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A Creative Path to Building a Labyrinth: A Reflexive Journey to a Wise and Compassionate Inner Life

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Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

An Abstract of a Project
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by

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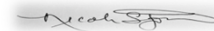
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Science

May 2021

ABSTRACT OF A PROJECT**A Creative Path to Building a Labyrinth:
A Reflexive Journey to a Wise and Compassionate Inner Life**

The labyrinth, a unicursal walking path, can be found throughout the world. There is evidence of its existence as far back as c.1200 B.C. Since the late 90's the labyrinth has re-emerged and grown in popularity in the western world as a spiritual and creative thinking tool. While more often establishing them on sites of spiritual, organizational and creative communities, some people have placed them on private property. The purpose of this research project is to understand the creative process of designing and constructing a labyrinth on private property. How might the creative person be impacted by an intrinsically motivated and seemingly individualistic effort? This exploration has revealed that this unique experience of designing and building a labyrinth is one of self-observation, self-discovery, and personal growth. It may be useful for developing one's inner life towards openness to experience and contextual thinking. These creative thinking skills and some others, such as resisting premature closure and tolerance for risk are useful in building strength and agility in human relationships. The outcome of this experience suggests the possibility of unifying interpersonal interactions among diverse people with labyrinth use. More structured research into the effects of the labyrinth on human relationships and inner life management is needed to understand this phenomenon.

Keywords: labyrinth, creative thinking, spiritual intelligence, creative interdependency, inner life



Nicole S. Jones

May 4, 2021

Date

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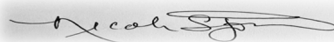
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Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
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Erik op en Berg: Thank you for sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm of the labyrinth with me from the other side of the world.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose and Description

My goal for this project is a complete design that can be used to build a labyrinth for walking meditation, self-care, spiritual presence, and creative thinking. The labyrinth is an ancient archetype, that is, an ancient symbol used to invoke a particular frame of mind (Artress, 1995).

My purpose for building a labyrinth on my private property is first to integrate a walking meditation experience into my daily life. In this way, I believe I will be embodying my philosophy of creativity: *Creativity is the ability to respond consciously; the ability to formulate the new and meaningful from infinite possibilities and perspectives. It is a function of conscious choice, enhanced by seeing life as a spectrum.*

Furthermore, I will be tending to my innermost being—an ongoing preparation, if you will, as I engage the creative process and interact with creative environments to produce the most authentic creative outcomes available to me. This aligns with my deep conviction (Jones, 2020) that “if we are to call upon one another to contribute one more iota of greatness into the world, we must first tend to the one within” (p. 10) and in our creative processes, we might embrace that “becoming our highest human potential does not have to be a secret ethereal event, it can just be true” (p. 11).

Rationale for the Selection

My goal is to leverage the intersection between creativity and spiritual intelligence and to use the labyrinth to access both. The labyrinth experience is an opportunity to deliberately train our ability to see and respond with wisdom and compassion while maintaining inner and outer peace (Fromm, 1959; Wigglesworth, 2019). After all, as mankind is creating into the world more

than ever in the history of the world, it is incontestable that who's doing the creating and where they're coming from is no inconsequential matter.

To be clear, my concern is not with the image we bear or the geographical location from which we come, not even the educational background from which we hail. It's about the *come-from*. That which motivates a creator, the lens through which they see, their line of sight, the condition of their inner self (Mortier, 2019)—these are the things that must be attended if there is to be continued advancement to the highest human potential by those shaping our world, rather than self-aggrandizing agendas typical, so far, of many of the smartest, most powerful, charismatic leaders and influencers making the world (Goleman, 2015).

We have come to understand that the creative thinking process relies on both our cognitive skills and affective skills (Puccio, et al., 2012). So, yes to that! And, we are also coming to understand that wherein rational thinking is a function of the serial thinking processes of the brain and our associative thinking processes are in charge of our emotional intelligence, there is yet another way by which we create and respond to our experiences. That is with our spiritual intelligence. It's through the function of the 40 Hz synchronous neural oscillations of the brain (Zohar, 2000). In fact, neuroscience research is finding that this aspect of the thinking process actually enhances our rational and emotional thinking abilities. It's unitive, it's both where we combine experiences and understand the distinctions—it's where we can hold opposing points of view (Wigglesworth, 2019). This polarity thinking, which is a skill of both creative problem-solving and spiritual intelligence, is crucial to human evolution (Puccio & Modrzejewska-Swigulska, in press; Wigglesworth, 2019). Unitive thinking allows us to see the profundity of our creative choices upon the whole as well as their insignificance. In other words,

it provides us with the polarity necessary to make consciously creative choices for ourselves and for others—to be humanely human.

My desire is to become fully human (Maslow, 1971; Sadhguru, 2016), that is, to go deeper spiritually and higher creatively, and to expand my sphere of influence into the lives of others. Creative thinking and spiritual intelligence are the practical skills conducive to this expansion. I believe this expansion is conducive to the wisdom, compassion and unity imperative at this moment in human social evolution. President Joe Biden has informed the nation that America is “in a race with China and other countries to win the 21st Century” (Biden, 2021). And, he shared predictions that we will see “more technological changes in the next 10 years than in the last 50” (Biden, 2021). I believe we have a responsibility to know and manage well the inner life that is competing and creating in the world.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

Introduction

The prehistoric labyrinth has reemerged as a spiritual tool in the Western world since the late 1980s. The primary objective of this master's project is to design a labyrinth on my private property. This unicursal walking path is useful for developing a practice of walking meditation, reflection, and creative problem solving. It is also unifying, in that it provides a creative space in which spiritual intelligence, such as awareness of self and others, self-mastery, and social presence, might be developed. I believe that the meditative environment of the labyrinth also creates opportunities to build creative thinking skills. Currently, the state of humanity demands that we develop our greatest potential to address problems and seize opportunities that matter with wisdom and compassion. The stillness within motion that occurs in the labyrinth may be just the right environment to promote holistic creative thinking. These are all skills necessary if our greatest change-makers are to contribute life-sustaining innovation to humanity. And, if we are to build and support one another.

Annotated Bibliography

Spiritual Intelligence and Creativity

Goleman, D. (2015). *A force for good: The Dalai Lama's vision for our world*. Penguin Random House, LLC.

Daniel Goleman gives a window into the wise and compassionate patterns of thinking, believing, and behaving that the Dalai Lama has become known for over the past many decades. It is the Dalai Lama's intention for global humanity to embrace our interconnectedness and create with concern for all. The Dalai Lama's conviction is that we can expand our thinking and creativity into building more holistic systems across the globe when we first look inward to

nurture our own hearts and minds. This he believes will help provide the balance necessary to tackle the greatest human challenges with curiosity, equanimity, and compassion.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. Penguin Books.

Abraham Maslow (1971) states: "If you think of the person, the creative person, as being the essence of the problem, then what you are confronted with is the whole problem of transformation of human nature, the transformation of the character, the full development of the whole person" (p. 71).

These are the words of renowned psychologist, philosopher and researcher Abraham Maslow expressed posthumously. He asserts that the general creative nature of the individual emanates through the whole self and therefore, self-fulfillment and self-care hold the potential of improving one's overall creativeness. He disputes the common ideology that creativity is a set of external behaviors to be used for a specified purpose at a specified time in a specific place and instead puts forth that a general internal and external atmosphere of openness, confidence, lack of inhibition, challenge, etc., makes for opportunities of creativity.

Sadhguru. (2016). *Inner engineering: A yogi's guide to joy*. Penguin Random House, LLC.

"The only thing that stands between you and your well-being is a simple fact: you have allowed your thoughts and emotions to take instruction from the outside rather than the inside," (p. 29). These words are the premise of inner life technology taught by Indian mystic and founder of the Isha Foundation, Jaggi Vasudev. Sadhguru, as he is commonly known, is reluctant to call his communication "teaching" as he believes he is describing our inherent qualities. He stresses that we all have the power to conduct our lives with increased human consciousness. He believes that this is necessary to physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Sadhguru offers that

spiritual expansion is a most natural longing of the human experience, and when we expand consciously rather than unconsciously (or artificially, with only material accumulation) we are in the position to live life sweetly. He also asserts that quality of life is improved with our ability to respond to complex problems and opportunities of life with wisdom, sensitivity, and intelligence.

Wigglesworth, C. (2012). *SQ21: The twenty-one skills of spiritual intelligence*. Select Books, Inc.

Wigglesworth defines spiritual intelligence as “the ability to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation” (p.8). She, like Danah Zohar (2000) who coined the term, uses the abbreviation "SQ" in keeping with the naming convention of other types of intelligence that have been studied before it, such as intelligence quotient (IQ) and Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence (EQ). Wigglesworth explains that in her theory of spiritual intelligence, spirituality and religion are distinct constructs, with spirituality being “the innate human need to be connected to something larger than ourselves, something we consider to be divine or of exceptional nobility” (p. 8).

This author states that characteristics that have been identified as belonging to spiritual exemplars, such as authentic, honest, calm, peaceful, centered, mission-driven, compassionate, dependable, faithful, and faith-filled can stand separate and apart from spirituality and religion, or flow with them. She states that accessing and operationalizing spiritual intelligence is a matter of awareness (of self, others, and the world) plus behavior; both able to be learned and enhanced through self-reflection.

