

ABOUT THE LABYRINTH

A labyrinth is a pattern with a purpose, an ancient tool that speaks to a long forgotten part of us. Lying dormant for centuries, labyrinths are undergoing a revival of use and interest. They offer a chance to take "time out" from our busy lives, to leave schedules and stress behind. Walking a labyrinth is a gift we give to ourselves that leads up past our intellect to a deeper place within. Among the results some people have reported from walking labyrinths are insight and creative ideas, relaxation and stress release, happiness (and sometimes tears), connectedness, balance and well-being.

SYMBOL

The labyrinth represents our passage through time and experience. Its many turns reflect the journey of life, which involves changes of direction, transition, some uncertainty but also discovery and achievement. Different from a maze (which has dead ends and false passages), the labyrinth has a single path that leads unerringly to the center. It shows us that no time or effort is ever wasted; if we stay the course, every step, however circuitous, however many turns, however distant it seems, takes us closer to our goal.

USE

Thinking is not required to walk a labyrinth. At the same time, one must remain alert to stay on the path. This combination of reduced mental activity and heightened awareness makes the labyrinth ideal for walking meditation or prayer. Some walk or dance the labyrinth just for the fun of it, or to express a certain intent or wish. There is a strong connection between the labyrinth and earth energies, reestablishing a long-lost rapport with nature and with the feminine. The turns of the labyrinth are thought to balance the two hemispheres of the brain, resulting in physical and emotional healing. Labyrinths have been used for weddings and other ceremonial purposes. As reaching the center is assured, walking the labyrinth is more about the journey than the destination, about *being* rather than *doing*, integrating body and mind, psyche and spirit into one harmonious whole.

Finger Labyrinth

Before you start any finger labyrinth "walk," take time to breathe and relax. Set an intention or question for the walk. Without an intention a finger labyrinth walk can become an exercise in hastily and mindlessly moving your finger along the circuits and wondering why at the end of the walk you even bothered. Say a prayer, if you like, for support, healing, and guidance.

Place a finger from your non-dominant hand at the entrance to the labyrinth. (Research shows that often our non-dominant hand has easier access to our intuition.) As you trace the circuit, stay open to whatever presents itself: feelings, sensations, memories, images, or just "knowings." Pause at any time to breathe, be with a memory, work with an image, or simply relax into the labyrinth. At the center of the labyrinth, feel its connection to your own center. The center is a wonderful place to relax, pray, or sing. When you are ready, trace your way out, staying open to whatever comes up for you. When your walk is done, place both hands on the labyrinth and give thanks for whatever you learned and experienced.

Preparing to Walk the Labyrinth

"If you want to know God better, you should take a walk with God." — 4 year old Asa



The goal of walking the labyrinth is connecting with God. One of the by-products of walking the labyrinth is transformation. The key to getting as much as you can out of your walk is remaining open.

On this pathway to prayer you are moving the body which quiets the mind. Often the message which God communicates through the labyrinth is not evident for 4-6 months. Note what comes but don't try to figure it out as you are walking.

There are as many ways to walk the labyrinth as there are people who walk it. There is no "right" way or "wrong" way. However you choose to interact with God as you walk is "the right way."

There is only one path. You follow it to the center, spend time in the center, follow it back out.

Many understand the walk to have these phases:

Preparation

Entering: Crossing the threshold

Moving in.

Being in the center.

Moving out.

Taking Leave: Crossing the threshold.

Many people have found meaning from noticing everything that happens while they pray the labyrinth. Use what happens and what you feel as a way to learn about yourself. This is a process of receptivity. The labyrinth can make one's life transparent. Open your heart; open your mind.

As you walk, you will find your own rhythm. Since there is only one path, you will meet other people on the way (coming and/or going). It is acceptable to pass another person, momentarily step off the path, wait, and/or stop.

If it is helpful, journal afterwards:

What images appeared while you were walking? Draw or describe them.

What thoughts did you explore? How did they change as you walked?

What messages was/is God communicating to you?

What wisdom did you gain in your body (including your mind) during the walk?

Some Prayerful Ways of Approaching Your labyrinth Walk:

Openness

"God, what do you want me to know? What do you want to show me?"

As intercessory prayer

"God, I walk to communicate with you about this person, situation, need . . ."

In honor of a significant date or transition

"God, it was just a year ago that Judy died . . ."

"Thank you God that I have a new opportunity . . ."

Using a prayer phrase

"Repeat one of God's names that has particular meaning for you (e.g. "Jesus, Jesus . . .")

Repeat a spiritual word that has significance for you ("Love, love, love . . .")

Repeat a short prayer ("God, what do I need to know? God, what do I need to know?")

