

Caring For Your Labyrinth

Congratulations on the acquisition of a labyrinth. I know you will find that this wonderful tool adapts to many uses. It is important to maintain efforts to care for your labyrinth so that it will provide many years of rewarding use.

Here are a few tips and ideas:

1. Purchase a small rug or mat to use at the entrance. This will identify the entrance to new labyrinth users as well as providing a place to stand for bowing or other gestures at the beginning and end of a labyrinth experience.
2. Purchase a small broom or a Bissell™ type push sweeper for use *on the labyrinth only*. This should not be used on the floor or other surface. Store this with the labyrinth and use this tool to clean the walking surface of the labyrinth before folding it to store it away. Also, as you fold the labyrinth, you will want to sweep away any debris from the underside that was against on the floor. You may wish to purchase a small hand-held whiskbroom to assist in this as well. Standard corn brooms work great on canvas.
3. Carefully and completely clean or vacuum the floor surface immediately before laying down the labyrinth. Use only on a clean, dry surface. If you allow the labyrinth to be used outside (not recommended), purchase a tarp or duct-tape several large plastic painter's drop cloths together – as large as the full labyrinth size – to use underneath. Remember, however, outdoor use invites outdoor soil and dampness.
4. Do not allow food or drinks on or near the labyrinth. Even water spilled on the labyrinth or excessive dampness can cause mildew or mold, which is nearly impossible to clean. Never store the labyrinth unless it is completely dry.
5. Ask that labyrinth users remove their shoes and walk in stocking feet unless medically restricted. Discourage bare feet as natural body oils and soil from feet can leave spots on the canvas. You may wish to provide a basket of clean socks (and a collection container for used socks to be laundered) or purchase a box of shoe covers from a medical supply source, paint or hardware store or Amazon. These are the disposable booties worn in the hospital surgery rooms or by indoor house painters to cover shoes.

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6. Avoid the use of candles on the labyrinth. While candlelight provides a beautiful setting for contemplative walking, keep candles far enough away from the edges so that, if accidentally tipped, melted wax will not splash onto the labyrinth surface. This will also reduce the risk of fire with long skirts or scarves used by the labyrinth walkers. Placing candles in heavy jars or enclosed candleholders/globes will help to avoid disasters. Smaller votive candles in non-tip votive holders work especially well. You will find that placing the candles further way from the edge of the labyrinth will actually make it easier to see the labyrinth in low light. Putting candles up on tables works even better. Placing a few tables around the exterior space can create wonderful environments. Try setting altar-type spaces with scarves, stones, icons, etc. These provide places for contemplation by persons waiting to walk or processing their labyrinth experience. Now battery tea lights make a great alternative to the live flame of standard candles. Strings of Christmas lights and rope lighting are other options.
7. You may wish to purchase or create colorful scarves for optional used and stored with the labyrinth. These can be ready made or simply a yard or remnant of flowing fabric. Use your imagination and slowly build a collection. Scarves can be placed around the perimeter of the labyrinth for people to use as desired, as head covers, prayer shawls, for dancing, etc. Be especially careful if using scarves and candles together!
8. You may wish to keep a notebook or journal in a Ziplock™ type bag with the storage container. This can be set out each time the labyrinth is, for people to record comments and/or to keep record of places, times and events for which the labyrinth is used.
9. You may wish to create a suggested blessing, prayer or ritual to “warm” the labyrinth whenever it is laid out.
10. You may wish to keep a box of Kleenex™ stored with the labyrinth as well. It is awkward to have to run around looking for tissues after strong emotional responses occur. This can be placed near the entrance of the labyrinth – just in case they are needed.
11. While ironing with a hot steam iron can be done to remove wrinkles, careful folding for storage is the best method to keep the labyrinth free from excessive wrinkles. Carefully sweep and fold the labyrinth to store it away. Sweeping all surfaces as you fold will remove debris and wrinkles, and push out air trapped in the folds so the labyrinth is stored as flat as possible.
12. Enjoy, enjoy, enjoy! Don’t get overly concerned if accidents happen. Some labyrinth owners claim a labyrinth isn’t properly broken in until wax is spilled on it. And a footprint or two can add character. None of these will render the labyrinth unusable or undesirable. But, a little preventive information and care can help to avoid or reduce mishaps. Enjoy, enjoy, ENJOY! May you be blessed with many years of fruitful labyrinth experiences.