Zohar, D. & Marshall, I. (2000). *Spiritual intelligence: The ultimate intelligence*. Bloomsbury.

Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) is defined by Zohar as “the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value...place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context...assess that one course of action or one life-path is more meaningful than another” (p.3).

Zohar discusses the symbiotic relationship between the rational and associative functions of the brain and how this rich, transformative and irreplicable mental capacity allows us to see the world and our self in the world anew. It allows for the discovery of solutions to messy, ambiguous problems. And makes possible one’s ability to develop spiritual intelligence across time and then show a marked difference in behavior and use it to creatively solve problems.

History and Construction of the Labyrinth

Artress, L. (1995). *Walking a sacred path: Rediscovering the labyrinth as a spiritual practice*.

Riverhead Books.

Artress, considered the grandmother of the labyrinth movement, describes her journey to recognizing the innate human need to expand and connect to something greater than oneself. She graciously describes the labyrinth as a path into self-understanding, healing, and creativity, in particular co-creativity of the condition of our lives. Artress describes the anatomy of the labyrinth and the historic context of its existence across centuries.

Ferre’, R. D. (2014b). *Classical cathedral construction manual*. Labyrinth Enterprises.

Robert Ferré, as a labyrinth builder, provides construction manuals for both the Classical Labyrinth and the Chartres Labyrinth. He provides techniques for drawing and building labyrinths including useful tools and materials. Ferrè also generously shares his knowledge on the proper orientation of the labyrinth; he thoroughly describes the various components and elements of the different types of labyrinths.

In starting with the history of the designs, the author allows the reader to think deeply about which pattern holds the most meaning and relevance from a personal standpoint.

Labyrinth Walking: The Practice

Artress, L. (2006). *The sacred path companion: A guide to walking the labyrinth to heal and transform*. Riverhead Books.

This companion workbook is an extension of the author's first work noted above, *Walking a sacred path: Rediscovering the labyrinth as a spiritual practice*. In this book, Artress invites the reader to develop a practice of labyrinth walking and therefore, gives insight into how the practice may help focus and provoke one's mind to creative insight. She walks the reader through how they might evaluate the impact of walking the labyrinth on their growth and key learnings. Artress also deepens the experience by describing in what ways one might use walking meditation for healing, transformation, and reflection.

The author makes no distinction between creativity and spirituality, but presence and conscious choice is required for both: "We need peace from within through nurturing a quiet mind. We need a place free from our addictions to steep ourselves in sacred teachings through art, music, creative flow, and wisdom stories" (p. xiv).

Francisco, J. (2006). *A creative walker's guide to the labyrinth: An approach for beginners*.

BridgePoint Effect. <https://www.bridgepointeffect.com>

Francisco has provided a straightforward look into the labyrinth as a creativity tool. She focuses on describing the three most prevalent types of labyrinths, the Classical, the Chartres, and the Santa Rosa. Francisco usefully links the practice of walking the labyrinth to the practice of doing creativity by providing step-by-step instructions for how to use the labyrinth in

conjunction with the creative thinking process. This guidance is concise and useful for practical application into creativity.

Conclusion

These authors all have something in common. Either they believe that to live and choose consciously is to thrive as a creative being, or they believe in the tools that activate the creative potential we all have to engineer our lives. Or, they support both. For all, the bottom line is twofold. We are individual but not separate, our inner and outer responses shape our experiences, and everyone has the privilege and responsibility of finding a tool that allows these truths to become our reality. For Robert Ferré and Lauren Artress, the labyrinth is a sacred device of creative living whose time has come to help us along on our journeys.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Plan to Achieve Goals and Outcomes

The deliverable for this project is a complete labyrinth design to be executed when weather permits in the future. To accomplish this goal, I will evaluate the different types and styles of labyrinths that are possible. I will select one to build with awareness for why that particular type and style is most relevant to me. For part of my process, I have generated a list of local labyrinths and am committed to visiting one each day for 21 days. To accomplish this means I will revisit some of the labyrinths multiple times. I will journal my experiences and insights. I expect that this will help me determine the scope of this project. Additionally, my research will include exploring the various methods of implementing the building stage of my project plan, such as a do-it-yourself project, purchasing and using a template or labyrinth kit, or contracting a professional landscaper. I will visit landscape suppliers to price the necessary materials, (see Appendix A for the Original Project Timeline and Task List.

Evaluation Plan

Finally, I will explore and evaluate the readiness of the building plan and the creative impact this project has upon me, as one "P" within the four Ps of creativity. How might planning and designing the labyrinth impact or be impacted by my ability to formulate the new and meaningful from infinite possibilities and perspectives? I will also seek and consider feedback from others with experience in labyrinth building, specifically; landscaping, in general; and experience with labyrinth walking.

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS

I have built a circular 7-circuit labyrinth as my final creative product (see Figure 1). Created with stone-lined borders, it is sweet simplicity. It strikes the bullseye of my intention for this master's project.

Figure 1
Artisan Journey Labyrinth; Nesbit Road



At the outset of this project, my main objective was to design a labyrinth with the expectation of building one at my home after the weather permits the final grading of the land. Before choosing, I evaluated the many styles of the labyrinth to decide which held the most meaning and inspiration for me. I had to be open to many possibilities and saw no better way to do this than by firsthand experience. My current home, Charlotte, North Carolina, where there are at least 30 labyrinths listed on the worldwide labyrinth locator online database, was the most apropos place for my research. I visited 14 different labyrinths of varying styles. I noted in my

journal the different materials used to establish the circuits and borders; I also paid special attention to any design elements in the surrounding areas of the labyrinths as most of them are situated within garden spaces intended to evoke peacefulness. I journaled my insights and feelings as they arose during this process because although my immediate objective is to build a labyrinth, my ultimate goal is for greater spiritual intelligence and deeper spirituality.

I met people as I moved along in my quest for the perfect labyrinth. They were people who themselves had become captivated with the deep-wide-high possibilities for using the labyrinth walking practice to navigate their life experiences. Finding others unquestionably brought encouragement, but developing resolve was mine to do. This too, I accomplished. I pushed through, hurdled over, slid past, and squiggled out from under my doubts that something so novel in my world has great value, not just for me, but for God-only-knows-who-else. So as stated above, my choice was to build the 7-circuit circular labyrinth. By this conscious choice, I have drawn a line from ancient history to my front door. Manifesting art and beauty from the intuition and intelligence of our ancestors and the earth itself, I have threaded past, present, and future. In my ability to adapt to and drive change (Puccio, et al., 2012)—if only in my own quest, I have merged doing with being.

During my research and exploration, I took notice of the different mechanisms of the creative process at play. While the four dimensions as identified by Mel Rhodes (1961)—person, process, product, and environment (press)—are always at work simultaneously, I enjoyed keeping an eye on them and teasing out the contribution of each as I moved along in this project. I will discuss these, although not necessarily to an equal degree.

The Creative Product

The circular 7-circuit labyrinth is derived from the oldest documented style of labyrinth, the *classical 7-circuit* (see Figure 2). The ancient classical dates back to Cretan culture around 3,500 B.C. The pattern has been found on an artifact, a clay tablet recovered from the remains of King Nestor's palace in Pylos (Ferré, 2001b). A distinct seed pattern is often used to make the classical labyrinth path (see Figure 3). Once the seed pattern is established, lines are curved around from its endpoints on the left to its endpoints on the right. Eventually, it manifests as a single oblong-shaped winding path that guides a traveler on a meandering journey upon which he or she will round seven turns heading into the center and seven turns when leaving the center to return to the outside world. It is an asymmetrical shape with its entrance path being off-center and the lower quadrant opposite the entrance hanging one circuit lower than its opposite side. This gives off the impression of a mushroom-like figure and provides the winding path for which we laud the labyrinth (Figure 4).

Figure 2
7-Circuit Classical Labyrinth



Figure 3
Classical Seed Pattern

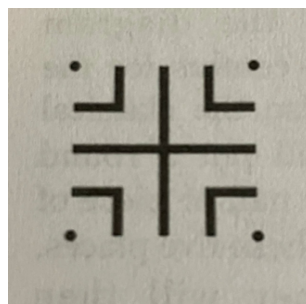


Figure 4
Classical from Seed



The beauty of the 7-circuit classical labyrinth is that once one learns how to draw the seed pattern, this path can be installed anywhere space permits using a plethora of mediums, including chalk, tape, sand, hardscapes, etc. It is deceptively simple. The complexity of this

labyrinth is rooted in the fact that the seed pattern (and the labyrinth) has survived more than three thousand years. It is a biomimetic (human innovation mimicking nature's process) example of how actual seeds have carried life over extended periods and civilizations. This New York Times article by Henry Fountain (2008) gives a more specific example:

Scientists in Israel have confirmed that an ancient date palm seed retrieved from the rubble of Masada and successfully germinated is about 2,000 years old. That makes it the oldest seed ever to sprout, beating the previous well-documented record holder, a lotus found in a dry lakebed in China, by about 700 years.

The date seed was among several obtained in the 1960s by archaeologists excavating Masada, the fortress in the Judean Desert built by Herod around 35 B.C. and destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 73. In 2005, three seeds were planted by Sarah Sallon of the Louis L. Borick Natural Medicine Research Center, part of the Hadassah Medical Organization in Jerusalem.

One seed germinated, and three years later, Dr. Sallon and colleagues report in *Science* that the resulting plant is healthy and more than three feet tall. Radiocarbon testing of shell fragments of the seed obtained when the plant was re-potted at 15 months shows that it dates from the time of Masada.

