

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. By walking our replica of the Chartres Labyrinth, laid in the floor of Chartres Cathedral around 1220, you are rediscovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn.

This labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks to it and no dead ends. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives; it touches our sorrows and releases our joys. So walk it with an open mind and an open heart.

HISTORY

A labyrinth is an ancient circular diagram found in many cultures around the world. In its classical form, this sacred, diagram consists of a single concentric circular path with no possibility of going astray. Labyrinths have been found in almost every religious tradition in the past four to five thousand years in such areas as Egypt, Greece, Italy, France, England, Peru and North America.

Walking the labyrinth is an ancient spiritual act and a physical meditation that is being rediscovered during our time. There are many different forms of labyrinths. The Labyrinth found in Chartres Cathedral, southwest of Paris, was laid in stone pavement during the 12th and 13th centuries. It was used in sacred devotions as

a substitute for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and for penance. The Chartres labyrinth is a universal meditation tool. Anyone from any tradition or spiritual path can walk into the labyrinth and benefit, through reflecting in the present moment.

AS YOU BEGIN

(You might consider the following)

Preparation

When preparing to walk the labyrinth take time to reflect on where you are in your life. Write it down. You may want to focus on a question, or find a statement that guides you to embrace a question or prayer on the labyrinth.

Gracious Attention

Quiet the mind, choosing to let all thoughts go when they present themselves in your awareness. In this form of walking the labyrinth, the task is to allow a gracious sense of attention to flow through you. Simply letting be and releasing whatever comes to your awareness, be they thoughts, tears, a sense of peace, a desire to be still.

Asking a Question

Journal your thoughts, feelings desires, questions before you walk the labyrinth. Focus on a question you have been asking yourself.
Let the question amplify itself and the

thoughts that surround it. Get ready to look into it, look at it from all angles, let all else go but your question. Our intentions guide the process. Questions that we take into the labyrinth should be beyond requiring a yes or no answer. The labyrinth allows you consciousness to open so that deeper, and perhaps new, parts of ourselves can speak to us more directly. The questions that we formulate should be as close to home as possible. They do not need to be worded articulately, but they need to be asked from the heart and soul of our being, not from our everyday conscious thoughts.

The Use of Repetition

One can meditate by repeating a word, a mantra, or phrase over and over to ourselves. One way from Christian centering prayer, is to use a word or phrase that does not stir up either positive or negative feelings or thoughts. This can be a word from another language or even a nonsensical phrase. Thomas Keating suggests short words. This approach distracts the restless mind by keeping it busy.

The second way, is to find a meaningful phrase which lends itself to walking phrases like "Come, Holy Spirit, Come." "I am the daughter of Light" or "Guide me Mother of God"

From the Buddhist tradition Stephen Levine offers:

May I dwell in the heart
May I be free from suffering
May I be healed
May I live at peace

Reading Scripture

Use the Psalms or other text to read as you walk.

Asking for Help through Prayer

Praying for others. Ask for Divine help.

Talk to God as if you were writing a letter, having a conversation.

The labyrinth is a place where you can pour out your heart, express your anger, experience joy, express gratitude and above all ask for what you need.

MORE SUGGESTIONS FOR WALKING THE LABYRINTH

You may think of walking the labyrinth in three stages:

Purgation - a releasing, a letting go of the details of your life. This is an act of shedding thoughts and emotions. It quiets and empties the mind as you walk into the labyrinth.

Illumination - may occur when you reach the center. Stay there as long as you like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there for you to receive.

Union - which is joining God, the divine healing force at work in the world. Each time you walk out of the labyrinth you become more empowered to find and do the work you feel your soul reaching for.

GUIDELINES FOR THE WALK

Clear your mind and become aware of your breath. Allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. You may "pass" people or let others step around you, whichever is easiest, at the turns. The path is two-way: those going in will meet those coming out. Do what feels natural when this happens.

RESOURCES

Walking the Sacred Path, by Dr. Lauren Artess, Riverhead Books

Veriditas, Grace Cathedral, 1100 California St., San Francisco, CA 94108, 415-749-6357

Walking the Labyrinth

