

The Cretan (classic) Labyrinth

'Labyrinths offer the opportunity to walk in meditation to that place within us where the rational merges with the intuitive and the spiritual is reborn.'

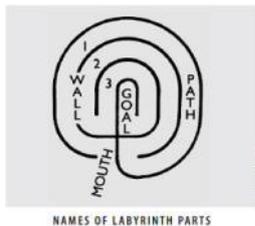


A Labyrinth is not a maze.

Labyrinths and mazes have often been confused. When most people hear of a labyrinth they think of a maze. A labyrinth is not a maze. A maze is like a puzzle to be solved. It has twists, turns, and blind alleys. It is a left brain task that requires logical, sequential, analytical activity to find the correct path into the maze and out.

A labyrinth has a single path that leads dependably, although circuitously, to the center. If you stay on the path, you WILL reach the center.

Explanation of the Labyrinth.



NAMES OF LABYRINTH PARTS

At its most basic level the labyrinth is a metaphor for the life's journey. Starting at the mouth (the East, where the sun rises) to our own center and back again out into the world with a broadened understanding of who we are.

It is a symbol that creates a sacred space and place and takes us out of our ego to "That Which Is Within."

It is an archetype that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path.

A labyrinth has only one path. It is unicursal. The way in is the way out. There are no blind alleys. The path leads you on a circuitous path to the center (goal) and out again.

Labyrinths have most likely always been used in a spiritual manner. They can create a heightened awareness of the human condition and aid psychological and spiritual growth (sometimes seen as spring, summer, autumn, winter). To build a labyrinth is to create a sacred space. To walk a labyrinth is to imbue it with power and meaning. The more a labyrinth is used the more powerful it becomes as a symbol of transformation.

To walk a labyrinth is a right brain task. It involves intuition, creativity, and imagery. With a labyrinth there is only one choice to be made. The choice is to enter or not. A more passive, receptive mindset is needed.

The Chakra Labyrinths

The seven circuits of the classical Cretan Labyrinth pathway have also been associated with the seven primary chakras of the body. Notice the sequence of the paths is 3-2-1-4 and 7-6-5-8 which repeats itself twice. This pattern goes from left to right making the brains left and right hemispheres alternate.



How to walk the Labyrinth?

Walking the labyrinth is to experience that inner stillness, as the labyrinth's intricate steps gently take the conscious mind out of the way.

There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. You only have to enter and follow the path. However, your walk can encompass a variety of attitudes. It may be joyous or somber. It might be thoughtful or prayerful. You may use it as a walking meditation.

Adults are often serious in the labyrinth. Children most often run in and out as fast as they can in a playful manner.

When you walk a labyrinth choose your attitude. From time to time choose a different attitude. Make it serious, prayerful, or playful. Play music or sing. Pray out loud. Walk alone or with a crowd. Notice the sky. Listen to the sounds. Most of all pay attention to your experience.

Some general guidelines for walking a labyrinth are:

1. Focus: Pause and wait at the entrance. Become quiet and centered. Give acknowledgment through a bow, nod, or other gesture and then enter.
2. Experience: Walk purposefully. Observe the process. When you reach the center, stay there and focus several moments. Leave when it seems appropriate. Be attentive on the way out.
3. Exit: Turn and face the entrance. Give an acknowledgement of ending, such as "Amen."
4. Reflect: After walking the labyrinth reflect back on your experience. Use journaling or drawing to capture your experience.
5. Walk often.

"Your life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path... exactly where you are meant to be right now... And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, and of love."

Caroline Adams