



## Labyrinth Foundation



### What is a Labyrinth?

Labyrinths and mazes are not the same. “Mazes can have more than one entrance, numerous choices of path and direction and cul-de-sacs. They are designed to pose some difficulty in finding ones way in, or out of them. The walls are usually high enough to block one from seeing the way out. Mazes are essentially a game and a test of skill.

Labyrinths: Unlike the maze the labyrinth, sometimes called a “prayer/meditation walk” is not designed to be difficult to navigate. It has only a single winding path which leads to the center and out again through a number of twists and turns, with no diverging paths or dead-ends along the way. A "circuit" describes the number of times the path circles around the center of the labyrinth. The Cretan or Classical 7-circuit labyrinth pattern is the oldest and most used of all labyrinth designs. It consists of a single path winding back and forth in a series of seven concentric rings, all the while leading to a center point

### Why a Labyrinth?

Research conducted at the Harvard Medical School’s Mind/Body Medical Institute by Dr. Herbert Benson has found that focused walking meditations are highly efficient at reducing anxiety and eliciting what Dr. Benson calls the ‘relaxation response’. This effect has significant long-term health benefits, including lower blood pressure and breathing rates, reduced incidents of chronic pain, reduction of insomnia, improved fertility, and many other benefits. Regular meditative practice leads to greater powers of concentration and a sense of control and efficiency in one's life. Labyrinth walking is among the simplest forms of focused walking meditation, and the demonstrated health benefits have led hundreds of hospitals, health care facilities, and spas to install labyrinths in recent years. - *The Labyrinth Society*