Reflection

Reflect on your life or something significant that is concerning you right now.

Observe whatever thoughts, impressions or feelings that come

"God, help me to pay attention to what is going on inside and outside of me . . ."

As a new approach to an old problem or memory

"God, I need to talk with you and gain new insight or commitment about this situation . . ."

Letting go . . .

"God, what do I need to release?"

Walking with a question that is important to you:

Identify a central question in your life. Walk with that question in your mind and heart.

"God, I am wondering what I need to do next in my life . . . what input do you have?"

Or repeat as you walk, "What is my next step?"

If you are unsure of a question use, "What do I seek?" or What spiritual needs do I have?"

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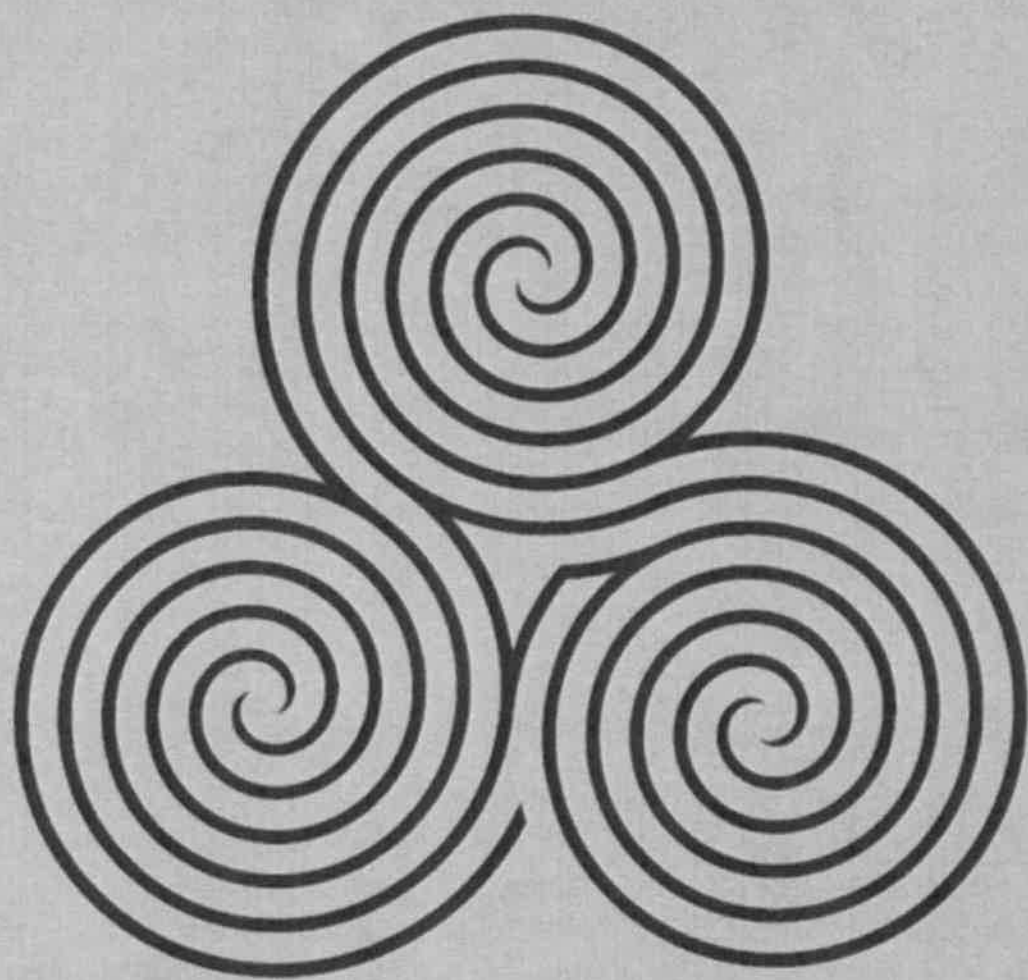




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PRAY FOR
YOURSELF

PRAY FOR THE WEAK,
SICK & THOSE WITH
PROBLEMS

PRAY FOR LEADERS &
ALL WHO HAVE AUTHORITY

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO
PRAY, INSTRUCT & HEAL
TEACH

PRAY FOR THOSE
CLOSEST TO YOU

5 Finger Prayer

Thumb: the finger closest to you - pray for those closest to you

Index Finger: the finger that points the way - pray for those who teach, instruct and heal you

Middle Finger: the tallest finger - pray for leaders and all who have authority

Ring Finger: the weakest finger - pray for the weak, sick, and those with problems

Pinkie: the smallest finger - pray for yourself