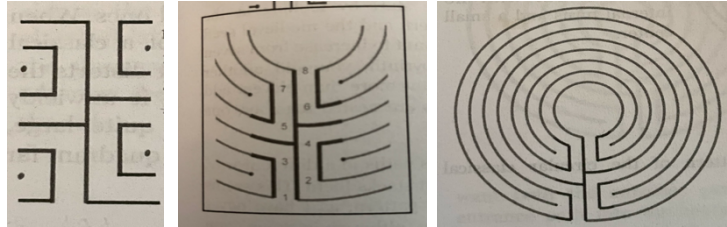
It's miraculous. And, just as a date palm seed can lie dormant and alive with potential until the relevant catalyst is integrated, so does the labyrinth's seed pattern. This creative process of self-sustenance by harboring, transferring, and transforming information is also a spiritual one.

I was drawn to the circular 7-circuit labyrinth design because, although it can originate from its own seed pattern (Figure 5), there is another fascinating way to build it.

One can start by making eight concentric circles from which they will then subtract everything that does not serve as a part of the path. After drawing the complete circles, the builder re-configures them by methodically opening and closing select parts of the circles. What remains then is a unicursal path into a widened center and back out, replete with the seven turns found in the classical. I have made my labyrinth using this method. The enlarged center is appropriately symbolic of my belief in the importance of being open, reflective, and meditative at our heart

space, in general, and while in the labyrinth, specifically. Its symmetrical shape symbolizes balance and equanimity.

Figure 5
7-Circuit Circular Seed Pattern and Labyrinth



As stated earlier, during this planning process, I spontaneously began to build a prototype labyrinth. It is constructed rather simply with milky quartz stones resting upon the template lines I painted over dirt (Figure 6). And, I have designed a plan for more a permanent, slightly more elaborate path. Even this, however, is a departure from my original plan which was to use edger pavers and river rock similar to one of my favorites located at the oratory 40 minutes away in Rock Hill, S.C. (see Figure 7).

Figure 6
7 Circuit Circular Labyrinth Template, Nesbit Rd.

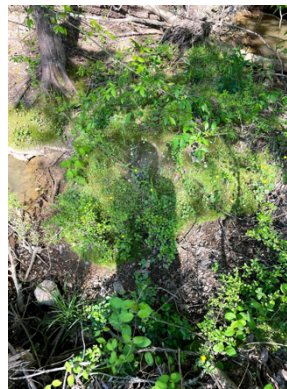


Figure 7
7 Circuit Circular Template, Oratory: Center for Spirituality, Rock Hill, SC



Instead, what I see myself doing is maintaining the milky quartz stones along the borders (as shown in Figure 1). These I have collected by hand from the perimeter of my home and I have come to appreciate their contribution to this work. I am humbled by the notion that the earth is providing all that I need to fulfill my aspirations. I will elaborate on the labyrinth's environment by growing mosses to carpet the path. I feel a special affinity every time I encounter mosses and so I will indulge this pleasure in my creation. I will not know which of the "at least 12,000 species of small nonvascular spore-bearing land plants" I will be cultivating (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopædia, 2020) as I will use whatever pleurocarpous (carpet-like) species is available to me around my home. As synchronicity would have it, about 15 feet away from the labyrinth, some are growing along the wall of a drainage ditch that, if you close your eyes on a rainy day, gives off bubbling creek vibes (see Figure 8).

Figure 8
Native Mosses; Nesbit Rd



I will harvest the mature mosses by lifting them from their current resting spot with a flat tool; I will use a putty knife. After saturating them with water to make them more pliable, I will transplant the removed specimen to my labyrinth path and press them into the moist soil ensuring that they make and maintain good contact. It will be my duty to keep this area shaded (which is a natural occurrence as it is in a tree-shaded area) and watered for optimal growth conditions (Vila, 2021). To fill in the paths, I will need to supplement the transplants by growing new

mosses. I will do this by purchasing Irish moss pelletized seeds and spreading them throughout my labyrinth. Mosses are known to hold up to moderate foot traffic and are often used as a grass substitute. I am not positive my efforts to maintain a path of mosses will be 100 percent successful, but I am willing to try, and I am willing to be wrong and modify this plan as necessary.

It bears repeating that as ecstatic as I am to have these materials at my disposal, I accept the privilege to use them with great humility. Mosses, for me, possess such wealth of being as some of the oldest species have been around for the last 298.9 to 252.2 million years—the babies being 2.6 to 66 million years old (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopædia, 2020).

Lastly, I will border the labyrinth with flower beds (annuals for my first planting, that I might get a feel for what works), potted herbs and fruit trees, and a picnic table for morning tea (Figure 9). I will start with the herbs with which I have already had potted success, these include bee balm, echinacea, oregano, parsley, peppermint, rosemary, and thyme. The trees that I currently have ready for planting include apple, fig, peach, pear, and plum.

Figure 9
Artisan Journey Labyrinth Garden Sketch



The fact that this building concept is so different from what I imagined at the start of this project speaks to the creative process in action. It is a testament to the fact that it is all but impossible to create change in our environment without ourselves being changed. Moving through this creative endeavor with authenticity demanded that I pause to re-assess what was being asked of me by all elements of the project—person, process, press, and product. When I submitted to that, a world of creativity opened up.

The Creative Process

My 21-Day Labyrinth Journey was a practical exercise in divergent thinking. Using www.worldwidelabyrinth.com to locate labyrinths here in Charlotte, I was able to identify approximately thirty different sites. Nearly two-thirds of the labyrinths were accessible at all times, a few others were owned privately or accessible only by contacting the organization first. Although this was not an immediate deterrent, I did not have a great deal of fortune with getting return calls, so I kept moving through my list to visit those that were available. Of the 14 different labyrinths over three weeks (see Appendix B, 21-Day Labyrinth Journey) I was more than happy to re-visit a few of them. With each visit, I noted that which I admired or disliked about the path and garden space. Naturally, there were a couple that became my favorites.

In Contemplation

I went into the selection process open to experience. I immediately understood that there is no one right answer to the question of which labyrinth type and style is best. Yet, I knew at the end, I could only build one. With this in mind, my divergent journey would have to culminate in a convergent exercise. Therefore, I used some evaluative and contextual thinking. I identified and overcame some concerns.

I had to take my financial resources as well as my skill and ability into account as neither are without limitations. After undertaking a couple of building projects with contractors most recently, I was well aware that I would not possess the resources to have my labyrinth constructed professionally. Not to mention, there is something in the laying of the bricks that means as much to me as owning it. So, I have decided that the construction of my labyrinth will be a labor of love. I have enlisted the help of two very capable people who love me. My husband, Kerry, and a friend, Leigh.

Many of the times I entered a labyrinth during my 21-Day Journey, I was reflecting on the question of what had inspired my aspiration. At first, it was about following a nudge—an unexplained spark—to become more familiar with the use of this archetypal pattern that, for me, represents a shared human experience across time. I was intrigued even though its significance and specific historical use are unrecorded, (Artress, 1995).

Shortly into my journey, however, it also became about wanting to extend the grace that I was receiving from someone else's creative contribution. With each visit to the labyrinth, I felt the intention of the people who had expended the time, money, and physical energy to build something for my creative well-being. It was palpable in the gratitude, and inspiration, and freedom that would arise within me each and every time.

There were many versions of the labyrinth to consider as options; even today, some people create their own unique seed patterns and designs (Ferré, 2001b). Ultimately, this process was largely about deciding what elements are meaningful to me. I did begin to clarify my thinking and feelings about what I believe will be an open and inviting space for all the needs that might be met in the unicursal path: reflection, meditation, prayer, ideating, ceremony, solace, respite, and any others. As I found myself asking "what matters?" the answers would always appear. I noticed life that was emerging, persisting, and spent. There were mosses and flowers, pods and seeds. Trees were swaying, fountains were springing, and chimes were singing. Inspirational quotes were speaking. Sunshine and rain were both gifts within the gardens. These became the root of my creative question: what might be all the ways to make my labyrinth not just a place, but a presence? How might it be a place where things are as much as possible ordered by Universal occurrences—birth, life, death, possibility, rebirth...sound amid silence...light co-existing with darkness? Also, I sought to solve the creative question of how

might I incorporate the oldest known seed pattern into a labyrinth that is most meaningful for me?

In Practice

During this pandemic time, my visits to the landscape yards were brief, a formality. Once I saw and touched the materials I wanted to use, I researched online to find the quantities necessary and the cost of each product based on my calculations. I accounted for tools that I don't have and would need to purchase. This was excellent, as I found myself in possession of a viable building plan, but it turned out there could be more (see Appendix C for my Original Building Plan).

In the process of planning the steps necessary to complete the construction, I began to visualize how I would do it. I practiced the steps in my mind for measuring and marking the area; I painted a template in my mind. Interestingly enough, the more I engaged this creative thinking tool, the more capable I began to feel of actually making the template that I planned on using eventually. I was overtaken by curiosity and decided that I would make a full-sized template now rather than just providing a scaled-down sketch as originally planned.

