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## Adventuring to the Center and Back

by

Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion



Suddenly a dream presents itself. For a split second you know it is possible. "How can you do that?" Imagination responds, "Somehow!"

What tools help you on the challenging road from inspiration to accomplishment? Many, the one I use and enjoy most is called the labyrinth.

Labyrinths, both ancient and modern, are found on every inhabited continent. Examples are over 3,000 years old. Over the centuries they have had many uses: decoration, ceremony, personal and communal transformation, and religious. The current worldwide revival of labyrinths is leading to their installation in public and private settings including hospitals, churches, schools, parks, airports, and personal gardens.

The photo above illustrates the flow of a typical labyrinth journey. Unlike a maze, it has only one path which leads from the threshold to the center. The same path leads from the center back to the threshold. Traveling the labyrinth involves covering the path externally and especially internally.

### Preparing

Every journey begins with decisions. When it comes to walking a labyrinth, "Why have I come?" Is this expedition inspired by a question? A concern? A longing? A perplexing situation? Have I come to mark a transition? Am I... People come to labyrinths for all these reasons, and many more!

### Beginning

By crossing the threshold you enter labyrinth territory. Whether the path is made of sand, grass, canvas, concrete or wood chips, you are on your way!

### The Journey

Many people notice that they quickly find a pace that feels right. Some people walk quickly. Others walk slowly. Young children seem to enjoy skipping the stones. Teenagers bike a large labyrinth that was painted on a parking lot or a frozen lake! No matter what the pace, by simply walking the labyrinth, many people notice that they begin to feel calmer, more focused and open. The path in and forth seems to invite people to let go of burdens of all kinds.

### Arriving

Most people are surprised to suddenly arrive at the center. For many it is a place of inspiration and renewal. For others it is a place of deep connection. When walking the labyrinth with others it is common to see people sitting or standing quietly.

### Setting Off Again

When ready, people leave the center moving back towards the threshold.

### Getting Home

The return trip often involves integrating new insights. "Are you sure that's the path that I went in on?" is a common question asked by first time labyrinth walkers. The return trip feels different.

### Returning to the Threshold

The path leads back to the edge of the pattern. Walking out of the labyrinth is the end of the journey. Experiences and thoughts which have come continue to unfold over weeks and months which follow. Exploring the labyrinth is a journey for all. It allows them to walk deeply into their own lives. It is an adventure I hope you will try — and often!

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The Rev. Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion, Ph.D., first walked over the labyrinth embedded in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France in 1979. Twenty years later she is delighted to be working closely with the labyrinth pattern as a writer, speaker, photographer, retreat facilitator and visual artist. She has authored *Praying the Labyrinth: A Journal for Spiritual Exploration and Living the Labyrinth: 101 Paths to a Deeper Connection with the Sacred*. Jill enjoys encouraging others to use this ancient pattern in ways that invite creativity, transformation and joy. Copies of the books are available at <http://www.amazon.com>



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