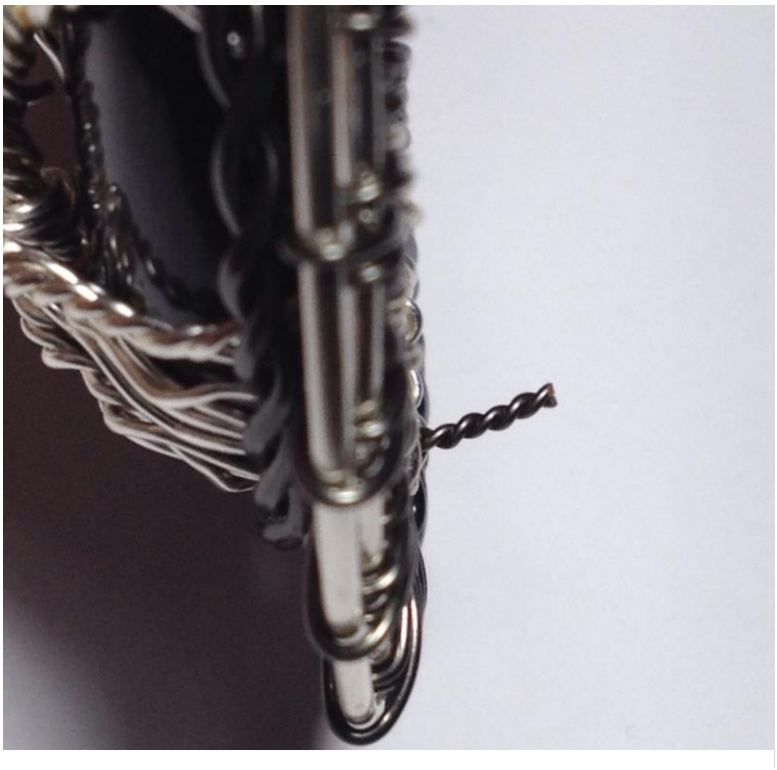
You could use a little scrap piece of 24 gauge but 26 gauge will be much easier. It just needs to be long enough to work with.

Start from the back, at the bottom, feed the wire between the cabochon and the weave coming out under the trim piece. Take it over the trim piece and down between the hammered wire and bottom base wire.

Figure 82

The wire should end up sticking out like this.

Figure 83



Twist the wires together tight (don’t snap them!) and trim.

Figure 84

Tuck the twist tight up against the cabochon and hammered wire.