I would first have to clean up all the twigs and shoots that were left behind after the leveling and rough grading of the area where I plan to build. Then, I took advice from Robert Ferrè (2001b) and marked a long piece of garden twine with loops at increments matching the length of each circuit and the radius of my center, 21 and 33 inches respectively. I purchased 2 cans of inverted tip spray paint (I ultimately ran out and needed more). After driving a stake into the projected center of the labyrinth, I simply placed the center loop around the diameter of the stake and used my spray paint to make 8 complete circles around the center point. Next, I measured and drew the path entrance by establishing the vertical lines that would become the

cross arms (see Appendix D for Steps for Drawing a Labyrinth Template). I took care to place the entrance facing due east. This was important to me because I wanted to appreciate the tradition of praying towards the east as practiced in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. On the labyrinth in the morning, I am greeted by the rising sun (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Facing Due East, 9am at Labyrinth's Entrance/Center



Clearing the area plus drawing the lines was a full day's work. The following day I returned to the labyrinth to use a stone to scrape away every line that was not a part of the unicursal path. Just as I suspected, the act of removing the extraneous lines to bring my real intention into focus felt fulfilling, definitive. Voilà! There I stood upon my own circular 7-circuit labyrinth template resting 250 feet from my front door (as shown above in Figure 6). There was nothing more to do besides shower and toast my creative success with a chilled glass of wine.

However, creativity never sleeps, it only incubates. I awoke with some concerns about my current creative solution. How might I retain my template beyond the next good rain? How to add semi-permanence to my labyrinth template? How might I do this cost-effectively? How might I balance cost and labor with the fact that a semi-permanent labyrinth may be destroyed when more fine grading and construction is done in an area nearby? While allowing a plethora of ideas to post onto my mental canvas, the ultimate spark came when, in a new and meaningful

way, I noticed some material that is littered about our property in copious amounts: milky quartz. A quick Google search gave me the general knowledge that quartz is the second most common crystalline rock found in the earth's crust. Furthermore, the opaque white version in my yard is the most common, least pure, and so-called least valuable among all types of quartz crystals (Wikipedia, 2021). It felt like a natural response to fall in love with the generosity of nature in this moment.

I decided that I would collect the plentiful chunks of rock-strewn everywhere and use them to mark the borders of my path. Intuitively, as I placed the stones along the path, I found myself categorizing them according to size in sets of seven. I worked within the awareness of the symbolism and sacredness the number holds in the many traditions around the world throughout history. Perhaps it was this kind of unverifiable intention that I felt when I walked labyrinths built by the goodwill of others. The “building” phase was no small feat—it took many wheel barrels full—but I am now the proud builder and owner of a 30' circular 7-circuit labyrinth.

My goal of designing a labyrinth has evolved into the labyrinth construction itself. I have moved through all stages of the creative problem-solving process, assessing and reassessing all the way through. The creative process has been the fulcrum upon which the pendulum of transformation rested. At times, I was the driver of change; at others, the witness. Sometimes I was the one impacted. As long as I initiated action and responded with a creative attitude—that is, with joy, intrinsic motivation, deliberate creativity, and vision (Puccio, et al., 2012), there remained the potential for the emergence of a creative product greater than the sum of my creative input.

The Creative Person & The Creative Press

What I know for sure is that my exploration into the creative process of building a labyrinth will be yielding results for many years to come. As insight continues to rise to the surface of my awareness, I realize that I have begun a lifelong journey that may never stop unfolding. During my 21-day Labyrinth Journey to explore types and styles of paths in the Charlotte area, I made a daily habit of meditating within the labyrinth. I noticed a deepening of my thoughts and attitudes around the interconnectedness of life. I began to sense a need to recover an openness and connectedness to the world. It was not just about the pandemic year's relentless seizure of normalcy that has kept us all penned up inside. It was about having recoiled from the stench of a rotting and undead polite society. I was having a grief response to the zombie-like qualities starting to show in some of America's most cherished institutions. I had to reorganize how I thought about our so-called federal system of checks and balances. I no longer recognized the nation's local law enforcement families, such as the one in which I had "grown up" from ages 22-47. Our systems of education and healthcare could neither hide nor admit the crushing vulnerabilities threatening the lives entrusted to them. There was much with which to grapple, yet public and political discourse had been broken beyond immediate repair.

As I committed to my field research, my slow rhythmic steps along the path of the labyrinth helped pound this new lack of identity up to the surface of my mind. The disempowerment that had felt like cement house slippers was starting to rattle with the potential for release. It became clear that restoration was in order. Intuitively, I began wondering what might be all the ways to respond to this new environment? I remembered a basic question asked by professor of education Mel Rhodes when he was describing the four strands of creativity:

“How important are attitudes, habits, and value systems [as we respond to our environmental press]?” (1961, p. 307). They are everything.

As a singular body, humanity has a social responsibility to both level up to our shifting realities and create waves of change where stagnated mindsets are strangling our lives. Experts in creativity tell us that creativity and creative thinking are the “adaptive skills that enable us to grow with change as well as to drive it.” (Puccio, et al., 2012, loc. 168)

I submit that this creative power must be activated *within* each of us first. We are facing global and national problems for which there are no known solutions. Furthermore, we are playing catchup because we have been in harsh denial for centuries about the effects of our objectifying attitudes and behavior towards each other and the rest of creation. Humanity is standing at the crossroads of predicament and opportunity and it is a situation ripe for creative thinking skills (Puccio, et al., 2012). However, it's not creative thinking alone that might address the life-defining issues within our systems. A society trained in creative thinking skills would be one capable of also developing spiritual intelligence for use along with our rational and emotional intelligence to design the holistic world we need today. "By painful experience, we have learned that rational thinking does not suffice to solve the problems of our social life" (Albert Einstein, 1951/1982, p. 190).

Spiritual intelligence, as noted earlier, is “the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value” (Zohar, 2000, p. 3) with “wisdom and compassion while maintaining inner and outer peace” (Wigglesworth, 2019). It’s the human thinking capacity to reorganize knowledge and articulate these new insights to each other in ways that improve the condition of our subjective and collective experiences (Rhodes, M., 1961). In other words, the creative solutions to the highly complex problems in the world’s societies are within us; they

appreciate our individuality but honor unity. And so far, what we are doing is not working as not much has changed since Albert Einstein said, “we have been for a long time so inefficient in finding adequate solutions to the many political conflicts and economic tensions which beset us.” (1954/1982, p. 185).

This is not the part where I attest to how my labyrinth walking practice has made me a perfect human being or made me the standard-bearer for world peace. It's just where I describe that the practice helps me access the kinds of thinking that allow me to *choose* what kind of human I will be from moment to moment.

I find that even when I am not in the labyrinth, I can experience the openness of the labyrinth within me. I find space to pause, to negotiate within the cracks of the moment. This pause deepens my ability to defer judgment and to respect the limitations of human perspective, that of mine and others—and the curiosity to seek to know more about our differences. These abilities, an intersection between creativity and spiritual intelligence, show up for me as key components in navigating tensions, again, with others and within myself. Lauren Artress (2005) says it this way: “When the ego is not tightly engaged in control, it joins the other parts of our being to allow us to see through the moment, to see beyond ourselves into the dynamic that is unfolding before us” (p.97). Transformation becomes imminent and the ability to look at things another way becomes a native response. It is a clear example of a transformation of the creative person in the process of creativity.

I have shared a snapshot of a moment in which creative thinking and spiritual intelligence skills might have manifested a more unified and nourishing experience (see Appendix E). It is an example of how a creative pause allowed me to shape the inner condition of my life. Yet, it highlights opportunities for overcoming concerns of “how might I nourish my neighbor with a

rapid response of the wisdom and compassion of creativity?” The anecdote is a bona fide experience taken from a journal entry documenting my 21-Day Labyrinth Journey but has been edited for publication.

Change never happens in a vacuum, creative or otherwise. As such, another part of my evolution in this process is owed to meeting others who have embraced the labyrinth for enjoyment and as a tool for navigating the processes of their lives. One person is Erik op ten Berg from the Netherlands. Upon meeting him through a mutual friend and colleague who also had experienced walking in a labyrinth, I felt welcomed into a new community. As a creativity consultant, his appreciation for the labyrinth as a creative space is practical. He is an enthusiast and shared with me his experiences of building and walking them. He gave me pointers for my building plan. Then there were those I met during my 21-Day Journey: Dennard, who was on her tenth annual 40-day pilgrimage in honor of the Resurrection, and Sherry, who had integrated a labyrinth into her tea house to provide peace and comfort to any in need. And there was Kathie Collins, a poet, who shared her experience of owning a labyrinth at her home, as well.

The labyrinth community is full of people from all areas of life. We somehow find our way to bumping into one another. It’s a scattered community but one that connects us at the most essential part of ourselves. It’s that place where the innate desire to expand leads us into relationships and occurrences whereby, if we’re lucky and paying attention, we come to know ourselves more deeply.

Evaluation

Now that I have created a labyrinth environment of my own, The Artisan Journey Labyrinth Garden, I am doing the inviting. Though it is still a garden in the making, at the time of this writing, I have had two visits (see Appendix F). My first visit was virtual and impromptu.

I enjoyed a tea-time video call with one of my best friends of over 30 years, Charmayne. At her request, I sat in the center. She was inspired to bundle up and go outside in chilly Connecticut for fresh air, too. Afterwards, I evaluated this virtual visit as a safe practice in sharing the labyrinth space.

