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Instructions on how to use a finger labyrinth

finger labyrinth Last year for my sixtieth birthday, someone gave me a finger labyrinth. I put it in my draw and promptly forgot about it. However, as I started to research various methods of prayer to incorporate in my new book Return to Our Senses: Reimagining How We Pray, I pulled it out again. To be honest this seemed a very strange way to pray especially when most of the articles I read suggested that the best way to trace out a finger labyrinth, I found that it really did help me focus and often brought intuitive inspiration when I was grappling with challenging issues. This morning it inspired this prayer: Walk with us Lord through all the twists and turns of life, Walk with us Lord until we trust in you, Lead us to the centre of your love. Interestingly, some of the earliest labyrinths found in Christian churches are finger labyrinths, their circuits well worn over the centuries by the passage of innumerable fingers "walking" to the center and then out again. In view of that you may like to try your own finger labyrinth experiment. Try this exercise from United Christ Church Ministries Before you start any finger labyrinth "walk," take time to breathe and relax. If you keep a journal, have it ready for recording any insights after your walk. Set an intention or question for the walk. Without an intention a finger labyrinth walk can become an exercise in hastily and mindlessly moving your finger along the circuits and wondering why at the end of the walk you even bothered. Say a prayer, if you like, for support, healing, and guidance. Place a finger from your non-dominant hand at the entrance to the labyrinth. As you trace the circuit, stay open to whatever presents itself: feelings, sensations, memories, images, or just "knowings." Pause at any time to breathe, be with a memory, work with an image, or simply relax into the labyrinth. At the center of the labyrinth, feel its connection to your own center. The center is a wonderful place to relax, pray, or sing. When you are ready, trace your way out, staying open to whatever comes up for you. When your walk is done, place both hands on the labyrinth and give thanks for whatever you learned and experienced. Experiment and play with your labyrinth. Try using a favorite word or phrase that evokes the sacred for you. Repeat the mantra slowly in your heart as you "walk." You may also walk with questions such as, "In what way do I most need to grow spiritually right now?" or "What most blocks me from fully receiving and living God's love?" You can also walk the labyrinth in intercessory prayer for someone else, sending them the fruits of your walk. If you are experiencing a difficult feelings may take more time than a walk). If you are struggling with a problem, ask for insight and guidance: What must I release in order to allow healing? Whom do I most need to forgive, and for what? If you are working with an illness, either serious or insignificant, you may walk into the labyrinth simply asking to return to balance with yourself and life, no matter what the circumstances of your illness. You can also walk with the question: What part of my life (or me) am I neglecting that needs attention? Illness may also be a teacher or an ally. If you are interested in exploring your illness as a teacher, you may walk asking, "How may I open to my illness as a teacher and ally?" or "What does my illness have to teach me at this point in my life?" finger labyrinthlabyrinthprayer methodsspiritual practices "Release, receive, and return." That's what the labyrinth invites us to do. Yesterday, I needed to release, receive, and return. I was stressing out about the ongoing tension between "do the thing that brings in money" and "do the thing that's calling you next" - the ever-present question of all soulful entrepreneurs. I wanted to go to the labyrinth. It turns out that making a labyrinth is almost as good as walking one for that whole "release, receive, and return thing." Since I use labyrinths a lot in my work (especially The Spiral Path, which is a 21 lesson journey through the labyrinth in case you'd like to make one too. You'll need: a square canvas or piece of wood (I used an 11X11" canvas) a print out of your favourite labyrinth design, printed to the scale of the canvas (For an 11X11 canvas in the 7 path Chartres design that I made, here's a pdf that prints on two 8.5X11 pieces of paper. If you prefer a different design, just Google "labyrinth template") heavy string glue (I used a hot glue gun and white glue, but if you don't have a glue gun, white glue is fine) newsprint or other paper (whatever you use should be fairly thin) mod podge (or just use gel medium) gel medium acrylic paint Step 1. Print the labyrinth design and glue it onto the canvas or board. I used ordinary white glue, spread thin with a spreader (any straight plastic edge, like an old credit card) will work. Use the spreader to work out any bubbles in the paper (though it doesn't have to be too fussy, since you'll cover it). Step #2. Glue heavy string onto all of the black lines. I used the hot glue qun for this because it dries faster, but it would work fine with white glue. Step #3. Cut lots of short strips of newsprint. I used blank newsprint, because it's easier to paint over, but you could use newspaper. You could also use coloured paper if you don't want to paint it. Tissue paper would also work, but you'd need a few layers to make sure the black is covered. The strips I used were approx. .75" by 3". You don't have to be fussy about it, but you'll want them wide enough to cover the string and adhere to the surface without covering two lines of string at the same time. Step #4. Slather mod podge (or gel medium) generously on a section of string. Add a strip of paper and cover the paper with more mod podge (or gel medium). The best way to do this is with your fingers, so be prepared to get a little messy. Step #5. Keep going until you have the whole labyrinth and canvas covered with strips of paper. Some spots are tricky (especially if you decide to do the flower pattern at the centre, like I did), so you'll have to let go of your inner perfectionist and let it be a little imperfect. Make sure it's all well coated with mod podge (or gel medium). Let it dry. Step #6. If you want to paint it, add a layer of gel medium once it's dry (this time you can do it with a paint brush) to smooth out some of the rough edges and to make sure the paint adheres to the surface. Step #7. Paint it however you like. I used three tones of acrylic paint for the ombre effect (crimson, burnt sienna and ochre. Step #8. If you want to give it a more textured, aged effect, rub a glaze over it. I used a brown glaze (acrylic paint mixed with gel medium) and rubbed it on with your fingers. Because I'd layered on the gel medium a little too thick, there were some cracks and the dark glazed picked these up, giving it a bit more of an aged look. Step #9. Hang it on your wall or keep it in your studio, bedroom, or sanctuary where you can use it as a meditation tool. Here are some tips for using your finger labyrinth... Before you start, take some time to settle in to a position in which you're comfortable. Take some slow deep breaths to centre you in your practice. You may want to journal before and/or after the practice. Before you begin, you may wish to set an intention or ask a question that you will carry with you into the labyrinth, but be careful to keep it open-ended so that you're open to surprise. Say a prayer, if you like, for support, healing, and guidance. Place a finger at the entrance of the labyrinth. Some people suggest that you use your non-dominant hand, as research suggests that our non-dominant hand has easier access to our intuition. As you follow the path with your finger inward, be conscious and intentional about releasing whatever stresses, worries, or distractions you might be feeling. Breathe deeply and slowly. Pause whenever you want, but don't lift your finger off the labyrinth. When distracting thoughts come up, simply let them pass and wish them well as they leave your mind. When you reach the centre, pause for awhile and receive. Be open to whatever guidance and wisdom you may need, even if it's not what you expected. When you're ready, follow the path outward, consciously returning and bringing the wisdom of the centre out into your life with you. In your journal, write or sketch anything that came to you while you made the journey. Don't try too hard. Sometimes the wisdom of the labyrinth is simply the pause that it forces you to take. Sometimes nothing obvious shows up, but that doesn't mean it wasn't time well spent. Stay open and receptive. Starting February 1, 2015, you can join me in a 21 lesson journey through the labyrinth, back to your authentic heart in The Spiral Path: A Woman's Journey to Herself. In the first seven lessons, you'll release what no longer serves you. In the next seven lessons, you'll open yourself to receiving. In the final seven lessons, you'll return from the journey.

