

There is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth

The most important thing to remember is there is no right or wrong way to walk the labyrinth. As you enter the sacred space of the labyrinth, just be yourself.

Enter with an open mind. Open your mind and your heart and receive the richness that may come from your journey on the labyrinth.

Expectations often get in the way of one's experience. We each bring our own unique self to the labyrinth; therefore, each of our experiences will be different from that of others. Those who walk many times over a short period find that no two walks are the same.

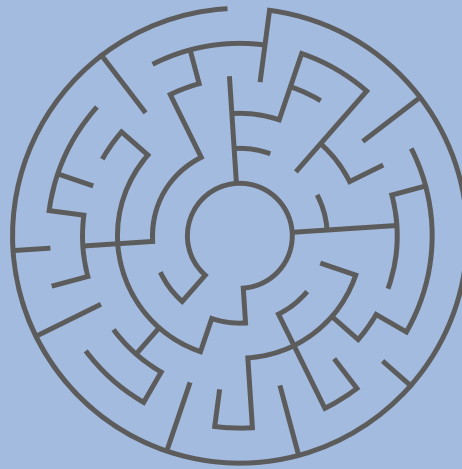
Honor your own pace. It is important to honor your own pace. Do not allow the pace of others on the labyrinth to influence your pace. Be in touch with your inner self. Your pace will not be the same every time you walk it. You may even change your pace on different parts of a single walk. It is important to honor your own needs. Failure to honor your own pace often causes feelings of frustration.

Enter with an open mind. Open your mind and your heart and receive the richness that may come from your journey on the labyrinth.

What you choose to say or pray as you walk the labyrinth is secondary to the intention with which you walk the labyrinth.

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Isaiah 30:21



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Parts of this text are from Walking A Sacred Path, *Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* by Dr. Lauren Artress, founder of Veriditas, the World Wide Labyrinth Project

The Labyrinth



What is the Labyrinth?



Labyrinths are divine imprints found in almost every religious tradition around the world. The Kabbalah or Tree of Life found in the Jewish mystical tradition is an elongated Labyrinth figure based on the number eleven. The Hopi medicine wheel based on the number four and the Man in the Maze are just two of the many Native American labyrinths. Tibetan sand paintings, though not walked, are mandalas. They are a kind of labyrinth created through a meditative state. They hold the experience of transformation within them as well. Labyrinths are mysterious because we don't know the origin of their design or exactly how they provide a space that allows clarity.



The Cretan Labyrinth



Labyrinths have been known to the human race for over four thousand years. The oldest European labyrinth on record is the Cretan Labyrinth, or seven-circuit labyrinth. It is believed that these designs evolved out of the spiral figure found in nature. Possibly the oldest surviving labyrinth is found in a rock carving at Luzzanas in Sardinia and dates from 2500-5000 BCE. Cretan labyrinths were also imprints on coins and traced into pottery and other artifacts in ancient civilizations. Researchers note that even though early civilizations were isolated from one another, only one archetypal design of the labyrinth emerged over thousands of years. Remains of a seven-circuit labyrinth can be found on Mount Knossos, on the isle of Crete.



The Eleven-Circuit Labyrinth



The most famous labyrinth in Europe is the eleven-circuit labyrinth laid on the floor of the Chartres Cathedral in France and dates back to the 13th century. The eleven-circuit design was often found in Gothic Cathedrals. Out of eighty Gothic Cathedrals built during the Middle Ages, twenty-two had labyrinths.

The Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool



The labyrinth, as a spiritual tool, dates back to the 13th century when it was placed on the floors of Gothic Cathedrals in Europe. Labyrinths were walked as a pilgrimage and/or for repentance. As a pilgrimage, it was a searching journey in the hope of becoming closer to God. When used for repentance the pilgrims would walk on their knees. Sometimes the labyrinth served as a substitute for an actual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. After 350 years there is a movement to rediscover this spiritual tool. A tool that can draw us closer to God.

Why Do We Walk It?



There are as many reasons for walking the labyrinth as there are people, world views, or spiritual traditions. Whatever one's religion, walking the labyrinth clears the mind and gives insight into the spiritual journey.

Many people today are seeking a closer, deeper, more personal relationship with God. The labyrinth is a place to find it. It is a place to pour out our hearts, express anger, experience joy, express gratitude and experience a peace that truly passes all understanding.

Many who walk the labyrinth do so as a result of a health crisis, either their own or that of a loved one's. Many walk it just before surgery. The labyrinth has been used as a tool to support the inner-healing journey.

The Three-Fold Process for Walking The Labyrinth



The first stage in your walk on the sacred path into the center of the labyrinth is called shedding, a releasing and a letting go of your worries and concerns. This tends to quiet the mind.

The second stage is called the illumination, the period when you reach and linger in the center. The center is a place of meditation and prayer; stay there as long as you like.

The third stage begins as you leave the center and retrace your steps back to the outside. It is called the union with God and the healing forces at work in the world.