What worked is that she took in nature with me—the sights and sounds—and we shared our real-time journeys. She marveled at the birds chirping and gliding overhead; she implored me to “remember what you have created and to notice the life that comes to reside there.” Her response was affirming. There is potential for this to be a meaningful setting for coming together with others in nature, even at a distance, and inspiring one another to think creatively. Areas of development may be that a more developed garden scape might provide an enhanced experience, and preplanning may bring richer outcomes.

My next visitors were people with whom I am unfamiliar—a distant neighbor, Darrin, and his friend who I hadn’t met before, Janie. I invited them and asked that they help critique the labyrinth’s design. Darrin was interested in learning more about the labyrinth, though he did not walk. Janie walked the labyrinth. I have evaluated this visit as a stretch practice.

What worked is that I was effective at describing the history of the labyrinth, ways in which it might be used, and some creative thinking skills. Janie who has been grieving the loss of her granddaughter and does Reiki work for others described the energy of the labyrinth as “strong.” She became visibly emotional and explained that walking the path had evoked the powerful response, reminding her that she still has much work to do to move through her grief. We sat in the “garden” and chatted over cold beverages on a beautiful day. It was a safe space of community; a moment of respite.

There was potential in that the labyrinth garden may be a place that supports our need to pay attention to what's happening within. It may also be a place for people to meet and connect. One area of development is found in Janie's feedback that the path, at 21 inches wide, felt a bit narrow and it required that she watched her steps to stay on the path. Another of development concerns how might I become educated about the liabilities that may arise when hosting others in the event there is a fall or injury on private property?

Certainly, there are many ways to elaborate upon this labyrinth prototype. There are also many opportunities to expand its use. I look forward to discovering what might be all the ways.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

I set out on a process to determine how to design and build a labyrinth. I wanted to know which elements would hold the most significance for me. I learned that I will build a labyrinth out of the most natural and organic materials as this connection to nature is paramount to me.

Some other questions arose during my exploration. How might I build a labyrinth that I can use to enrich my spiritual growth and development? How might I embody my ability to choose creatively in my responses to the details of my life? How might I become open to all possibilities and perspectives for new ways of thinking in a world where mankind's general approach to life is not only inadequate but damaging to one another and nature. How might I understand the significance of the labyrinth in the human experience historically and now? Ultimately, my quest for knowledge of and familiarity with the labyrinth became as much about my expansion to new heights of awareness as it was about the construction of the path. I have found the labyrinth experience to be relevant to polarity, perspective, community, and inner connectedness.

The Labyrinth and Polarity

The labyrinth supports the polarity between stillness and movement. Together, these two elements equate to a pause. Within the pause—much like the labyrinth—a negative space relieves us from judgment and supports our ability to hold multiple perspectives or multiple states of being (Cook-Greuter, 2013). In this sacred space where experience meets possibility and knowledge meets wonder, we might settle down long enough to choose and respond at our highest level of consciousness if we so desire. This is a state of creativity.

Imagine walking with no care for where you are going. There is a rhythm and a motion, yet your mind is allowed to be still. It is free to be present at the exact center of focus where you

place it, or nowhere at all. You can notice what enters into your awareness, grasp it, or let it float. This is a freedom that welcomes our largely underrepresented intuitive responses of acceptance and transformation. This is what it feels like to be in the labyrinth.

Indian mystic Jaggi Vasudev, also known as Sadhguru, makes the case for stillness: “If you want to bring about inner transformation, this is the best time. On this day, spend a few hours in a consecrated space” (2021). But this stillness is also the motion of creativity because it is fertile ground for the ability to formulate the new and meaningful from infinite possibility (Richards, 2018).

The Labyrinth and Human Perspective

We know that creativity is enhanced by our ability to intuit and feel our way around the creative thinking process. Appreciation for intuition and consciousness is on the rise here in the Western world and mastering the ability to rise above the ego is lauded. Yet, we should never aspire to be wholly free of our mind's cognitive ability to shape meaning through deduction, making associations, storytelling, and even verification. These are techniques for which the ego has often gotten a bad rap but that are useful for pointing us to some of the conscious and subconscious creative material we carry through our interpretation of experiences across our life (Richards, 2018). It is designed to keep us safe, the ego, to help us navigate along the path of life. It just should never be driving the bus.

So, in keeping with our need to maintain healthy levels of ego input, we also should not dismiss the more objective elements of reality that can be affirmed by the observations of others. After all, if I see a tree and you see a tree, let's appreciate that, somehow, we share the experience of a tree. However, it is also important to understand that even collective experiences are not necessarily interpreted the same.

Enter divergent and elaborative thinking: even if we both agree that we see a tree, we may differ on uses for the tree. I may see it as a life-giving haven for insects and wildlife that affords me breathable air, you may see furniture. What I am talking about here is perspective, vantage point, context—all elements present in the creative process of life. And all elements that must be considered in any thriving human community.

Walking the labyrinth invites clarity to see and honor the innumerable possibilities of human perspectives and to respect the limitations of each (Wigglesworth, 2019). Ultimately, when I acknowledge my inner creative material, I may become more capable of recognizing yours and sensing gaps in both. I may at the very least become tolerant of our different ways of seeing the world. But in my most creative and spiritually intelligent state, I may seek to know, understand and appreciate yours.

The Labyrinth and The Inner Creative Process

We are, at every turn, interpreting what is happening to us and around us (Morter, 2019). We are deciding how to respond, what we need to finagle to make our chosen response work, and how to act to emerge a winner. This is the inner creative process at work. It is incessant, and yet, we hardly even notice it (Sadhguru, 2016).

Furthermore, as noted above, our limited human perspective, through mechanisms such as self-talk or belief systems, is usually the basis for how things shape up in our inner world (Morter, 2019). How much better might our lives be if we noticed this innately human process and took responsibility for what we create within even before we express anything into the outer world?

The labyrinth is a highly suitable metaphor for the creative process of life. For one thing, it symbolizes to us that though there is one way in and through the creative process of life (birth,

day-by-day, death), there are countless ways to walk it and we all bring our content into the path for a unique experience. It also shows that all the experiences we each have across our lives have the potential to be different from one to the next, just like each time we enter the labyrinth (Cook-Greuter, 2013).

Having this understanding may be the difference between having a life of peace, interconnectedness, and expansion versus angst, separateness, and contraction (Sadhguru, 2016). Creativity is a function of conscious choice (Jones, 2020). With awareness, I can create a life that allows me to walk alongside you always with wise compassion for you and myself.

The Labyrinth and Community

The labyrinth celebrates the commonalities, differences, and interdependency we all share. It serves as both a physical platform and a metaphorical one for those seeking a deeper connection to others (Artress, 1995) and intimacy with Divine Nature.

The unicursal path represents the unity of life in the way that it has survived and evolved across time, culture, and geography (Ferré, 2001b). And, its decrease in relevance for millennia and reemergence during one of our most trying times in Western culture—the late 90's AIDS epidemic (Artress, 1995)—reflects that human “consciousness and culture coevolve as people try to solve problems and improve conditions” (McIntosh, 2015, p. 55).

The labyrinth experience is transcendent in its power to be a space for the communal dance of evolution in which human beings are as susceptible as we are infectious to the world in which we live. The reflection of Alejandro R. García-Rivera (2003, p.3), on the sacred intersection between art and religion, predates my sentiment on the shared value of the labyrinth: The paintings at Lascaux demonstrate a truth our world seems to have forgotten. There exist values that transcend space and time. There exist realities that pervade the entire universe either

through the vast reaches of unimaginable light-years of space or the vast journeys of unimaginable eons of time. There exist presences that allow us an intimacy with God.

He articulated that the paintings had the power to bring observers to tears as if they held a sacred splendor of truth, goodness, and beauty. In other words, they were transcendental. I believe the labyrinth holds this same sway. I experienced it myself.

To be within one labyrinth is to be within any labyrinth that ever has been because the unicursal path is an archetype that conveys a shared human experience. And as we use our creativity to address the problems among us to make a better world, it is common experiences and common values that will help us drive change, for this is the nature of community.

The Labyrinth and Research

There is a dearth of research around the effects of walking meditation via labyrinth use. Much of what is available tends to be qualitative and self-reported, resulting in limitations with the data being generalizable and predictive (Rhodes J., 2008). However, labyrinth use is becoming more common based on continuing research indicating that it may be useful in the care of people with illness and without. That is in cancer patients, it may provoke contemplation, reflection, and transformation and in young, healthy students, calm (Lizier, et al., 2018). Furthermore, a study was conducted in 2018 using a convenience sample of 30 people who were enrolled in other integrative therapies such as family therapy, yoga, and acupuncture. The conclusion made as a result of the data was that "the practice of labyrinth walking is a physical, emotional, and sensory experience" (Lizier, et al., 2018, p. 9). In this study, 66% of the sample group perceived a sense of safety and security within the labyrinth. Forty-eight percent of respondents had greater access to memories of life and family experiences, and 14% gained more awareness of that which worried them (Lizier, et al., 2018).

Other studies support the potential for decreased anxiety and increased calm, centeredness, clarity, openness, and quieten with labyrinth walking practice (Rhodes J., 2008). When Dunphy, Borsdorf, and Chambliss (2000) conducted a study of labyrinth walking to induce wellness, they found no significant difference between walking in the unicursal path and walking with focus outside of it—both forms of walking appeared to be beneficial to the wellness of the participants. However, for more concrete benefits, such as changes in blood pressure, Sandor and Froman (2006), reported no effect size differences between measures taken before and after labyrinth walking.

