

Labyrinth Walking Meditation Script by Dr Elspeth Evans, Psychologist (2019)

This is a guided walking meditation, which is common to many Eastern philosophical and spiritual practices. This walking meditation has its origins in the ancient Buddhist practice of vipassana, or mindfulness, meditation. Mindfulness means focusing one's attention in a particular way to the present moment, to thoughts, feelings and sensations as they arise. Walking meditation is appropriate for most people and can be therapeutic when practiced regularly. This meditation is not a replacement for psychological treatment for those who are struggling with unresolved traumas, major mental health concerns, addictions, or thoughts of harming themselves.

Likely the most effective way to use this recording is to listen while you walk the labyrinth outside, following along with my voice. You may also listen in preparation for walking quietly, using my words as a form of guided imagery. Some people think that walking the labyrinth allows us to engage different parts of our mind, the more intuitive, symbolic parts. For some, the circuitous path of the labyrinth represents life itself, whole and complete even with its many twists and turns from start to finish. Walking the labyrinth also allows us to connect our minds with our body rhythms and our senses. For those of us that are still able-bodied, walking meditation reminds us of the complex body parts and systems involved in making these movements, movements which we all had to learn early in life. This practice is a reminder that we may walk for the sake of walking, not simply to get from A to B.

So, beginning by planting your feet at the entrance of the labyrinth. Deciding whether you would like to set an intention for this walk, or whether to let the walk itself be the sole intention. Starting by acknowledging the land we are walking on, this indigenous land on Turtle Island, traditional territories to many peoples who have had a deep connection to these spaces and places for thousands of years: the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape, and Attawandaron peoples.

Now again, centering yourself inward on your body, noticing your body in space. Feeling the contact that your feet make with the earth. Starting to take your first steps, going at a pace that is natural or a pace that is somewhat slower than normal. Just letting your arms and hands fall as they will at your sides, swinging slightly. Walking the labyrinth should not be strenuous physically. Lifting your leg, stepping out with your foot, bringing your heel down followed by your toes. Noticing the weight of your leg as you lift it, perhaps feeling the urge to place your foot down, and doing so purposefully, with intention. Walking with one leg, and the other.

And taking this opportunity to find your breath in your body. Notice the location of your breath, and the sensation of air as it enters and exits your body. Noticing the rise and fall of your chest or belly as you breathe and walk.

Returning your focus to your body as you move through space. Trying not to force any particular outcome of this walk, just allowing whatever happens happen. Just following the narrow path along its circular route.

Not having to think about the path, just letting the stones guide you. If a thought comes up in your mind, acknowledging it and then just letting the thought go, trying not to follow it. Returning your attention to your body as you walk. There is only one way to go, and that is onwards. Noticing any resistance to the direction of the path, any desire to change it or end the walk. If possible, just allowing these feelings to wash over you without judging them or acting on them.

Noticing also the weather outside – is it cool or warm, what is the temperature as you are experiencing it right now? Is there a breeze meeting your skin? Can you feel the sun on your head, or maybe a snowflake on your cheek?

Walking along the path, slowly making your way inward towards the centre.

And noticing the pattern of footsteps on the earth, the feeling of the stones or plants beneath your feet. Perhaps a pebble makes itself known to the sole of your foot. Noticing whether this is a pleasant or unpleasant touch, accepting what it is as it has already happened. Noticing perhaps how the sensation fades on its own without your intervention.

And involving all of your senses as you walk. Perhaps noticing any smells as they arrive at your nostrils... maybe the slight scent of thyme after you step on the leaves of the plant. The scent of the fresh earth. Any other smells as they arrive and fade away.

Just following the circular turns, moving inward toward the centre, winding your way inward.

Once at the centre, just pausing.

Allowing yourself to take in your whole body. Then, purposefully, turning around and making your way back, outward on the return path. Continuing at a pace that allows you to maintain your attention on the present, on your legs as they walk, your feet as they step.

Continuing to notice your senses as you walk.

Noticing perhaps the sounds of people going by on the sidewalk, or of the traffic as it passes down the street beside or behind you. Maybe noticing any reactions to these sounds, perhaps irritation or annoyance at their presence during your meditation. If possible, just letting these thoughts pass through your mind like the traffic passing down the street, not attaching to any particular thought, practicing letting go and unsticking from difficult thoughts.

Noticing also sounds from nature: a bird in a tree, a squirrel chattering, the crunch of your foot as it makes contact with the ground.

Noticing also your sense of sight, perhaps taking in the colours of the leaves on the trees as they sway in the wind. Perhaps noticing the plants in the garden, the variation of colour on the stones of the church, perhaps noticing the sky above us. Allowing thoughts about what you see to pass through your mind like clouds passing through the sky.

Allowing yourself to take in your connection with all living things. Maybe the turns in path remind you of the unpredictability of changes in life. Twists and turns that all lead us to the end.

And when arriving at the end of the labyrinth, which is also the start, pausing, perhaps with your eyes closed, and once again, connecting with your body, with your breath in your body, and with your whole self, rooted to the earth.