

Guidelines for Walking the Labyrinth

The Cancer Wellness Center labyrinth walking path is grass...the bricks are the path borders. Because the grass surface may be uneven, you might wish to use a cane or walking sticks if balance is a concern for you.

The labyrinth is not a maze. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. It is a single circuitous path that winds its way into the center. The person walking it uses the same path to return from the center and the entrance then becomes the exit. Because the path is in full view and there are no decisions to be made about which direction to take, the mind relaxes, which allows a person to be quiet and focus internally.

The labyrinth is an ancient healing tool that has been used throughout human history. It can be seen as a metaphor for life. The path inward may serve as an unwinding of what is currently in your focus; the center can literally be a place for centering or grounding yourself; the journey out can be a way of carrying out what you received in the center.

Generally, there are three stages to the walk: releasing (emptying, quieting) on the way in; receiving in the center; returning back to the world when you follow the path back out of the labyrinth. Symbolically, and sometimes actually, you are taking back out into the world that which you have received. Perhaps this will be an increased sense of calm, empowerment, creativity, authenticity – your experience will likely be different every time you walk a labyrinth.

There is no right way or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. Use the labyrinth in any way that meets what you need while being respectful of others walking.

To prepare, you may want to sit quietly to reflect before walking the labyrinth. You may wish to journal during your reflection – you might even wish to take paper to jot down images or thoughts that come to you during your journey through the labyrinth. Some people come with questions, others just to slow down and take time out from a busy life. Some come to find strength to make important decisions. Many come during times of grief and loss.

You may wish to begin with a deep breath and a moment of silence or reflection before proceeding into the labyrinth. Enter without expectations. Enter with an open heart and an open mind. If there is someone ahead of you on the path, please allow at least one minute to lapse between you and the person in front of you before entering.

Move through the labyrinth in your own style and at your own natural pace. It is OK to pass people who are moving at a slower pace and, when paths cross in opposite directions, do whatever feels natural to move around the other person or to let them move around you. Attempt to move through the labyrinth without expectations. Simply be mindful of what you are experiencing, noticing, feeling – “experience your experience”.

When you enter the center, follow your body wherever it takes you. If you entered the labyrinth with a question, prayer, or intention, you may wish to leave it in the center. Spend as much time in the center as feels right to you.

After exiting the labyrinth, pay attention to what you experienced on your journey. Did you experience any metaphors for your life? Did any words, images, people, memories come to you? Did you relax? Did you experience emotion? However strong or weak any insight or experience, consider writing it down soon after your labyrinth walk.

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