

## The Labyrinth

The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs have been found on pottery, tablets and tiles that date back as far as 5000 years ago. Many patterns are based on spirals and circles mirrored in nature. They all have one thing in common: one path that winds in a circuitous way to the center. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. Unlike a maze where you lose your way, the labyrinth can be viewed as a spiritual tool that can help you find your way. In Native American tradition, the labyrinth is identical to the Medicine Wheel and Man in the Maze. The Celts described the labyrinth as the Never Ending Circle. It is also known as the Ka bala in mystical Judaism.

There are many ways to describe and use a labyrinth. It can be a path of prayer, a walking meditation, a crucible of change, a watering hole for the spirit and a mirror of the soul.

The studio labyrinth is a 5 circuit replica of the Eleven-circuit Medieval Labyrinth from Chartres Cathedral in France. This labyrinth was made of Beauce quarry stone and an unnamed black stone to delineate the path and was inlaid into the stone floor in 1201. For the last 250 years it had been forgotten and covered with chairs until recently when the chairs were removed and the labyrinth opened for to allow people to experience the meditative walk again.

The path is in full view, which allows you to be quiet and focus internally. When you walk the labyrinth you use the same path to walk in to the centre and to return and the entrance.

The walk can be thought of as having three stages: releasing on the way in, receiving in the center and returning when you follow the path back out of the labyrinth.

To prepare, you may want to sit quietly to reflect before walking the labyrinth. Some people come with questions, others just to slow down and take time out from a busy life.

There is no right way or wrong way to walk a labyrinth.

Labyrinths are used world-wide as a way to quiet the mind, recover a balance in life, and encourage meditation, insight, self-reflection, stress reduction, and to discover innovation and celebration. They are open to all people as a nondenominational, cross-cultural blueprint for well-being. The practice of labyrinth walking integrates the body with the mind and the mind with the spirit. They are found in many places, for example in parks and gardens, churches, schools, prisons and cathedrals.



## Walking the Labyrinth

Welcome to the Labyrinth. You are about to step into ancient archetypal path that is hundreds of years old. The pattern has been walked by millions of people of all cultures for many reasons.

The labyrinth is a sacred place set aside for you to reflect, look within, pray, negotiate new behavior. The rhythm of walking, placing one foot in front of the other, empties the mind, relaxes the body and refreshes the spirit. Follow the pace your body wants to go.

The labyrinth can be walked in four stages. As you encounter other people walking the same path, simply allow them to pass. You walk the labyrinth with your body and rest your mind.

### **Reflect**

*Before walking the labyrinth*

Take time in gratitude be thankful for your life. Bless the people in your life. If there's a specific event or situation troubling you, bring it to mind and form a healing question if possible.

### **Release**

*Walking into the labyrinth*

This is the time to quiet the mind, let go of the mind chatter and release your troubles. Open your heart to feel whatever it might feel. Become aware of your breathing. Take slow breaths. Relax and move at your own pace.

### **Receive**

*Standing or Sitting in the Center*

This is a place of reflection. Pause and stay as long as you like. Open yourself to your higher power. Listen to that small inner voice. In the safety of the labyrinth have a heart-to heart talk with yourself.

### **Return**

*Walking out of the labyrinth*

When you are ready, begin walking out the same path you followed in. Walking out, integration of your experience happens. Experience the sense of well-being, healing, excitement, calm or peace. Each labyrinth experience is different. You may feel nothing or have a powerful reaction. Whatever, listen to your heart and take all the time you need.

Remember – this is only a guide, you provide the bigger picture.