Figure 85

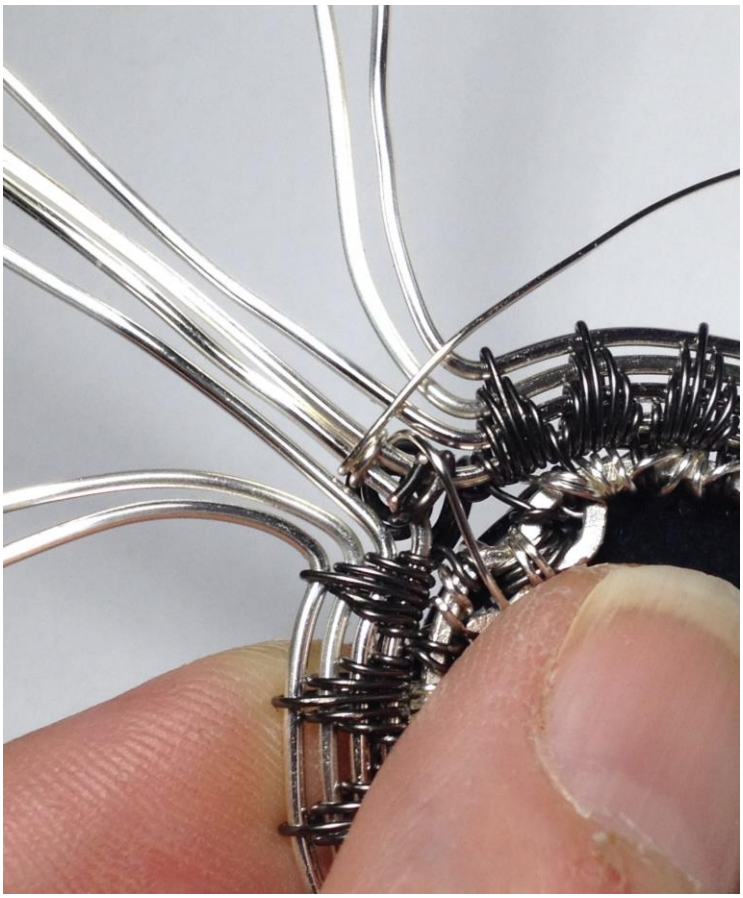


Figure 86

Chapter Five

Creating A Bail

We're almost done, we just need to make the bail.

➔ *I'm working with about 30 inches of 24 gauge wire in the pictures.*

Starting with the center two bail wires wrap your 24 gauge wire around them twice.

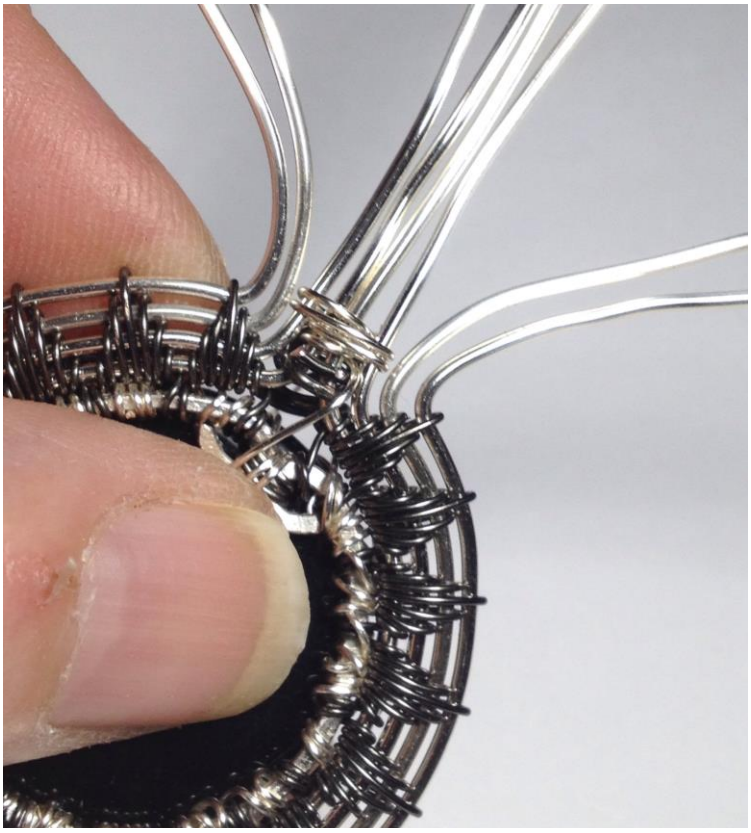
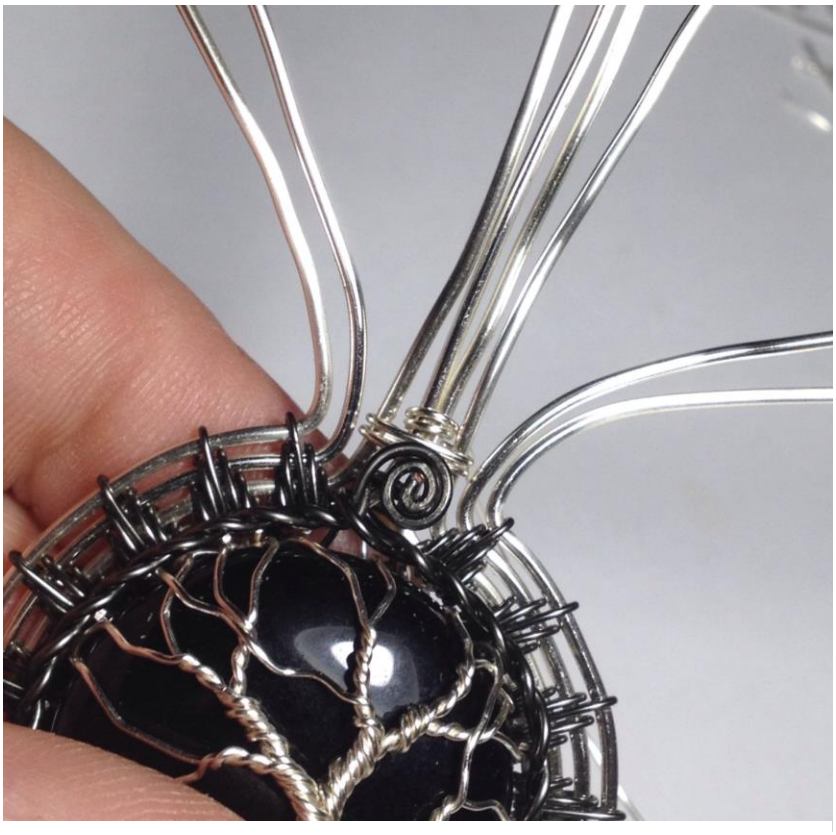


