

PRAYING WITH THE HEART LABYRINTH

Tracing the path of the Labyrinth with your finger is calming & relaxing. It is a method of of prayer, meditation and self reflection. It engages your rational, logical, analytical mind to concentrate on following the path and at the same time releases and enhances your awareness, intuitive, instinctual, imaginative mind, balancing the two, giving you time and space to let go of worries and be in the present moment.

Find a comfortable peaceful place to sit in a straight backed chair, if possible so that your spine is self supporting and feet flat to the floor. Take a few moments to notice how your body is feeling. Take a few deep slow breaths in and out focusing your attention on your breath.

Hold the labyrinth on your lap or on a table or tray in a position where you can be comfortable but attentive. Touch the surface of the labyrinth, close your eyes and feel it texture. Notice the notches, the ‘speed bumps’ at the entrance/exit, to help you slow down and be totally in this present moment. Notice especially the two hearts and larger central heart. Represent those you are praying for by placing a finger gently on the smaller hearts, think deeply of the person you want to hold and carry round the heart labyrinth journey of prayer.



When you are ready slowly begin to trace the labyrinth path, use a finger on the hand you do not write with, your non-dominant hand. Slowly, follow and trust the path. There is only one way to the centre both in and out. Take your time, go gradually, unhurriedly, think of those you are carrying in your thoughts and feelings, ‘your dear ones’.

Release any tense feelings and thoughts that come to mind, make a note of them, you don’t have to engage with them now, you can come back to them later. **Remember** you are loved and unique, breathe slowly and trace the path to the centre.

When you reach the centre, stop. **Rest & receive.** Give yourself permission to be in the moment totally, linger here awhile. Holding those in your heart at the very centre of your prayers and thoughts. Offer your concerns, prayers and decisions for those you are carrying to God. You and they are loved wherever you and they are on our unique paths.

When you feel ready, **return** back to the beginning, breathing slowly, trace the path out again, taking any thoughts or insights you have received.

When you find yourself back at the beginning, take some time to **reflect** and give thanks. You may feel lighter, stronger, and ready to engage with the world again and or received some insights and reflections while you were praying.

It’s beneficial to Journal your experience. So write down and or draw your experiences. How did you feel ? What did you think as you took this time to walk and pray ?

When we say to people, “I will pray for you,” we make a very important commitment. The sad thing is that this remark often remains nothing but a well-meant expression of concern but when we learn to descend with our mind into our heart, then all those who have become part of our lives are led into the healing presence of God and touched by the Divine in the centre of our being.

We are speaking here about a mystery for which words are inadequate. It is the mystery that the heart, which is the centre of our being, is transformed by God into the Divine’s own heart, a heart large enough to embrace the entire universe.

Through prayer we can carry in our heart, all human pain and sorrow, all conflicts and agonies, all torture and war, all hunger, loneliness, and misery, not because of some great psychological or emotional capacity, but because God’s heart has become one with ours.

Henri Nouwen

You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you. *Frederick Buechner*

You know how every once in a while. you do something and the little voice. inside says, “There. That’s it. That’s why you’re here.” ..and you get a warm glow in your heart because you know it’s true ?

Do more of that. *Jacob Nordby*

When you remember me, it means that you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. It means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart. For as long as you remember me, I am never entirely lost.

Frederick Buechner

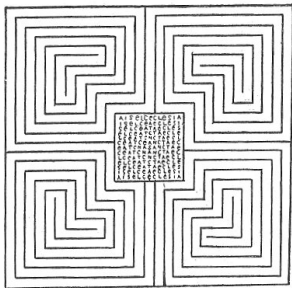
It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without heart. *Mahatma Gandhi*

The wish to pray is a prayer in itself. *Georges Bernanos*

You are my God. Help me to do your will, and let your gentle Spirit lead me on the right good paths. Show me Your ways, O Lord, teach me Your paths.

Psalms 143 :10 Psalm 25:4

Using labyrinths creates, enriches and enhances a state of mindfulness enabling fruitful prayerful silence. They help reduce inner noise and confusion of our everyday busy lives. They help us slow down, find peace, and a place of rest to be 'still and still moving' to hear God's heartbeat.



Christian labyrinth
Algeria,
North Africa 324 CE.

Labyrinths have been used for for thousands of years in many different cultures. The first recorded Church Labyrinth is in Algeria, North Africa dating back to 324 CE.