Research into the practice of labyrinth walking is underway. Understanding phenomena is usually a long, non-linear journey to understanding. Perhaps most important in this journey is that, though response to the labyrinth is different for each individual, demography does not seem to make a significant difference. Age, race, gender, religion of the first-time walker or the frequent walker, research shows it doesn't matter. It appears that "relaxation, contentedness, health, and friendliness" are universally available to all (Rhodes, J., 2008, p. 33).

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

Creative thinking describes the stages of problem-solving to which we submit (consciously and unconsciously) anytime we need to respond to a challenge or opportunity with no known solution. “Creative interdependency” is a term I find useful to describe our creative ability to influence the world around us (including other people) and our susceptibility to being influenced in kind. Both of these processes are natural occurrences. Yet, neither will function optimally without intentional practice. For this reason, much research and scholarship have been dedicated to understanding the creative thinking process and how to train emerging leaders and innovators to deliberately use it for problem solving. What about our ability to be optimal at creative interdependency? We might first improve this bi-directional flow of influence between our creatorship and our environment when we accept its preeminence. It's like breathing. We all do it to survive, but when we pay attention, we can determine the efficiency with which we use the breath entering and leaving our bodies.

As it pertains to creating the world through creative problem solving, sharpened cognitive, associative, and unitive thinking skills are reflected in the quality of output. As evidenced by a world of more conveniences and excesses (for some) than any other time in recorded history, we seem to have creative production down to a science. I think, however, it's clear that with rapid production, not only is the process not sustainable but neither is the product. In simple terms: the quality of what we create into the world—whether it helps or harms, builds or depletes, nurtures or destroys—is reliant upon the quality of our creative thinking processes. And, it is closely associated with our acceptance of our creative interdependency.

How might we seize a great opportunity while using contextual thinking to also factor in the impact it may have upon others? How might we, when responding to a problem, tolerate risk

long enough to think tactically and consider polarized viewpoints? The quality of our actions depends on a) our level of awareness of this thinking/feeling process, b) our aptitude for assessing the situation by holding things together and separately at once, c) the inner connectedness to bring them both into focus with muscle memory, and d) the interconnectedness to exemplify that what I do to/for you, I do to/for me.

The gravity of realizing creative interdependency does not just come to bear on big creative decisions such as managing toxic runoff from manufacturing warehouses. It is also paramount in seemingly small acts that have equally toxic ramifications. How might I, in the middle of a heated conflict, first, notice that I have a worldview that is coming to bear on the situation and, next, value yours as much as mine? Using the tools developed across decades of scientific research in creative thinking, creative problem solving, and spiritual intelligence it is possible to hone one's ability to respond to everything with wisdom and compassion while maintaining equanimity.

Labyrinth walking is not *the* only tool to develop a mindset for creative thinking and spiritual intelligence but is certainly one worth deploying. What I have learned through designing, planning, and ultimately building a labyrinth is that the quality of creative thinking and creative interdependency may be improved with the sharpened ability to being open to possibility. I believe the best path to this open space is through a heart-guided mindset of wisdom, compassion, and unity of mankind. It is in this space where we might find a powerful modifier for guiding conscious decision-making: *ceteris paribus*. This Latin phrase, translated to "all other things being equal", conveys that we can expect certain rules to hold if no other factors muddy the water. The term is often used to explain how systems behave, i.e. the economy and nature. However, if we were to extend its context to explain human behavior, we might find the

liberty to live as if we are all traveling along the same unicursal path of life—as if we are individual but not separate. With infinite possibilities for responding to challenges and opportunities in this rapidly changing world where the sky is not even the limit, the only constant might be this unifier of wisdom and compassion. I have articulated this in a Model of Creative Wisdom (see Figure 11).

Figure 11
Model of Creative Wisdom

Model of Creative Wisdom & Compassion vs. Creative Control	
Creative Interdependency & Freedom	Creative Independence & Control
If I harm you, <i>ceteris paribus</i> , I apologize, and I will refrain from harming again	If I harm you, but it achieves my bottom line, I will continue my actions.
If you're are hungry, <i>ceteris paribus</i> , I will feed you If I am powerful, <i>ceteris paribus</i> , I will empower you	If you are hungry, but I desire more, you are not my problem If I am powerful, and I benefit from your weakness, I will exploit you
If I am creative, <i>ceteris paribus</i> , I will create that which sustains my life and yours	If I am creative, I will create as I please without regard for any negative impact upon you or our world
If you choose a life path with which I disagree, <i>ceteris paribus</i> , I will love and support you.	If you choose a life path with which I disagree, because I love you, I am at odds with you.

What might be all the ways wisdom and compassion may become our *ceteris paribus* as it relates to creating our socioeconomic, interpersonal, and environmental worlds. How might we relinquish the habit of wedging our bottom lines into the center of every creative endeavor so that the pendulum swings unevenly on behalf of he who holds the most weight? I do not know all the ways, but I believe one way is through the center—through being open and sensitive to our environment, through envisioning what could be, by doing away with everything that is not a part of wisdom, compassion, and unity. I have come to see the labyrinth as a metaphor for this big hairy audacious goal. Furthermore, see it as a means to getting there. Similar to other tools used for the inner journey, such as prayer, sitting meditation, silence, time in nature, yoga, etc., the labyrinth provides the spirit of openness to experience. However, it also provides a physical structure through which a supreme metaphorical understanding might shine through and take hold: all humanity is on a singular path with infinite possible experiences.

Another lesson I learned is that it's hard to find a bad labyrinth. That's because the labyrinth journey is mostly determined by the sojourner. With that in mind, I learned the seed patterns for building multiple types of labyrinths; some were more complex than others. I look forward to trying these out myself and teaching them to interested others.

Ultimately, I selected the labyrinth type that I could accomplish and that would hold personal meaning for me. There was something about using the form that had the longest presence in human history, the classical, in conjunction with a larger center to make it more useful—the circular form. Also, there is something about the living spirit of creativity resting in the dormancy of a seed, and the act of removing that which is concealing a true and complete form that made it the most appropriate expression of creativity and spiritual intelligence.

I believe that within the labyrinth built by my hands there is already a vibration of creativity and spiritual intelligence. I have one last anecdote to share. It is sensational but true. On May 1, 2021, the 13th annual World Labyrinth Day was celebrated. Four organizations collaborated to organize the event; they included The Labyrinth Society, Veriditas, Legacy Labyrinth Project, and the Australian Labyrinth Network. On that day, all around the globe, labyrinth walkers would take to the path to "walk as one at 1." Because each participant walked at his or her own local time, there was a wave of people walking around the world for a full day. Humanity walked with one intention: "In this year of suffering and uncertainty around the world, we have a profound opportunity, today, to make a difference. My intention for myself and the world is to receive the wisdom/insights necessary to make change."

Armed with our marching orders of intent, I, along with my husband, Kerry, and son, Frank set out on our journeys of peace. We were three individuals with one intention, traveling along one path, having distinct experiences, thus, *journeys*. Frank, with lungs compromised by

an autoimmune disorder, sat in the middle holding the intention. Kerry, taking a break from mowing the lawn, popped onto the labyrinth with the intention, neatly written by me on lined paper, curled up in his fist. His pace was quite a bit faster than mine, so even though he entered behind me, he quickly caught up. I stepped aside, allowing him to pass, and continued at a deliberate pace perfect for me. Once Kerry arrived in the middle, they waited there for me. We hadn't discussed that we would meet up in the center together, but I was glad we did. The exact moment I stepped into the center of the labyrinth and took a seat on the low meditation stool I have positioned there, something opened up. A dusting of pollen came drifting down from overhead majestically. We all looked up at it, and my husband, the skeptic, marveled aloud that it had started at the exact right moment. It looked like snow flurries—or maybe like manna from heaven. Within 30 to 40 seconds, it was over. Pollen happens all the time, no question about it. Yet for me, after such a wonderfully creative series of events throughout this project, it felt like Divine Providence. It felt like an affirmation that I have contributed my creative inspiration to something new and meaningful. I am satisfied that I have created something personal and unifying at once.

What I see myself doing is extending my learning to facilitate labyrinth walking for others because while there is “no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth”(Artress, 2006), there is certainly a wrong way to introduce the labyrinth to novices that may interfere with their experience. Concretely, I will train as a labyrinth facilitator through the Veriditas organization. My more ambiguous objective of becoming more fully human is one that calls for unfolding creatively every day. I will maintain dedication to developing a wise and compassionate inner life by allowing a creative pause and by honoring creative interdependency. *Ceteris paribus*, creative thinking skills, and spiritual intelligence will be my tools. I will insert these into my

internal and external negotiations. I will support my fellow human beings by responding to my environment with conscious choice. These are acts of creation. They inevitably make space for the new and meaningful to emerge with soundness. Our world needs this today. We need to create with sound consideration for the world around us. So, first, we care for the self, because when we do, we care for the world. We are the world.