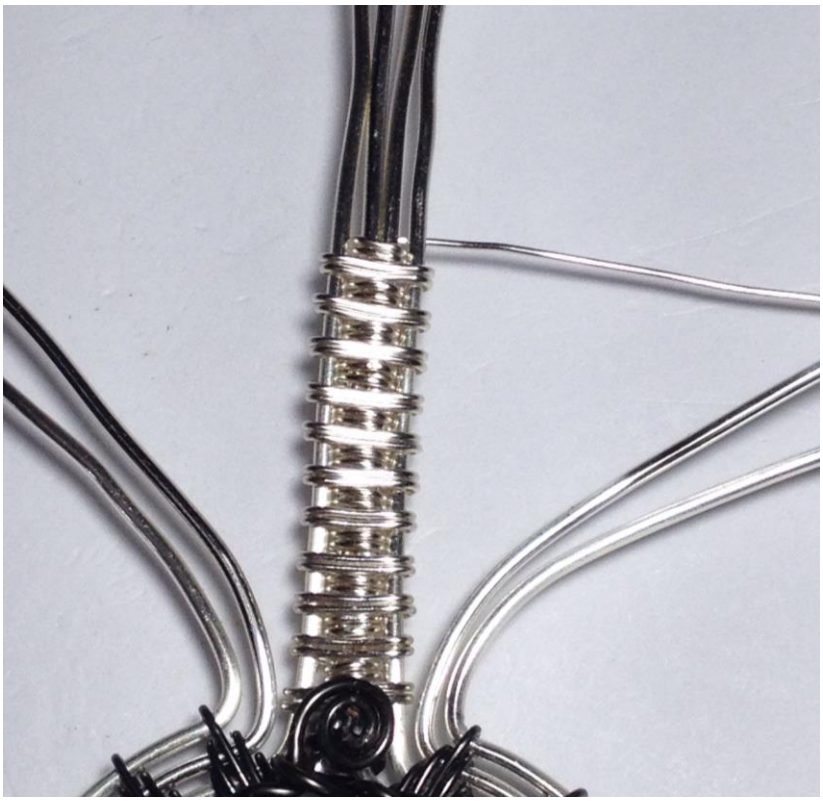
Figure 87

Wrap your weave wire around all 4 middle wires. The picture shows how it looks from the back.



Wrap your weave wire around the center 2 bail wires twice. The picture shows how it should look from the front.

Figure 88



Continue this pattern about halfway up the bail wires. Don't trim your weave wire, we'll be coming back to it.

