



Illustration by Gaia Orion

Reiki and the Labyrinth

BY ROBIN FUERST

WHEN I STARTED down the path of self-discovery, I experienced as separate and individual the healing energies of modalities such as Reiki, labyrinth, psychic insight, prayer, and sound healing. Through practicing with various energies, an understanding dawned on me, and I now firmly believe that “All is One.” To borrow an analogy from theologian Matthew Fox¹, for me there is one Universal healing energy “river” to which each of us connects through the “well” of whatever technique(s) we practice. Over the last ten years, I have integrated two of the “wells” through which I connect with this “river” of energy: Reiki and walking labyrinths. Doing so has changed my life and deepened and enriched my spiritual growth.

Reiki is an easy, mystical, and powerful way to access this Universal God-consciousness energy. Mystical in the sense that Reiki is a direct experience of energy or, for me, the sacred. A simple attunement, intention, and willingness to listen and learn from the energy are all that are needed to heal or change. Healing is different than curing—healing is a deep shift in mind, body and/or spirit to a place of release and acceptance. It may or may not result in a cure or total absence of disease. Healing can allow for a shift or attenuation of dis-ease in any situation. Trusting the Reiki energy is a journey of letting go of the need to control or releasing the need for the ego to be in charge.

I learned to appreciate this lesson when I was sending my mom Reiki as she was going through surgery, radiation and chemotherapy for breast cancer. Initially I was very focused and attached to the results. Because of this I was stressed and anxious about the situation. It took an intuitive friend to notice this and suggest I relax and only send energy when my mom came to mind versus some rigid

schedule of my own making, and to let go of my need to control the outcome. This was excellent advice and both my mom and I did much better once I learned to trust the Reiki energy. Mom later told me how she knew when I was sending her Reiki. If her eyes were closed at the time, she saw the “most beautiful colors.” Her surgeon was surprised at how quickly she healed and the oncologist was amazed at how few side effects she experienced with the chemotherapy. She is cancer free and doing well today, eight years later. Mom is also attuned to Reiki I and II and also finds comfort and support through walking the labyrinth.

The labyrinth has existed as a symbol and walking meditation practice for over 5000 years. No one knows exactly what prompted ancient peoples who were separated both by distance and time to combine the circles, spirals and meanders they saw in nature into the complex spiral of labyrinths. The psychologist Carl Jung described this experience of the collective unconscious as “that inherited part of us that connects us with all other human beings.” From a Reiki point of view, it is almost as if HSZSN links our subconscious minds at some deep, universal level.

The classical seven-circuit labyrinth on page 34 is the oldest known labyrinth. Although often called the Cretan seven-circuit labyrinth or the Cretan labyrinth, its form is also found in Celtic labyrinths and the Hopi medicine wheel. A second well-known labyrinth is the eleven-circuit or Chartres labyrinth also on page 34. This labyrinth is named for its location in Chartres Cathedral in France. Chartres is one of 500 Gothic cathedrals built within a span of 150 years during the Middle Ages to honor Mary, the Mother of God and the Divine Feminine. The Chartres labyrinth is unique because of the 112 lunations that encircle its

perimeter. The lunations represent the moon or feminine presence, which balance the more masculine or sun energy at the center of the labyrinth.

Walking the labyrinth, like Reiki, involves the process of letting go, especially of EGO. Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress from Veriditas, the World Wide Labyrinth Project, says this word is an acronym for Edging God (or Spirit) Out². A labyrinth walk is composed of three parts: the walk in or releasing; time in the center or receiving; and the walk out or returning. Every labyrinth walk begins with letting go of any preconceived expectations of what the walk will be like, since these can clutter the mind and cause one to miss an insight, gift or metaphor while experiencing the path. Since the labyrinth, unlike a maze, has only one path in and the same path out again, there is only one choice to make—to engage in this ancient journey.