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APPENDIX A

Original Project Timeline and Task List

Project Timeline

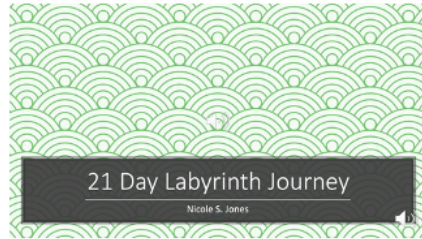
Table 1- Activities			
Objectives	Completion Dates	Hours to complete	Support needed
Proposal development	02/08	12	Dr. Sue Keller-Mathers/cohort
Proposal approval	02/15	n/a	Dr. Sue Keller-Mathers
Reading research; data gathering about labyrinths	02/01-04/05		Nicole Jones
Visit Labyrinths; document experience, insights, likes/dislikes	02/01-02/22	63	Kerry Jones; Frank Jones; Lucy Valls; Leigh Flowers
Visit suppliers, gather costs info	02/16	10	Kerry Jones
Calculate cost to build selected type/style	03/02	6	Frank Jones; Leigh Flowers
Draw full-size labyrinth template	04/04-04/05	12	Nicole Jones
Build labyrinth prototype	4/6-4/22	24	Nicole Jones
Develop sketch of labyrinth	04/21	6	Nicole Jones
Host labyrinth guests and gain feedback	04/27	3	Darrin; Janie
Project write-up; approval and signature	05/07	n/a	Dr. Sue Keller-Mathers

Tasks List

Table 2	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readings—Exploring the history, uses and construction of the labyrinth • Explore and evaluate different labyrinth patterns, ie: Cretan, Medieval, Santa Rosa labyrinths • Explore (in-person and online) and evaluate different styles of labyrinths, ie: stone, brick/paver, grass, concrete slab; path width (evaluation matrix or card sort) • Determine style and type of labyrinth to build • Develop sketch of labyrinth
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit landscape supply companies to gather information for material and building costs of selected type/style • Explore, evaluate and determine Hm I build, ie: DIY, template, labyrinth kit, landscaper, etc. (evaluation matrix or card sort) • Explore, evaluate and determine Hm I need to amend the soil at labyrinth site (known solutions, no CPS necessary) • Estimate build date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document and reflect on my personal experience and impact of walking the labyrinth on my creativity and spiritual intelligence

APPENDIX B

21-Day Labyrinth Journey



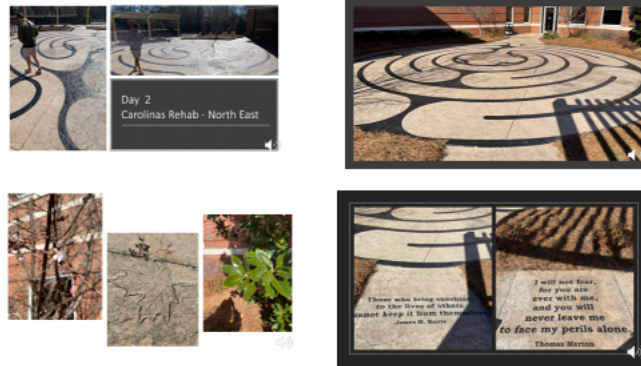
A 21-day journey on the labyrinth. It's an Artisan Journey: an age-old method of travel incorporating ingredients of exceptional quality. That is, good vibes, sunshine, gratitude and a spirit of "keep going".

My first stop on the journey was met with a challenge. In recent days nature's generosity had brought persistent watering of the earth, and the labyrinth at Grove Presbyterian Church had the puddles to prove it. So even though I was welcomed and directed to it by a parishioner happening by, it was just too muddy. I made the choice not to be deterred. I moved on. My next stop: Galilee Ministries.

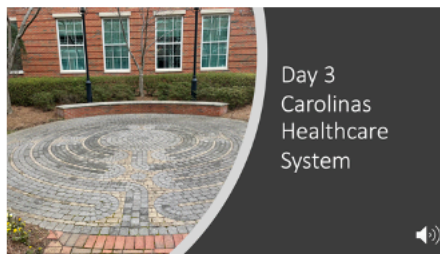


This 7-circuit modified labyrinth that made use of the space available was a quick journey that started me on my way.





Carolinas Rehabilitation, a different version of the 7-circuit with a wide path designed to invite wheelchair travelers. I accessed this one with the kindness of strangers as it is typically reserved for patients at the rehabilitation center. I saw life imitating art and art imitating life. Inspiration was at play.



Day 3 was ironic as it was practically one year to the day that my son had been released after an 8-day stay at this hospital and a diagnosis of a rare autoimmune disease—we are still on a journey of healing. Had I encountered this path last year, I would have had no idea what it was.

I was always delighted to find mosses on the path. They have presence. And, they appear different depending on the positioning of my camera. Just like life and creativity, it all depends on how you look at it.



On day 5, this labyrinth, an 11-circuit Chartres was sturdy but the circuits along the path were not well defined. It spoke to me in an area of great concern: my strong tendency to get lost, to find myself off path, literally and figuratively. And sure enough, when I found myself back in the center while intending to be exiting the labyrinth, I simply had to accept it ...and keep going.



Avondale Presbyterian Church—my visit on day 6—would become one of favorites. There was such a peace and presiding there. I discovered life in all stages, falling, waiting, and in bloom.





Morningstar Lutheran Church, much like Avondale had the chimes, the garden, the fountain, the consecration. It was all unmistakably miraculous.



On Day 8, Pauline's Tea Bar and Apothecary. When I met Sherry, I didn't feel like meeting stranger, she was so welcoming. Her vision for her tea bar was to build a safe space... a place of solace. She has done that indeed.

On Day 9, Myer's Park, close to uptown Charlotte. I found myself comfortable enough to use meditative mantras on this walk. Not because it was secluded, but on this cool winter's day, there was no one around. I stepped outside the box and did my thing.



Day 9 Myers Park Baptist Church

Day 10, Admittedly, in the nation's political climate, I felt a little unsure venturing into South Carolina to a place I had never been. So, when I pulled in and spotted someone peeking through the blinds, I went to the door of the Oratory. The woman who opened it was kind. She invited me to enjoy myself on the path. I did. The garden was beautiful, the crunch of the stone beneath my feet was energizing. And I felt good knowing I was being watched.

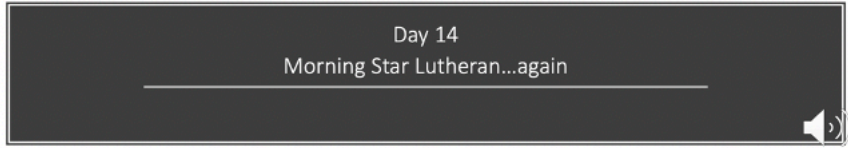


Back to Morningstar, early evening, on a lighted path. I accepted the invitation to skip around the path this day! I could imagine the amusement of anyone who might have been watching! Here, again, there was life in the throes, life gone by and life becoming.



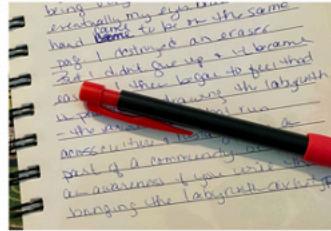
The next day, on Day 12, a trip to the home improvement store for a bathroom remodel meant I did not make it to the labyrinth. Nevertheless, I took a lesson from my walk the day before. Here is a plaque memorializing one of Morningstar's loved ones. Even in death this woman's wise words provide a light along my path. I took solace in my imperfection. No sweat. "It is what it is." Growth happens where it happens.



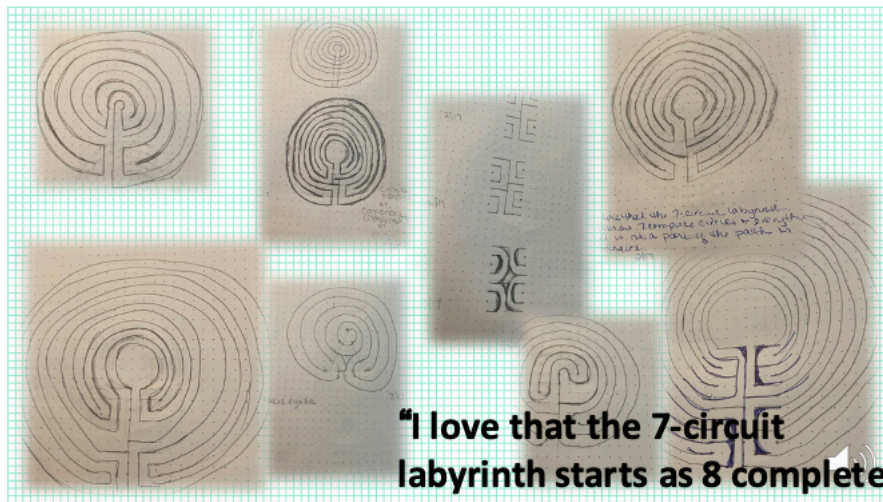


One rainy day...I found myself running to get into the rain. Such grace.

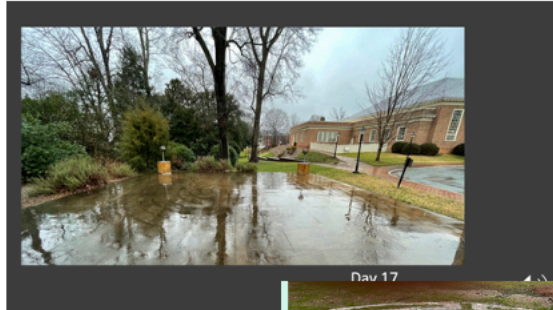
Day 16
An Inside Journey



On day 16, I journeyed inside. I destroyed an eraser learning the art of making seed patterns and drawing various labyrinths. I didn't give in. I met the challenge. I saw great improvement. I learned a lot. Key learnings from my journal entry:



"I love that the 7-circuit labyrinth starts as 8 complete circles and everything that is not a part of the path is eliminated." -Nicole Jones



Myers Park in the cool rain.