Figure 89

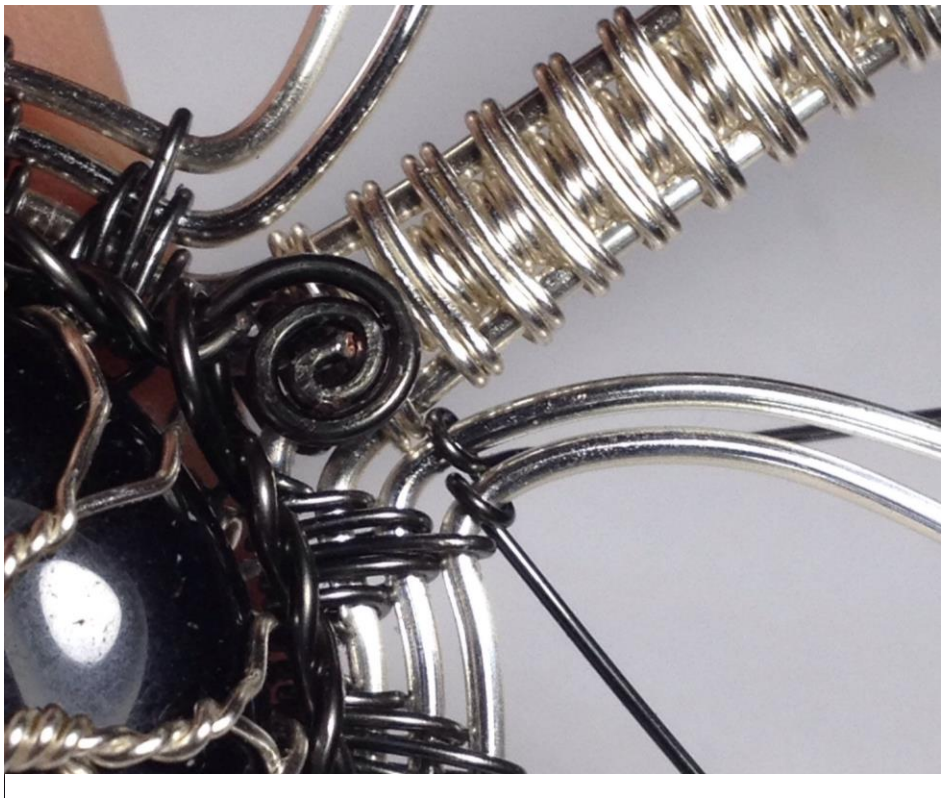


Figure 90

I'm starting with the wires on the right, it doesn't matter which side you start on.

We're doing a Ladder Weave on these wires. Wrap your weave wire around the base wire once take it straight across and wrap it around the second base once.