Throughout the long history of labyrinths, whenever and wherever society is going through rapid change and development, the labyrinth has blossomed. Now, humanity is seeking the sure path of the labyrinth in an uncertain and confusing world. Jeff Saward



HEART FINGER LABYRINTH



The Labyrinth is an ancient metaphor for life's journey, an archetype symbol representing pilgrimage that offers a deep way of embodying prayer for growth, transformation & spiritual renewal. Labyrinths provide welcoming opportunities for mindfulness, of finding an oasis of calm and relaxation. They help us slow down to catch up with our soul, still the busy mind, and connect again with our deep inner resources.

Finger labyrinths are an excellent addition and alternative when it is not possible to walk a full sized labyrinth. The purpose of the heart finger labyrinth is to enable you to carry others in your heart of empathy, goodness, compassion and prayer.

The heart finger Labyrinth contains three hearts, the two smaller hearts are resting places to hold metaphorically those dear to you in your heart of prayer and bring them into Gods bigger heart. The heart labyrinth invites you on a sacred journey engaging touch and feel to embody a deeper experience and way of following a way of holding and carrying people in focused intentional prayer.

The labyrinth strengthens contemplation, meditation, rest and recharging, it helps manage anxiety and creates opportunities for recovery, re-discovery and re-charging.

The labyrinth is not a maze. Mazes have dead ends, choices, many paths, they are multicursal. Labyrinths have one path, to the centre and back out, they are unicursal. You just follow the path. Using a labyrinth is like teaching a fish to swim !

The heart labyrinth offers ways to help you hold others with intention in your thoughts and feelings. This is what prayer is, the raising of the mind and soul to God, a path of encounter with the Divine, gently providing practices to carry others you care for with open hearted thoughtful compassion and tender kindness.

The Heart Labyrinth is printed from Eco friendly, sustainable plant polymer natural material. Designed by Jim Bailey 2023

WWW.JIMBAILEY.ORG

WWW.PILGRIMPATHS.ORG.UK

PRESENT PRESENCE CONTINUED...

You are present in this here and now and what happening doesn't involve any action on the your part. In holding space you're just there to give open hearted wholehearted witness, almost like a fly on the wall. Naturally, you can participate if requested to do so, but essentially your role is that of the watcher.

Through the practice of holding space, you serve as a container for which the healing and transformation can take place. It's a powerful gift of presence that you can give to others through the quality of your attention.

CAIM PRAYERS, 'CIRCLE ME LORD'

Celtic Caim or 'encircling' prayers. Walk with your fingers the apotropaic (protective) circling path of the labyrinth as you pray, this is an outward sign of an inward intention symbolising the all encompassing love of God.

See yourself and others encircled and be aware that the living God surrounds and encompasses us with His love, care and protection.

The Caim prayer can be adapted to many different situations. Sometimes a particular form of the prayer that has been found to be helpful can be written down for repeated use when praying again for the same person or for another person in similar circumstances.

DIFFERENT EXAMPLES OF CAIM PRAYERS

Insert him, her or them instead of name if appropriate, and change the wording to suit. Be still, hold a moments quiet before you, with intention circle the labyrinth with your finger as you pray these encircling Calm prayers of peace, protection & providence

Circle (name), Lord.

Keep light near and darkness afar.

Circle (name), Lord.

Keep (comfort) near and

(discouragement) afar.

Keep (peace) within and (turmoil) out.

Circle (name), Lord.

keep peace within and anxiety without.

The eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit

shield (name) on every side.

Circle (name), Lord.

Keep protection near and danger afar.

Circle (name), Lord.

keep hope within, keep despair without.

Amen

HOLDING PRAYER SPACE FOR OTHERS IN OUR HEARTS

Holding space has become a way of describing how we hold both a physical safe space and an empathetic open hearted mental and emotional space for others we carry in our hearts.

YOU HOLD ME IN YOUR HEART

A pioneer of the very first churches, Paul, in his writing to the followers of the 'Way' at Philippi in Macedonia, the first church he established on the European continent. It is one of Paul's most personal letters. 'Joyful' is the best way to describe it, from his tone and words, it is obvious this was a group for which he held deep and lasting affection. The feeling was mutual. The Philippians had sent Paul assistance to help with his ministry and he looks forward to the day when he can see them again.