Walking a labyrinth helps to bring one into the present moment. It encourages a shedding of worries and a quieting of the logical, thinking, left brain. This centering and quieting echoes the Reiki process of *Gassho* and *Reiji-ho*, the strengthening of one’s own light and stating one’s intention or praying for the highest good of the client prior to beginning a session. The labyrinth journey is an inward walk towards the still, quiet center of the labyrinth within. The center of the labyrinth is a place to pause and reflect. In this stillness it is easier to listen, learn, and receive guidance, insights or energy for healing. Similarly, it is in that still quiet center that we can be most effective during a Reiki treatment, trusting the Universal healing energy as it flows through us for our own healing as well as the healing of the client.

The final phase of a labyrinth walk is returning, or the walk back into the world. It is a time to integrate the peace-



Classical Seven-circuit Labyrinth
Illustration by Gaia Orion

ful heart or insight received while resting in the center of the labyrinth. It can also be a time of exhilaration because of the energy received from releasing a long carried burden, or for a new purpose for one's life. I liken this to the "return" following a Reiki session and the resulting "sparkle" a practitioner can see in the eyes of a client who has made an important healing shift.

There are a number of ways to combine Reiki and the energy of a labyrinth. The circuits of the classical seven-circuit labyrinth echo the number of times the spiral of the Power Symbol touches its vertical axis. In addition, each of the major seven chakras, colors of the rainbow, spiritual lessons, and even the notes of the musical scale, starting with middle C, can be paired with a circuit of this labyrinth. It is interesting to note that one begins walking this labyrinth by entering at the third chakra, which is associated with our identity and personal power. Carolyn Myss³ also links this chakra to our honor code with ourselves and our ability to "let go and let God," the starting point for a labyrinth walk or a Reiki session. Try the following exercise the next time you have an opportunity to walk a seven-circuit labyrinth.

Chakra exercise with the classical labyrinth and Reiki – The classical or seven-circuit labyrinth can be walked focusing on clearing, healing and balancing the chakras.

Charge the labyrinth with Reiki before starting your walk.

Set your intention to have Reiki work on each of your chakras as you are walking the circuit of the labyrinth with which it is paired. You may want to place your hands on that chakra or beam Reiki into that chakra as you walk.

Your walk starts with the third chakra and circuit of the labyrinth, associated with the solar plexus, color yellow, and issues of self-esteem and personal power.

Then you shift to the second circuit or sacral chakra, the color orange, and lessons around creativity and survival instincts.



Chartres eleven-circuit Labyrinth
Illustration by Gaia Orion

The next turn of the labyrinth places you on the outside path and first or root chakra where the power of being grounded and “all is one” is explored with the color red.

Now you walk into the fourth circuit and heart chakra focusing on love, compassion and forgiveness, especially for yourself on this green path.

Your journey continues into the seventh circuit and violet crown chakra with its connection to Spirit or the Divine and the urging to live in the present moment.

Only then does the labyrinth move you to the sixth circuit and the indigo colored brow chakra, seeking the insight, wisdom and intuition associated with the inner eye through its connection with the Divine or Spirit.

Then you find yourself in the fifth circuit and throat chakra, with its sky blue color and lessons of choice and surrendering personal will to Spirit or the Divine.

And finally you are to the center of the labyrinth for a time of resting, insight, rejuvenation, and meditation before you reverse the process on the walk out.

In the Veriditas labyrinth newsletter there is a section called “Little Miracles on the Path” in which people share stories of healing, similar to the “Reiki Stories” in *Reiki News Magazine*. One story of a woman who had a stroke that left her paralyzed on one side illustrates another aspect of these activities. She was drawn to the labyrinth in addition to her physical therapy. Initially she used a finger labyrinth, first “walking” with her “good” hand, then the impaired hand. She eventually was able to walk the labyrinth with a cane, and finally independently. She attributed her rapid progress to the labyrinth. In a labyrinth there are an equal number of turns to the left and to the right, which help in establishing balance in a person’s brain and life. This results in stabilizing and integrating the right and left sides of the brain in a manner similar to the “crossed technique” Mari Hall taught at the 2008 Labor Day Reiki retreat. This technique helped me “rewire” my own brain that September, six months after a car acci-

dent “scrambled” my ability to function, especially in the areas of thinking clearly, focusing, concentrating, and accomplishing any complex tasks involving planning.