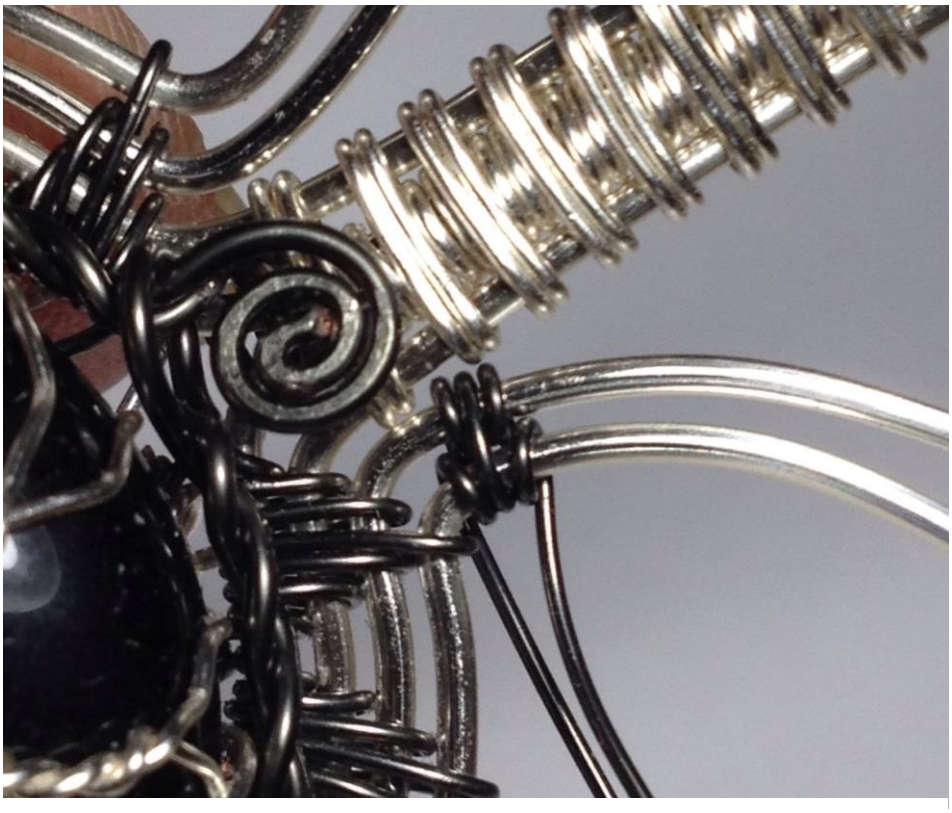


Figure 91

Continue this weave about 15 more wraps.

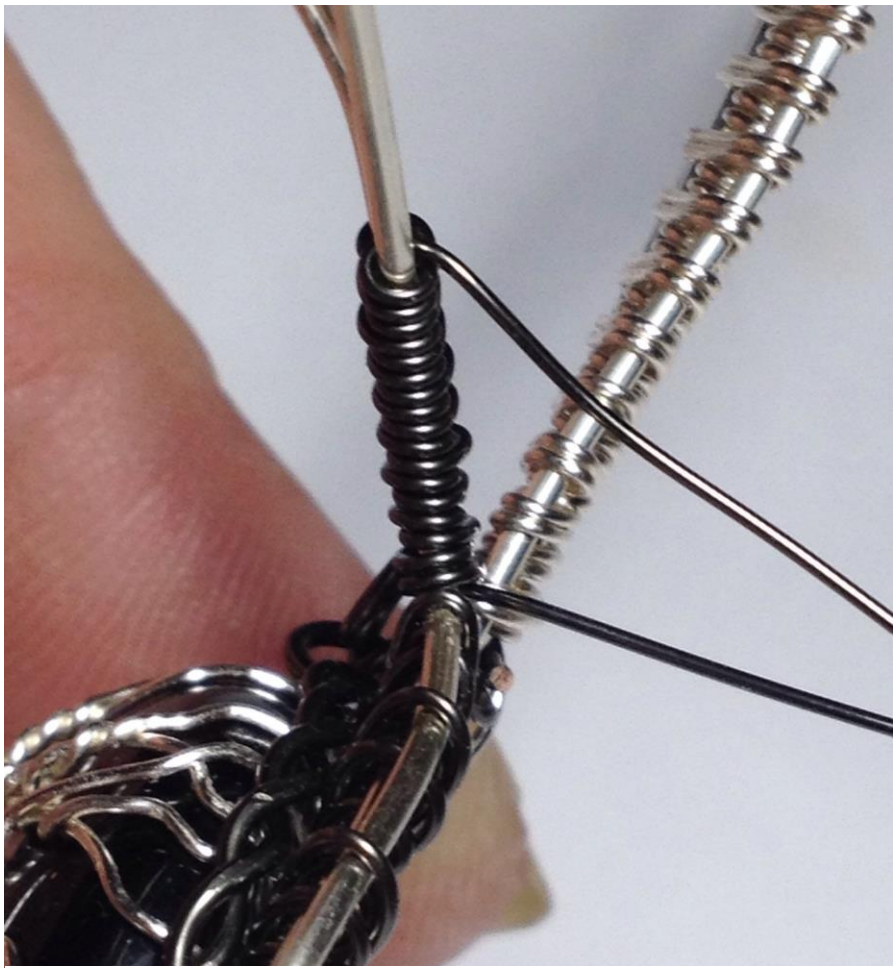


Figure 92

Gently bend the weave forward being careful not to bend the frame they're attached to.