This joy, takes place in the midst of turmoil and trial. Paul is in prison, deprived of freedom of movement, uncertain of his ultimate fate, and in spite of this he writes a letter filled with peace and comfort filled with a joy in knowing that he was carried in their hearts.

He writes: "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, **because you hold me in your heart**"

This phrase in Greek, the original language of the New Testament, can be translated in two different ways, both perfectly correct, firstly "because you hold me in your heart." and at the same time Paul meant: **"because I hold you in my heart."**

This literary ambiguity is deliberate, Paul wanted to express mutual love and concern to carry for one another. Just as the Philippians held Paul in their hearts through prayer and love, so Paul held each one of them **"because you have me in your heart, and I hold you in my heart"**

From attention to intention

"We never know how God will answer our prayers, but we can expect that God will get us involved in the Divine's plan for the answer. If we are true in intervening on behalf of others especially in prayer, we must be ready to take part in God's work on behalf of the people for whom we pray."

Corrie ten Boom

Holding space means to be present with someone with non-judgment. Being attentive and aware by active listening It is providing enriching empathy and compassion to accept someone's truths, no matter what they may be, and put your needs and opinions aside, allowing someone to just be. Holding space may appear to be easy, but sometimes our own opinions and egos can get in the way, making it a bit more difficult to put into practice.

Holding space is being physically, mentally, and emotionally in the here and now with someone, putting your focus on someone to support them as they feel their feelings. An important aspect of holding space is managing judgment while you are present. The person who is holding space helps set the tone for a kind, curious, and judgment-free interaction where the other person can be vulnerable, literally to 'give them some space'.

To hold space means to embrace or encircle someone or something with your own availability in your own vulnerability through intention, attention, and energy. Space refers to the immediate environment you are sharing with another. This, too, may be the physical space of a room, but more frequently refers to the mental and emotional environment you are in with others. Put together, these words embody the principle of surrounding the environment with your awareness a in way that provides comfort and compassion.

Holding space involves several specific qualities of consciously relating to others, the whole of which are greater than the individual parts. Let's explore these attributes and see how they can deepen your ability to hold space for others.

A vitally important aspect of holding space is the understanding that it's not about you. When you hold space you must make the conscious decision to leave your ego at the door. Holding space is about serving others and your personal concerns or needs are not part of the process. Suspending your sense of self-importance can be challenging and should be considered a prerequisite for the practice. If you aren't able to put your ego in the back for a time, you'll be ill-suited to be present for the needs of others. Holding space requires radical humility and the willingness to be a temporary caretaker of the feelings and concerns of another.

ATTENTION

One of the most precious gifts you can give another is the gift of your full and complete attention. However, listening attentively without the need to respond, interrupt, or comment is a skill that takes considerable practice to master. Even with the best of intentions, your ego may sneak back in; it looks for opportunities to subtly make things about you instead of the other.

When holding space you must work diligently to maintain eye contact, be free of distractions, be fully attentive, and cultivate an openness or "space consciousness" in which there is no "me," but rather the ever-present witness of the sounding board of consciousness.

NON-JUDGEMENT

Holding space is an impartial process. You are not there to pass judgement or to evaluate another. When you judge another's experience you create additional mental static that will only get in the way and obscure the truth. In the moment when you are holding another's fears, suffering, or grief, your opinions are irrelevant. Unless you are been through what they are going through, you will never truly understand their feelings. Being there is enough. Good and bad are merely a matter of perspective and in this moment, your perspective isn't the one that's important.

COMPASSION

Compassion is an open hearted attentive practice of non judgmental is the sympathetic consciousness of others distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Compassion is an essential quality for the practice of holding space. To embrace another in acceptance is an act of compassion in and of itself. In your openness to the pain of others you are essentially saying, "How can I help you? I don't want you to hurt. What can I do to help support your highest good?" Even if not spoken aloud, these intentions to relieve the suffering of others are the essence of compassion.

In many cases, simply being a loving presence can bring about a deep sense of relief that eases the pain of another. The world can use more compassion, so the practice of holding space provides an opportunity to continually build this vitally important skill.

PRESENT PRESENCE

Being present allows you to play a special part while holding space by giving your full attention, like in quantum physics, the observer is what triggers a collapse of the wave of potential to turn into a particle, the non-local into the localised phenomenon ! What ?.... read on...