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HOW TO LABYRINTH...by Sarah Gish

Welcome to our “First Saturday Community Labyrinth Walk”! I hope you’ll join us whenever you can – I always have an art activity, information about the specific labyrinth we’re walking, and an inspirational reading to start the walk. I announce the locations via my personal email list (sign up for that here <http://eepurl.com/buzsXT>), via my monthly e-newsletter/blog, SPIRIT PICKS: A GUIDE TO INSPIRING ACTIVITIES IN HOUSTON (www.spiritpicks.com), and as an event in our Houston Labyrinth Walkers Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/houstonlabyrinthwalkers), which you can easily join. We walk all over the greater Houston area – if you’d like to know about our city’s many labyrinths, click here www.gishcreative.com/Houston_labyrinth_list_2015.pdf for a printable list of them. There is a \$10 suggested donation fee for each walk.

**The most important thing to know about labyrinths is this:
there is no right or wrong way to walk them!**

Labyrinths are an ancient structure with a rich history that you can easily research. They have generally been used for meditational practices in some way and are often viewed as a symbol of the journey of life. Labyrinths have also been associated with the feminine divine as well as with Christian pilgrimages. They are mysterious tools for anyone who wants to use them.

The “primer” on labyrinths, [Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool](#), is by Dr. Lauren Artress, a San Francisco-based priest, psychotherapist, top labyrinth expert in the world, and creator of labyrinth-related groups, including Veriditas (www.veriditas.org). Veriditas and the other main labyrinth group, The Labyrinth Society (www.labyrinthociety.org), maintain a labyrinth locator which is very handy, www.labyrinthlocator.com. In her book, Artress said this about the labyrinth: “Why does the labyrinth attract people? Because it is a tool to guide healing, deepen self-knowledge, and empower creativity. Walking the labyrinth clears the mind and gives insight into the spiritual journey. It urges action. It calms people in the throes of life transitions...To those of us who feel we have untapped gifts to offer, it stirs the creative fires within. To others who are in deep sorrow, the walk gives solace and peace. The experience is different for everyone because each of us brings different raw material to the labyrinth. We bring our unique hopes, dreams, history, and longings of the soul.” (page 21)

Labyrinths are different from mazes in that there is only one path in and out. The meditation while walking a labyrinth is your choice but there have been a few suggested mantras or ways of viewing the journey. Artress suggests “purgation” for the way in, “illumination” for the center, and “union” for the way out. There’s also “entering, centering, turning, returning” and “release, receive, return.” Each time you walk the labyrinth will be a unique experience. As you are walking the path, please be mindful of your fellow walkers – some might connect with you while others won’t. It’s just like life. Also: observe how the experience of the walk resonates with you – what are you learning/feeling?

On the back of this page are a few labyrinth types – may you enjoy many labyrinth walks!

TYPES OF LABYRINTHS

There are two main types of labyrinths: **classical**, 7-circuit and **medieval**/Chartres, 11-circuit. The 7-circuit ones have been said to correspond to the seven chakras in the body. The medieval ones are generally left-entering but some have the path heading to the right. Most are 11 circuits but they have also been found containing anywhere from 6-15 circuits. The design is a four-quadrant circle that is symmetric and sometimes has a center with 6 “petals.” The most famous of these is the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth, which is the one that ignited Dr. Artress’ work and life.

There are also a variety of other free-form, modern labyrinths as well as three-dimensional ones. My favorite new labyrinth design is triangular!

The numbers, design, and path direction all have meanings in the labyrinth world and you can explore them at any level you wish.



Classical Labyrinth



Medieval Labyrinth



Triangular Labyrinth by Robert Morris
(glass sculpture at the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City)