



Labyrinths and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Have you ever thought about how a labyrinth can help you to help your students navigate their way through **self awareness, self management, social awareness** and **social management** skills development? It's the perfect tool to incorporate into your Social and Emotional Learning program.

Here at the Australian Labyrinth Network (ALN) we've developed a broad range of labyrinth walks/activities suitable for outdoor, indoor and finger labyrinths as starting points. In some cases a finger labyrinth may be the preferred option. Start with small steps and you'll see how adaptable and supportive this versatile tool, the labyrinth, can be. All of the walks/activities are cross-referenced to the [ACARA Personal and Social Capabilities learning continuum](#).

Whether your own experience with labyrinths is vast or minimal is not an issue. Our Teacher Notes Resource will help you get started, and you can always [email us](#) at any time if you have a question we haven't covered.

NB. The ACARA Personal and Social Capabilities learning continuum aligns with the [CASEL Five Core Competencies for Social Emotional Learning](#) as follows:

CASEL 5 Core Competencies	ACARA Personal & Social Capabilities
Self-Awareness	Self-Awareness
Self-Management	Self-Management
Social Awareness	Social Awareness
Responsible Decision Making	Social Management
Relationship Skills	Social Awareness

Benefits of Using Labyrinths in SEL Programs & Beyond



Who is Using Labyrinths?

- Aboriginal Community Education Officers
- Allied Health
- Chaplains
- Class Teachers
- Counsellors
- Lecturers
- Leadership
- Pastoral Care
- Psychologists
- School Support Officers
- Special Needs Teachers

Additional Support Materials

This SEL Labyrinth Activities resource is supported with the following:

- Teacher Notes (see separate document)
- Powerpoint: Use the PowerPoint slides *A Short Introduction to Labyrinths* on the World Labyrinth Day in Educational Settings [Resources page](#)

SEL Labyrinth Activities

Self-Awareness	
Notice Body Signals	<p>Sand Labyrinth</p> <p>Sand activities using the labyrinth are endless. Sand itself is a primordial medium from Mother Nature, experienced and used throughout cultures and civilizations for millennia. Children and adults alike are drawn to 'playing' in the sand (bearing in mind that some people do have a natural aversion to its texture also).</p> <p>Many ancient stories were symbolically drawn in the sand and exploration of subjects on the topic of <i>Sand</i> are many. Sacred texts, sand composition, the loss of sand dunes and its importance in the environment, the romance of the Arabian stories and myths, countries that are landlocked by sand, and the great deserts of the world are just a few.</p> <p>However, this activity could simply be just to allow students to explore and play with the sand while making a 3 circuit classical labyrinth in it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you can use a sandpit for this activity that would be ideal. If a sandpit is not an option, then you could spread sand on cloth or large pieces of paper, or maybe over-lapping pages of newspaper. Alternatively, put sand into a kitty-litter type tray to keep it enclosed. We suggest that you create this activity in an area where it's easy to clean up afterwards! No matter how careful you are, sand can spread over surfaces!• Begin with a discussion about where the student has experience sand eg beach, sand castles (Please note: the student may not have had a pleasant experience with sand and be sensitive to their individual experience)• Reflect on those times or imagine what they may look like. Draw symbols, words or pictures in the sand that might signify those times.• After time has been allowed for free expression, invite student to create a 3 circuit classic labyrinth (see Teacher Notes) using their finger or a stick, and in its centre encourage a symbol of safety to be drawn, created or placed there. eg the placement of a stone, flower, leaves, shell or a sandcastle. Water in a bowl in the centre may offer an added medium. Water could also be used in the pathways.

- Activate the student's imagination in play to allow the possibility of a place where they can go when they need advice, to relax, to pray - a special or safe place to be themselves could be found in the centre of their labyrinth.
- Each finger-walk into their labyrinth could be accompanied with twigs or another item from nature with emphasis on their particular story .
- Follow up activities could be asking students to write the story down using symbols as much as possible, or a drawing of their labyrinth and their special place.

Take Regular Walks

Introduce students to a walking labyrinth and/or finger labyrinths. (See *The Basics of Introducing Young People to Walking a Labyrinth* in Teacher Notes.)

Allow them time to reflect on their walk with some prompts such as the following:

- What did I notice about my walk?
- Was it fast or slow?
- Did I walk forwards all the way, or sometimes backwards, or sideways?
- Did I pause? Did I stay in the centre, or somewhere else on the labyrinth for a while?
- Did I stay between the lines or did I want to be on the lines?
- Was I looking up, down, or somewhere else?
- Did I use my right or left hand (on a finger labyrinth)? Did I change hands (on a finger labyrinth)?
- What do I notice when I start a walk, and when I finish it?

