

Labyrinth Walking for Emotional Regulation and Professional Formation

Valerie A. Ubbes, PhD, CHES, Department of Kinesiology and Health, Miami University, Oxford OH

Purpose

The goal of my poster is to discuss my research plan for implementing the Labyrinth Walking Survey (Ubbes & McDonough, 2015) on college campuses in the United States. This poster also focuses on the implementation of a labyrinth in an undergraduate and graduate course as an innovative pedagogy for professional development.

What are Labyrinths?

Labyrinths are circuitous pathways that are walked for a variety of purposes, including educational, health, and spiritual outcomes. Used for 4000 years, labyrinths are cultural artifacts for stress management, problem solving, creative expression, conflict resolution, spiritual healing, and emotional regulation. More recently, hospitals, prisons, clinics, schools, and nonprofits have used labyrinths as tools of engagement for their clients, participants, and learners.

What is Unique about this Project for Research?

After an exhaustive investigation of the literature, only a few studies were found that had an acceptable methodology for labyrinth study. Only one research survey was found. Therefore, the Labyrinth Walking Survey (Ubbes & McDonough, 2015) resulted from a two year writing project – and is available for psychometric study and use.

What is Unique about this Project for Teaching?

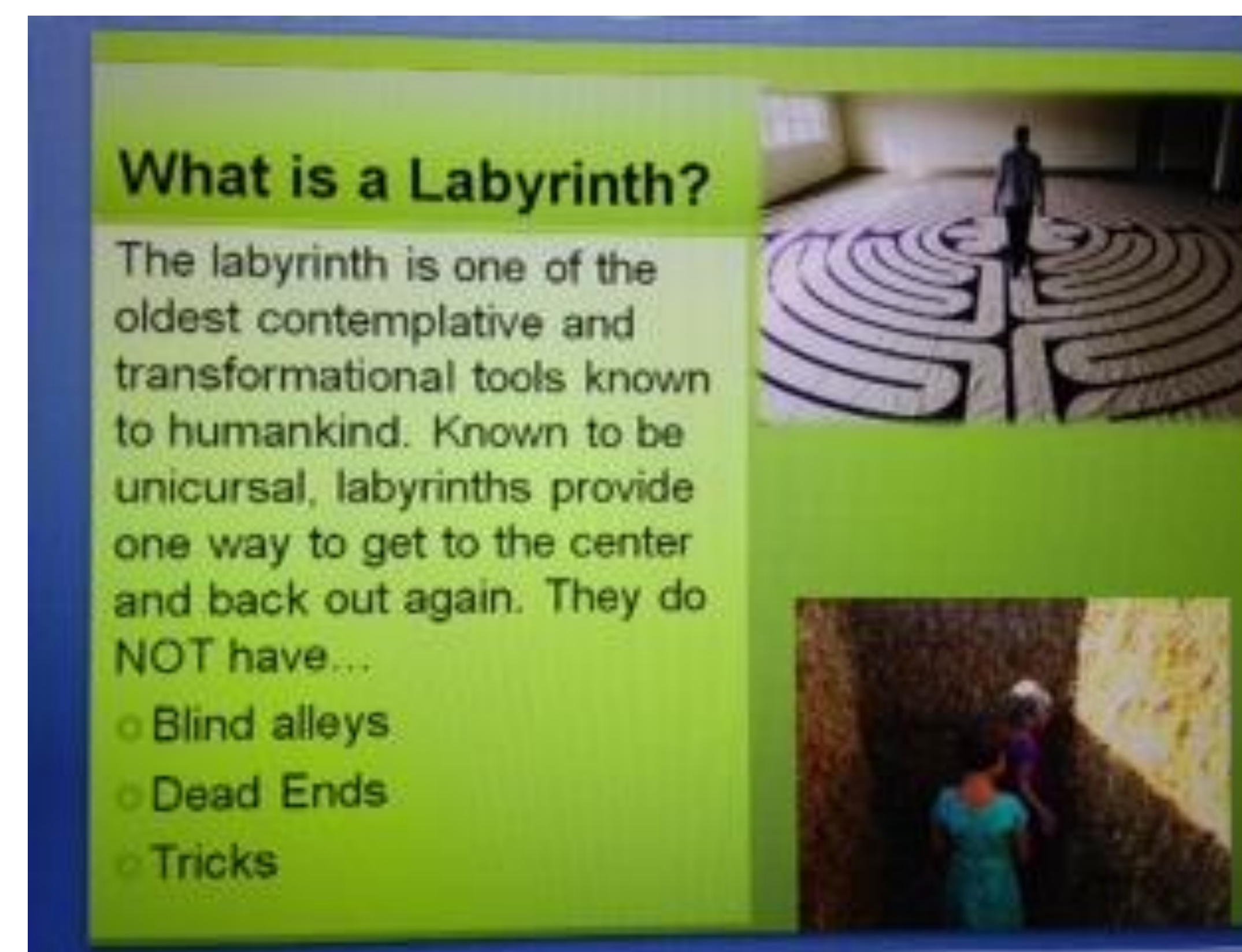
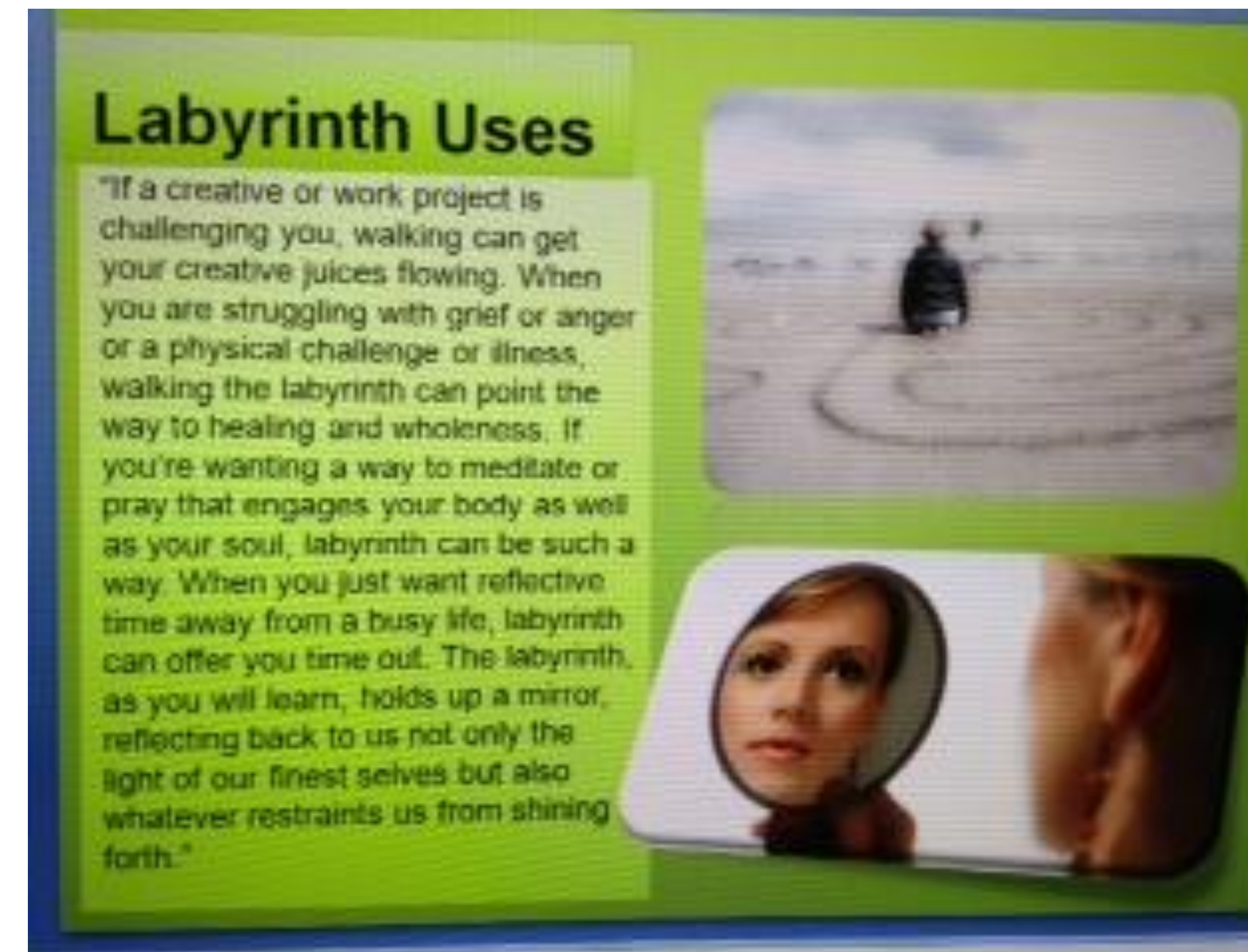
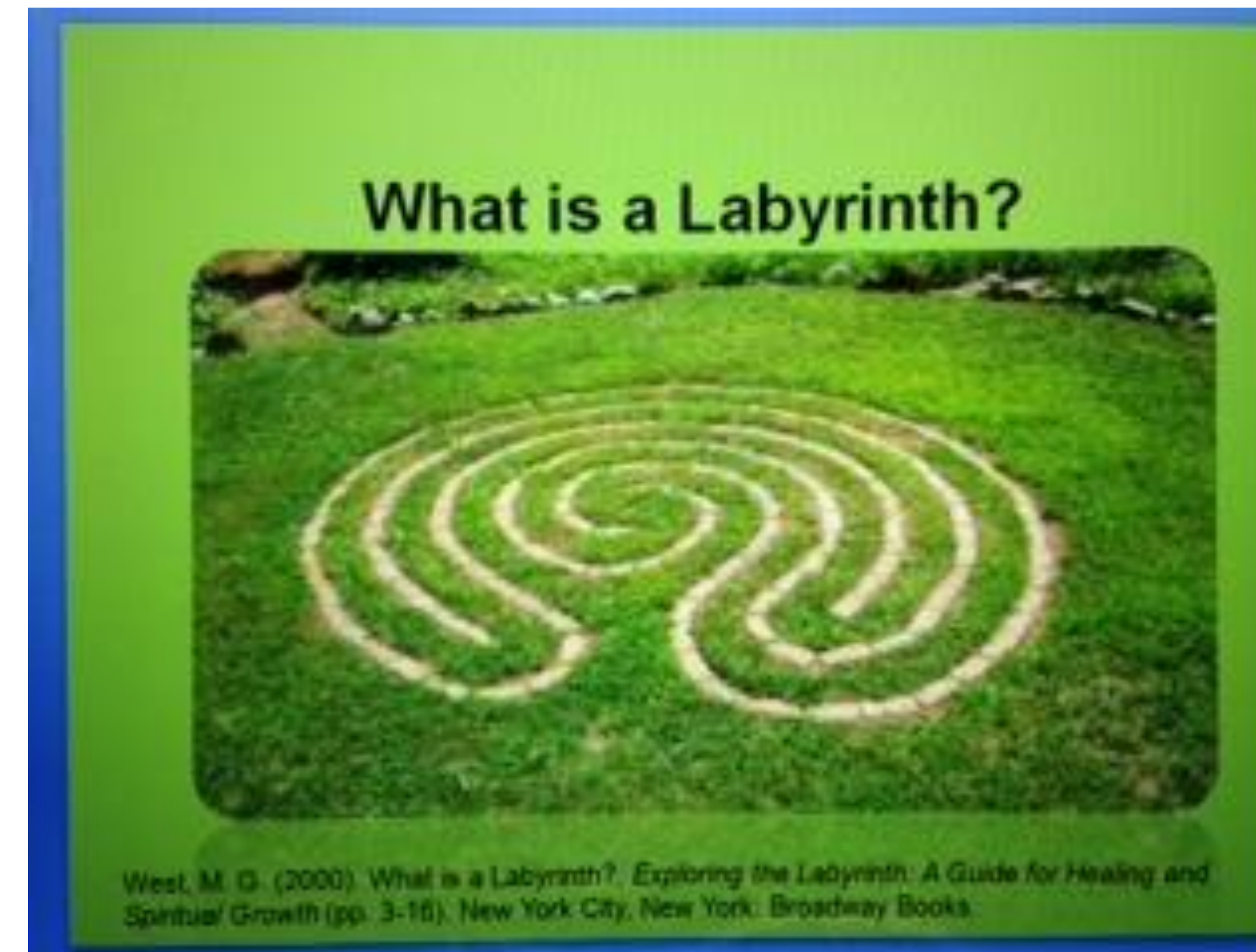
The teaching part of this public health project will involve writing through journaling. The intersect of journaling by hand and journeying by foot will help students explore decisions and goals for professional development via written language and body language, including oral language – forms of communication employed by professionals on a daily basis when interacting with clients, participants, and learners (Ubbes, 2015).