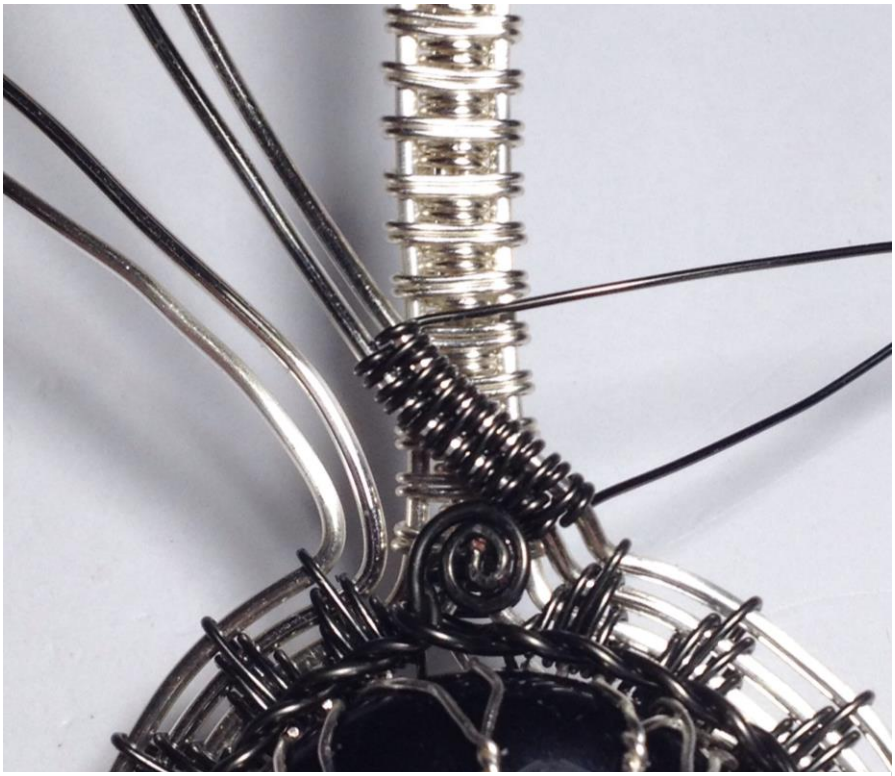


Figure 93

Bend the weave sideways across the bail, we're checking for length while we do this.

Figure 94

Continue the weave until it's long enough to just reach around the back of the bail.

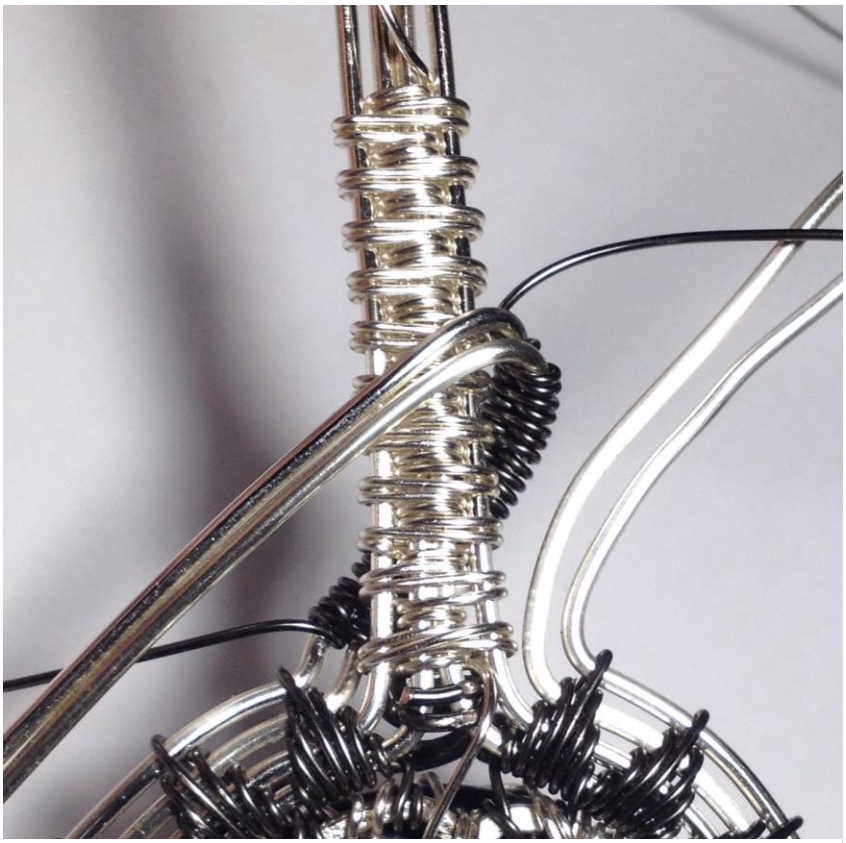


Figure 95

Wrap the base wires diagonally around the back of the bail.