Reiki symbols and the form of the labyrinth both seem to me to fit in the category of archetypal symbols. Jung said that an archetypal symbol has a life of its own; it is an image connected with the living individual by the bridge of emotion. The Distant Healing symbol and its unique ability to bridge time and space, as well as the Mental/Emotional symbol and its ability to connect with an individual at their point of need, or the Power symbol’s ability to amplify the energy needed in a situation. Similarly, the labyrinth meets the walker exactly where they are and invites them to move forward on their spiritual journey.

It is fun to play with the metaphors that arise while walking the labyrinth. Frequently these metaphors are a chance to learn indirectly what the Divine is trying to teach us in the mystical language of the soul. An example of this was the first time I walked the Chartres labyrinth with my daughter, who was eight years old at the time. She started first and I followed after a short time. Periodically on the labyrinth we would end up walking side-by-side and she would reach up to hold hands. Then one of us would come to a turn and we each went our own way. Later we would find ourselves passing each other going in opposite directions and briefly touch hands, each on our separate journeys but also on the same universal path. This was a powerful metaphor for me because it gave me insight into my changing role as a parent.

Enhancing Your Labyrinth Walk with Reiki

Experiment with these ways to integrate your labyrinth walk and Reiki.

Charge the labyrinth with Reiki – Before your walk you can beam Reiki to the labyrinth, or in the case of a finger labyrinth you have the option to hold it

between your hands and let Reiki flow into it. You can also do this at the end of the walk as a thank you for your labyrinth experience.

Walk the labyrinth with Reiki – Many options exist here! With a finger labyrinth I recommend “walking” with your “fire” finger, experimenting with eyes open or closed, and with using your right or left hand. Practitioners with symbols can walk with a Reiki symbol in mind or flowing, with the intention of being open to experiencing the symbol in new ways. Again be especially observant of any metaphors that come to you, since this is the favorite “language” of the labyrinth.

Set the intention to receive an attunement – At the Reiki master level, you have the option of beaming and/or chanting all the necessary symbols for an attunement onto the labyrinth and calling in your Reiki guides or sacred beings of the highest light you work with to participate in this special walk and assist in attuning you.

Last spring Jessica Miller and I walked a large, outdoor Chartres-style labyrinth located at Trinity Lutheran Church in Pullman, Washington. It has been on this land for almost ten years and has been blessed with Reiki energy numerous times and numerous attunements have been given in the center. I have attuned Reiki students there who have shared wonderful experiences afterwards—they experienced powerful attunements accompanied by insights into challenges in their daily lives as they meditated after the attunement. One student felt the walk out of the labyrinth was as if she were walking a big CKR.

Prior to our walk, Jessica and I chanted and placed all the Karuna Reiki® symbols onto the labyrinth with the intention of sharing an attunement in the center. We got sidetracked and forgot about the formal attunement until after we left for home. Interestingly, I realized that I had actually been attuned while walking the labyrinth, despite our not having performed the physical ritual.

Explore the labyrinth with your Reiki hands – Jessica and I discovered other curious energetic properties of the labyrinth. You can feel the difference energetically between the path and the lines of the labyrinth, and the energy of the lines extends vertically as high as we could reach. It was also interesting to straddle a labyr, the double axe-head that occurs when two 180-degree turns meet. The sensation was of being in two different energetic realities. This style of axe is frequently seen in the hands of ancient warrior goddesses. Symbolically, each of these turns is a choice, are you ready to change directions and follow this non-linear path? It also provides a sharp edge to “cut” cords binding an issue to a person as they walk, allowing them to release it.

The labyrinth and Reiki have deepened my spiritual practices. They have taught me how to get out of my own way, to trust in something larger than myself, and they have taught me compassion and forgiveness. They have helped me learn how to better stay in the present moment and have given me wonderful tastes of that “peace that passeth all understanding.” I am grateful.

To find a labyrinth near you, check out www.veriditas.org, click on World-Wide Labyrinth Locator, and fill in the location information in the box on the right hand side of the page.



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References:

- ¹ Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths* (New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2000).
- ² Lauren Artress, *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).
- ³ Caroline Myss, *Anatomy of the Spirit: The Seven Stages of Power* (New York: Three Rivers Press 1996).