

Labyrinth Experience



A labyrinth is a pattern, usually in the form of a large circle that has one path, beginning at the outer edge and leading in a circuitous way into the center. Labyrinths are at least 4000 years old and are found in medieval churches and called pavement or church labyrinths. Some are also made out of hedges, earthen mound, or other materials. Not to be confused with a maze, which is made to make you lose your way, labyrinths are designed to help you find your way.

Used as a prayer tool. It has only one continuous winding path which becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives. It can touch sorrows, release joys, a tool for helping us discover metaphors about our spiritual journey.

Meditative Walking “A time to quiet our minds”

The Four Fold Path – Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Scriptures

- Blessing (Via Positiva)
- Emptying (Via Negativa)
- Receiving the creative spirit (Via Creativa)
- The transformed person transforms the community (Via Transformativa)

1) Remembering – As you are gathering your thoughts, preparing to begin your walk, remember you are blessed. All that we have is a blessing from the Divine. If there is a line waiting to enter the labyrinth, take this time to literally count your blessings.

2) Releasing – Letting go, quieting, opening, or emptying. This begins at the entrance and ends at the center.

3) Receiving – Having done your letting go, there is now space within to receive the creative spirit. Receive guidance, interior silence, a creative idea peace...are only a few experiences that may occur. It is different for everyone. You can sit, stand, stay, in the center as long as you wish.

4) Resolve – It begins when you leave the center and return on the same path back out of the labyrinth. This may look like how you are to resolve a next step in your life, or come to a resolution about an issue in your life. Or you may reclaim the responsibilities you had prior to walking but are now seeing them in a different way or with renewed strength, taking back into the world which you have received. You can allow a blessing anywhere on the path, release anywhere on the path, receive anywhere, come to resolution anywhere. Do not hold these too tightly; during your walk you will understand the flow.

The Basics

- *No right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth:* Start where you feel drawn to start, follow the path as you feel drawn to follow the path. Your spiritual life is now your own unless you create practices that nourish you. It is a sacred place set aside for your reflection, prayer and negotiating new behavior. This is your relationship with the Divine, as you walk the complicated, demanding journey called life. Keep it free of “should” and “ought’s.”
- *Preparing for a Walk:* Quiet your mind and focus your thoughts before you enter the labyrinth. How you do this is entirely up to you. (Journaling, quiet walk prior to entering, refresh your memories of a recent dream, etc.)
- *Offering Sacred acknowledgment:* It may feel right to acknowledge your actions in some reverential way. What you hold close to the heart is, in essence, sacred. You may make the sign of the cross, walk with open prayer hands, or whatever may be meaningful to you. In this way you are connecting your mind to your body to the Spirit.
- *Using music:* If music is something you enjoy to relax, bring your iPod with you.
- *Finding your own natural pace:* Move with the rhythm that your body wants to go. Feel free to move around others or let them move around you.
- *Handling expectations:* Labyrinth experiences are subtle and can be invisible. If you focus on what you think should be happening, rather than on what is actually unfolding, you will miss the experience. Be present, experience your experience.
- *Reflecting on the Walk:* Some walks can be significant and offer valuable insights. Others can be like dreaming: hazy and unfocused. Some method of nonverbal reflection can deepen the meaning of a labyrinth walk. These are not meant to interpret what happened. Interpretation can extinguish the energy of the images, journaling or drawing can be helpful.
- *Dealing with distractions:* When you are distracted from your intuitive flow, you have two choices: increase your effort to focus on what you are working with, or follow the distraction. It is taking up your energy, so follow it to see where it leads. “Pray the distraction” Franco Legaux. It may mean you have made a shift from the soft-eyed, receptive state into your thinking mind.
- *Not imposing an agenda:* Often your ego will attempt to dictate the outcome of your walk. The labyrinth supports the intuitive nature, which is often snuffed out by the task-oriented ego. The psyche has to be willing to release the intuitive information and you have to be ready to receive it.
- *Accepting unexpected feelings:* Walking the labyrinth can raise feelings that you didn’t know you had. Gently stay with the experience and feel the feelings that come to the surface. Let them be present without attempting to figure out what is emerging. Experience the experience. If you were walking the labyrinth and the walk ended, you may want to walk it again. Then, in a journal, jot down the thoughts or images that occurred to you during your walk.
- *Being comfortable with the Walk:* One gift the labyrinth offers is that it is easy to do.