Figure 96

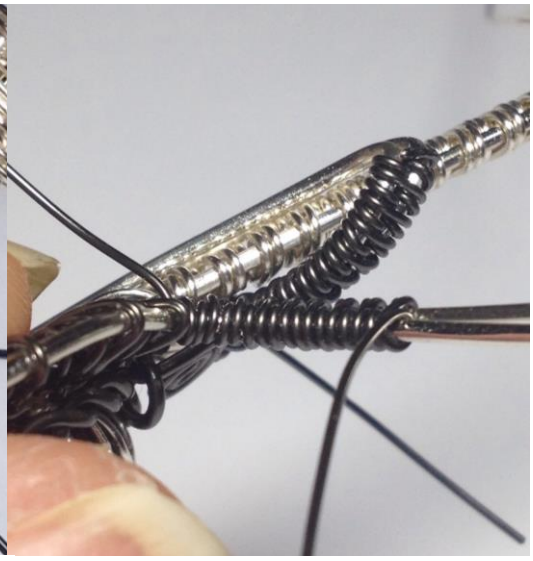


Figure 97

Repeat the same steps with the last 2 wires

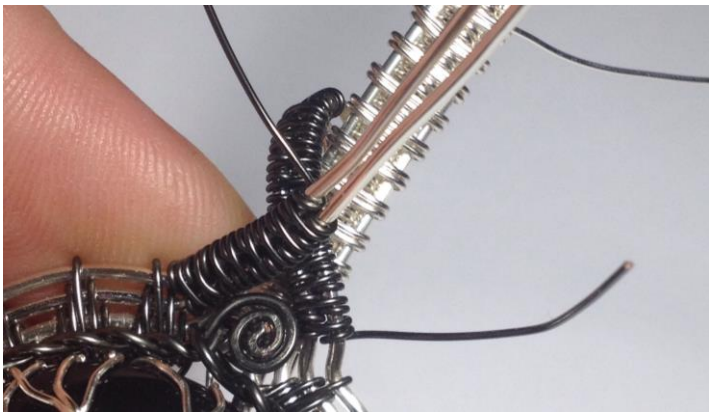


Figure 98

The second weave has to be longer than the first to reach over the top of the first weave.

Figure 99

Wrap the base wires around the back and angle them diagonally up.

Figure 100

Continue around the bail and bring one of the base wires back to the front. Create a coil with the tail using the same process as the coil below it in the picture.

Figure 101

Trim the remaining tails just enough to curl the ends of the wire.

Figure 102

Curl the wire tails and lay them as flat as possible against the back of the bail.

Figure 103

Continue the bail weave, you need about an inch of weave between the top swirl and the end of the weave.

Figure 104

Bend the two outside base wires straight out to the sides.

If you haven't done it already wrap your weave wire around one base wire, trim and tuck.

Figure 105

Trim the base wires and begin curls, it doesn't matter what these curls look like they won't be seen but they have to be small.

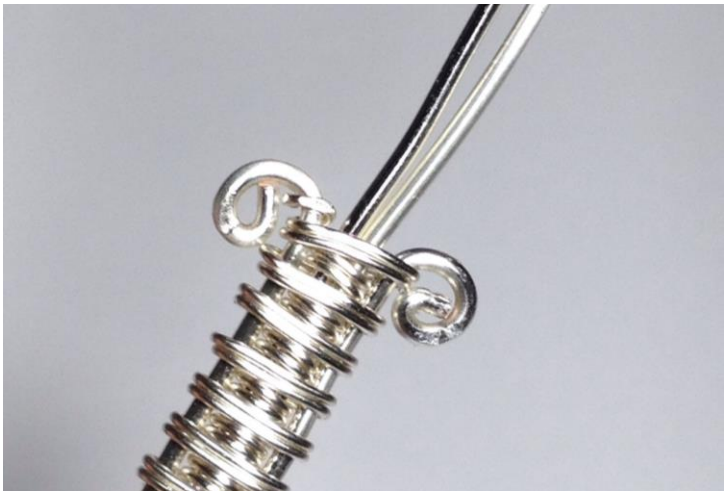


Figure 106

Curl the wires up to the weave.

