

Blue Skies

Families and Friends with Anxious Loved Ones Exploring Anxiety Management Resources



March 19th, 2024 – 7:00 PM – MVQ Building, 790 Main Street, Warren, RI, 02885

Warren Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a **BlueSkiesRI** briefing to consider a walking meditation labyrinth in Warren. This concept represents part of the BlueSkiesRI mission to reduce anxiety in collaboration with substance use recovery and prevention groups, communities of faith, and local artists and citizens. The goal of the proposal is to demonstrate our civic commitment to offer behavioral health resources for our extended communities.

THE MERITS for offering a walking meditation labyrinth in Warren include its centrality in bridging faith, art, and public health. The walking meditation labyrinth began as a religious tradition of pilgrimage, and it is sustained by these traditions. The layout has been crafted in a range of artistic forms. In practice, with its quiet rhythms, walking while meditating makes it easier to sustain meditation, compared to sitting in a static posture. Intentional walking helps us separate ourselves, if only briefly, from distractions that can inject themselves. A public walking meditation labyrinth can affirm community care, by nurturing our community's behavioral, spiritual, and physical health.

THE BENEFITS – Anxiety is of growing concern because it is both socially contagious and – when sustained – intensifies internally. Anxiety, like depression, reduces the performance of our students and our workforce. So, anxiety has direct economic impacts. The benefits of this project to our community include a visible town-wide demonstration of the recognized importance of reducing anxiety. These benefits also include a practical means of reducing anxiety, which can enrich the quality of life for those who are anxious or have anxious loved ones.

THE DISCUSSION – Our proposal is for the creation of a public walking meditation labyrinth in Warren. Community involvement is central to this proposal, to share wisdom for the **style**, **scale**, and **site** for such a civic expression of public spirituality, and to instill community ownership in this park feature.

- ✧ **Style** issues for a path include the accessibility and walkability, installation and maintenance costs, and sponsorship opportunities to offset costs. Examples of a variety of labyrinth layouts are shown below.
- ✧ **Scale** issues for the path include consideration for the duration of a walk, and offering a path that is long enough to be meditative, yet short enough to accommodate our time pressures.
- ✧ **Site** issues for the path include public visibility, accessibility, a serene locale, parking, and synergy with nearby civic land uses.

Medieval (Chartres) style labyrinth

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Portsmouth, RI



Classical style labyrinth

St. John Vianey Catholic Church, Cumberland, RI



Classic style labyrinth
The First Unitarian
Church in New Bedford
New Bedford, MA



Medieval (Chartres) style labyrinth
Chase Park, Chatham, MA



One possible site – offered solely as a means of visualizing how a walking meditation labyrinth could be placed in town – might be at the Town Beach. This location benefits from its peaceful setting, proximity of parking at Burrs Hill Park, accessibility, and proximity to many of the Town’s memorial benches. The labyrinth shown in this mock-up is 44 feet in diameter.



Meditative practice – The “Five Paths” through a labyrinth begin by quieting the mind. The walker then can follow one of many “paths” to experience a meditative state:

- ✦ *The Path of Silence* – Empty your mind of the hubbub and commotion of the outer world. Open your heart to the silence of the walk.
- ✦ *The Path of Image* – Follow the images or dreams that arise in your imagination.
- ✦ *The Path of Memory* – Walk the sacred path in the memory of a friend or family member who has passed away.
- ✦ *The Path of Prayer* – Recite a prayer, a spiritual verse, or a line of poetry.
- ✦ *The Path of Questioning* – Concentrate on a question. Don’t expect an answer. Simply be content to explore the possibilities.

BlueSkiesRI is a non-profit, citizen-run association dedicated to hosting small group explorations of locally available anxiety management resources. All are welcome to help our mission of engaging and supporting families and friends with anxious loved ones.

In specific collaboration with **The Baptist Church of Warren** _ Minister Rev. Debra Lee.



Respectfully submitted –

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