Providence Presbyterian Church: Built by the efforts of a troop of scouts.



Day 18
Providence Presbyterian Church



Day 19

On this walk I met a fellow sojourner. Her name is Dennard. She blogs about her experiences on the labyrinth. I hope we will walk together again. Unfortunately, this labyrinth may be destroyed soon because this property has recently changed hands...notice the orange barrier.



This little guy is a tree. A tree in its beginning stage of life is still a tree. The lesson? Just be.



How beautiful, the light.

Day 20
Levine & Dickson Hospice House

My last labyrinth walk was actually on the first labyrinth I have ever experience which occurred about one week before this 21-day journey. It felt appropriate that I finish with this one and I am glad I waited to return. I felt explosive on this day, energized and empowered.

I basked in the mystery in the African markings. I wondered what it means. The gratitude that engulfed me every single time I walked a path was palpable once again.



Day 21
Almetto Howey Alexander Labyrinth

Almetto Howey Alexander's quote "With patience, persistence and prayer, a God-filled spirit can bring a seed to fruit" is beckoning to the ability to create through conscious choice. A deepened and expanded connection to all life—as can happen in the living space of the labyrinth—is just where this manner of creativity can take place.

APPENDIX C

Original Building Plan

Labyrinth Building Materials and Cost

Materials	Quantity/Size	Price	Cost+Delivery (70)	Description
River Rocks	890ft ² /2 yd ³	155 (yd ³)	380	3/8in, white
Pavers	463 ft ²	1.78	825	Geometric Edger, tan
Crusher Run	890 ft ²	2 yd ³	161	
Fill Dirt	890 ft ² /8 yd ³	8 yd ³	262	
Landscape Fabric (Premium)	890 ft ²	.11 (ft ²)	65	Sta Green 3x300
	1	7	7	
Spray Paint	2	5	10	
Anchoring Spikes	10	7	7	Easy Flex Spiral
Bow Garden Rake	1	35	35	Heavy Duty 16"
Spade	1	30	30	Kobalt 20.5 Inch
Rope	1	20	20	1/4in Premium
Chalk Line	1	10	10	
Level	1	0	0	36'
Knee Pads	1	0	0	
Total Cost			1812	

"Excellent but not enough (EBNE)", (de Bono, 2011)

APPENDIX D

Steps for Drawing a Labyrinth Template

Steps for Drawing a template on soil using spray paint

1. Using garden twine still attached to the spool, tie a knotted loop at the starting end.
2. Measure 33" along the twine and tie a knotted loop.
3. Measure 21" along the twine and tie a knotted loop, repeat this step 6 more times until there are 7 loops positioned at 21" increments.
4. Cut twine 12" from the last loop.

You will now have a piece of twine with 9 loops (an end loop, one at 33" and 7 at 21" apart)

5. Next, place a stake where you intend the center of the labyrinth to be and attach rope using the end loop.
6. While holding spray paint can, place forefinger through loop positioned 33" feet from the center and while making rope taut being careful not to stretch it or dislodge the stake, walk around in a complete circle.
7. Repeat with each loop on the rope until reaching the eighth one. When done, you will have 8 concentric circles, consider these lines 1-8 from the innermost to the outermost.

Next, establish the center vertical arm

8. At the center circle, measure 10.5 inches to the left of the center and 10.5 to the right of the center stake (this marks the entrance to the center of the labyrinth).
9. The next steps will establish the entrance, exit, circuits, and turns of the labyrinth.
10. Draw a straight vertical line from the innermost circle to the outermost circle (this establishes the "center vertical arm" of the labyrinth).

Draw the left and right vertical arms

11. With the innermost circle being 1 and the outermost being 8, measure 21" to the left from the center vertical arm draw another vertical line from line 2 to line 8
12. Measure 21" to the right from the vertical arm from lines 1 to 7.

You will now have 8 concentric circles and 3 vertical arms (the center vertical, left vertical and right vertical (establish the turns). Complete the next step on dried paint.

13. On concentric lines 3 and 7, measure and mark 21" to the left of the vertical left line; scratch away these 21" of paint from the soil.
14. On concentric lines 2 and 6, measure and mark 21" to the right of the vertical right line; scratch away these 21" of paint from the soil.

Now remove vertical lines from the concentric circles (this opens up the path).

15. Between concentric lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, scratch away the paint between the vertical arm and the vertical left. Repeat on the right at concentric lines 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

APPENDIX E**21-Day Labyrinth Journal Entry: February 3, 2021**

I had an encounter today with a stranger in which kindness was not the option selected among several. A point of contention arose because I had parked taking up two spaces while sitting in the car waiting for my son Frank to have his blood drawn. I had backed in carelessly, intending to park properly once he was out of the car. Then, I got absorbed in something else (probably my phone) and immediately forgot to fix my position.

After about 10 minutes, an older man walked up to my driver's side window. He was wearing an American flag face mask and a veteran baseball cap.

He was angry and incredulous. "Two spots? You're parked in two spots?" He had clearly never witnessed anything so obscene. He was demanding a response to his high-charged accusatory semi-question.

So, maintaining my composure, I gave him an instant response, "Yes. I am. And, I am also sitting in my car." I was planting my feet, but I was also inwardly admitting that I had not intended to remain there hogging two spots. I knew it was, indeed, an inconsiderate thing to do. However, I was also aware despite his anger, he had parked only one car space behind me--not a mile. So perhaps his anger had less to do with me than he thought. The man countered that he couldn't see that was sitting there until he had already parked and walked up. He was being a jerk, but all things being equal, he had a point there.

Admittedly, I was also a bit triggered because I could notice that, using my creative palette, I was painting a picture of him, as he was likely to be doing of me (Richards, 2018). Plainly stated, I was making some pretty heavy assumptions about him based on all that I could

assume about someone of his age, race, and attire living in our current political climate. I could imagine his worldview: by birthright, he was superior to me in this nation and the world. I projected that he was angry about the recent change in leadership in our nation. True or false, who knows?

But then, in the midst of it all, within me, there came a pause. It was faint, barely a glimmer or a millisecond. I could have missed it. I could have ignored it. Yet because I didn't, space opened up. It was enough for me to realize that my response was flawed. In an egoic response to his awful approach, I had pushed back, when I should have pulled in. So, trying to get out of the muck, I asked him earnestly if I had inconvenienced him. I wanted to find his eyes and recoup our mutual humanity. I was hoping to create a bridge over which to extend an apology. I didn't feel I owed him any explanation per se, but I thought it was worth telling him that I really had intended to move and not take up two spaces. But, before the bridge could be built, and maybe he just didn't trust the builder, he snorted and hobbled off angrily. Stiff and stooped, he dismissed me with a low wave behind his back, right at butt level. The relationship was over. Or was it? Indeed, it was not.

See, according to my philosophy of creativity, we had just been a part of a powerful creative event. I believe that creativity is the ability to respond. It is also a function of conscious choice. Together, the gentleman (aka grumpy ole' man) and I had responded to the situation and (unconsciously) chosen to create discord, anger, frustration, separation, and anxiety. It was a team effort, and then we parted ways with it all just lingering in the air. Now, in solitude, I had a dilemma. What else would I create with this fresh, raw material? I had some choices. Would I be angry? Would I be self-righteous? Would I tell my story to those who know and love me and who would co-sign my perspective of innocence? Or, would I own my responsibility for the

impact I had just made upon humanity, however inadvertently? In short, would I acknowledge that all things being equal, he was right? I was parked wrong. Would I move now, or naw? Would I let him win, or would I stand my ground?

There I stood at the intersection of spiritual intelligence and creative thinking. My ability to hold multiple perspectives was at work (Wigglesworth, 2019). As a trained creative, I was evaluating and resisting premature closure. My next move would determine the inner condition of my life and this required tactical thinking. I needed to find the balance between my commitment to spiritual growth and managing the potential risk to my autonomous personhood (Wigglesworth, 2019; Puccio et al., 2012).

The pause—the flat, open sacred space within me, my inner labyrinth--was allowing me to notice the inner creative process in action, and to shape it. It came down to a simple question: Now realizing that I was parked wrong, would I own the mistake and take corrective action, or would I flip two birds and die on the hill for my right to be wrong? It was bigger than a parking space: it was about my shaping the condition of my inner life and reaching my highest human potential at that moment (Maslow, 1971). It was about, even in my opponent's absence and without his affirmation, would I use my everyday creative power to transform my creative material into love?

I moved my car. I chose love; I chose unity; I chose humility. It doesn't matter that the guy was behaving like a jack wagon. Yes, he could have chosen another way to approach, and he didn't. Yes, I might too have chosen a better response. And eventually, I did. Conscious choice is creative choice. It's all a part of the journey.

APPENDIX F

Visitors in the Artisan Journey Labyrinth Garden



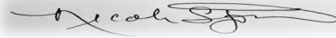
Old friends meeting in the labyrinth in a 21st century way.



New friends open to new experiences.

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I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project A Creative Path to Building a Labyrinth: A Reflexive Journey to a Wise and Compassionate Inner Life as an online resource.



Name

May 4, 2021

Date