Figure 107

Bend and lay the curls flat on the back of the bail.

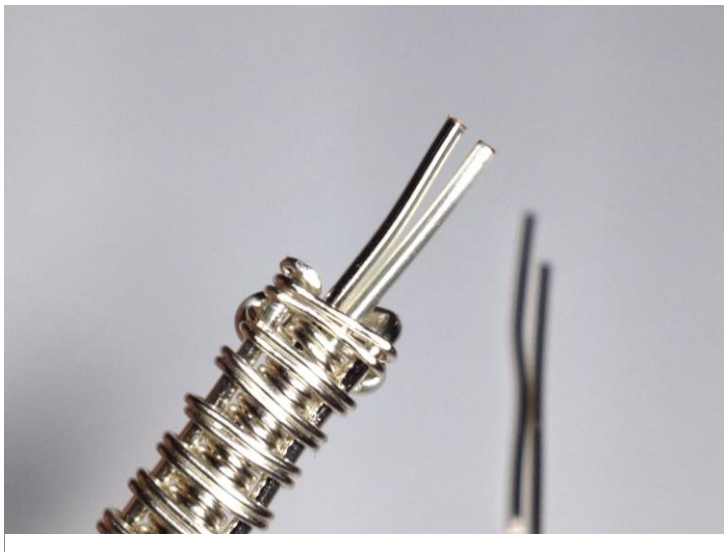


Figure 108

Trim the last two base wires short enough to make two small curls on the end of the wire, these curls won't be seen.

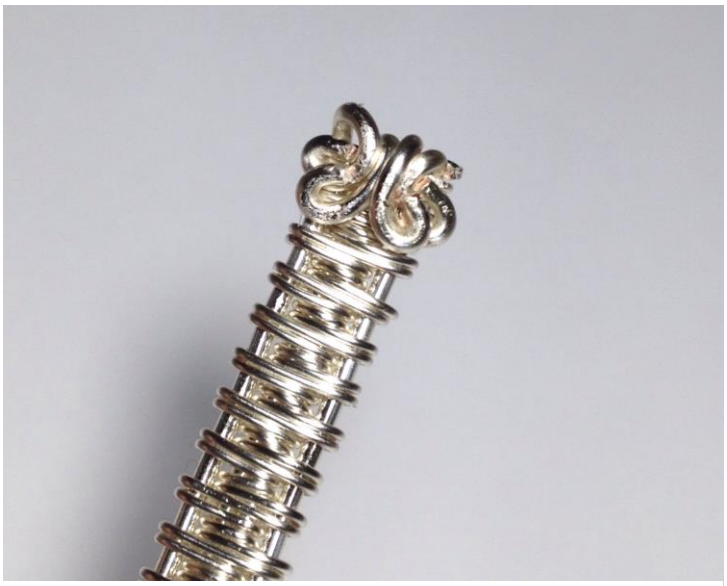


Figure 109

Curl and tuck the last two wires agains the back of the bail. We do this so they don't get caught on anything.

Figure 110

Figure 111

Bend the bail back, making the bend right behind the top curl on the front of the bail. Bend the bail over something roundish, I'm using a mandrel but you could use a pen, marker, handle of your pliers, anything with a consistent and small enough shape. Bend it so the bottom is right up against the back of the piece. We don't need to wire it to the main piece, four 18 gauge wires woven together are stiff enough to stay in place. Make sure all your weave wires are trimmed and tucked and your bail is centered.

Figure 112

Figure 113

You did it!! Great job!!

Now that you have the general idea of how to build this piece in future pieces you can change different elements, try different weaves and different bails, Give it your own personal touch!

The End

Figure 114

Legal Blurb:

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Thank you so much for taking this journey with me!

-Aletha Tjaden