What is the focus of this Project with Public Health Professionals?

The use of labyrinths for professional development and identity formation is new (Ubbes, 2015). The outcomes can also include physiological measures (Ubbes, 2015). An underlying hypothesis includes the way in which health professionals can use labyrinths for defining life events and transitions through a self-regulated process. Self-regulated behavior has been studied in depth by Clark & Zimmerman (2014) and Bandura (1982). Zimmerman (1989) suggests that individuals who are highly self-regulating initiate and direct their own knowledge and skill development rather than depending on others. Self-regulation involves the use of “cognitive-behavioral strategies to manipulate the environment to attain the desired goal” (Clark & Zimmerman, 2014, p. 487).

Labyrinths as a Cognitive-Behavioral Strategy for Health, Healing, and Well Being (Ubbes, 2015)

One such environment where cognitive and behavioral strategies are mediated by the learner in an autonomous way is via a labyrinth. Labyrinths can be perceived as a place, space, location, and/or container for exploring one’s life course. A labyrinth’s winding journey to center and back out again serves as a transition, transformation, and transitory change into “head knowledge...foot knowledge, breath knowledge, heart knowledge” (West, 2000, p. 20) and the possibilities from “womb to tomb” of self and others.



Nursing schools have used labyrinth for preparing nurses for the life and death realities of medicine, including ways that a labyrinth can help with stress management and release loss experienced in patient care (Rhodes, 2008). Prisons have also used labyrinth for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Through the “agency of human movement” (Sands, 2001, p. 19), professionals have used labyrinths to help others deal with trauma, abuse, and life changes.

There are many ways to use a labyrinth as an instructional tool and a pedagogical approach. Ubbes (2008, p. 4) states: “The curriculum of life is health. To educate for health, we must help individuals name their private, personal, and public identities. Private identity is grounded in solitude and silence, meditative reading, walking in the woods or sitting by a lake, keeping a journal, and finding a friend who will listen (Palmer, 1998). These are ways to talk to yourself so you can learn to author the stories within you.”

A List of Themes to use with Individuals who will walk a labyrinth:

Curriculum Themes (Ubbes, 2015)

- Circuitous patterns of living, teaching, and learning
- Intrapersonal and interpersonal health perspectives of well being
- Personal, public, and private identities
- Inquiry-based approach to pedagogical practices
- Role of constructivist theory and meaning making
- Crafting a career versus hearing our calling (vocation, L. *vocare*)
- Advocacy for others emerges from vocation and avocation
- Frameworks for personal formation and professional development
- Emotional expression and self regulation
- Personal energy as stress and conflict
- Stages of the labyrinth walk: Receiving, Releasing, and Returning