Reflections do not need to be shared, but they can be. Work with the comfortability of the student/s. Practicing reflection will focus them on noticing their bodies and their body signals. The reflection questions could be written on cards for students to refer to if they walk a labyrinth spontaneously.

<p>Notice & Name Feelings</p>	<p>Sand Labyrinth</p> <p>Sand activities using the labyrinth are endless. Sand itself is a primordial medium from Mother Nature, experienced and used throughout cultures and civilizations for millennia. Children and adults alike are drawn to ‘playing’ in the sand (bearing in mind that some people do have a natural aversion to its texture also).</p> <p>Many ancient stories were symbolically drawn in the sand and exploration of subjects on the topic of <i>Sand</i> are many. Sacred texts, sand composition, the loss of sand dunes and its importance in the environment, the romance of the Arabian stories and myths, countries that are landlocked by sand, and the great deserts of the world are just a few.</p> <p>However, this activity could simply be just to allow students to explore and play with the sand while making a 3 circuit classical labyrinth in it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can use a sandpit for this activity that would be ideal. If a sandpit is not an option, then you could spread sand on cloth or large pieces of paper, or maybe over-lapping pages of newspaper. Alternatively, put sand into a kitty-litter type tray to keep it enclosed. We suggest that you create this activity in an area where it’s easy to clean up afterwards! No matter how careful you are, sand can spread over surfaces! • Begin with a discussion about where the student has experience sand eg beach, sand castles (Please note: the student may not have had a pleasant experience with sand and be sensitive to their individual experience) • Reflect on those times or imagine what they may look like. Draw symbols, words or pictures in the sand that might signify those times. • After time has been allowed for free expression, invite student to create a 3 circuit classic labyrinth (see Teacher Notes) using their finger or a stick, and in its centre encourage a symbol of safety to be drawn, created or placed there. eg the placement of a stone, flower, leaves, shell or a sandcastle. Water in a bowl in the centre may offer an added medium. Water could also be used in the pathways. • Activate the student’s imagination in play to allow the possibility of a place where they can go when they need advice, to relax, to pray - a special or safe place to be themselves could be found in the centre of their labyrinth. • Each finger-walk into their labyrinth could be accompanied with twigs or another item from nature with emphasis on their particular story .
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Allow them time to reflect on their walk with some prompts such as the following:

- What did I notice about my walk?
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- Did I pause? Did I stay in the centre, or somewhere else on the labyrinth for a while?
- Did I stay between the lines or did I want to be on the lines?
- Was I looking up, down, or somewhere else?
- Did I use my right or left hand (on a finger labyrinth)? Did I change hands (on a finger labyrinth)?
- What do I notice when I start a walk, and when I finish it?
- Can I make any connections about my feelings and how I walk?

Feelings and Emoji charts (or **Mood Elevators** for older students) can be useful resources here, enabling students to recognise and locate a specific emotion or feeling and name it. They could choose the one that matches at the start of their walk, and then the one that matches how they feel at the end of their walk.

Reflections do not need to be shared, but they can be. Work with the comfortability of the student/s. Practicing reflection will focus them on noticing their bodies, their feelings and naming those feelings.

The reflection questions could be written on cards for students to refer to if they walk a labyrinth spontaneously.

Mindfulness

Mindful Movement

On a walking labyrinth indoors or outdoors.

Select from one of the options below (some will need preparation/prior planning), students move along the labyrinth path according to the routine or movement sequence chosen.

- Do This, Do That (slow, sinuous shapes and moves)
- Balance – Walk Routines
- Qigong or Tai Chi Movement Sequences
- Pilgrim Walk/Dance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DKNmk-io2M>
- Self-choreographed Dance Movements

Reflect: How did you feel? What did you notice in your body?

Mindful Senses

For this sensory walk, use either a finger labyrinth or physically walk a labyrinth concentrating on the senses.

Undertake a discussion about senses, inviting the student to focus on a particular sense or a few of them:

- What do you smell?
- What do you hear?
- What do you see?
- What do you feel?
- What do you taste?
- What do you sense?

Focus students on calming their breath (see Teacher Notes).

Students choose one or a few of the senses as they finger-walk/walk their labyrinth into the centre, rest in the centre, and on the way out again.

Close with several slow, calming breaths before inviting them to reflect on their walk.

Reflect: How did they feel? What did they notice?

	<p>Mindfully Draw the Path Walked</p> <p>Students who have had some experience with walking labyrinths or using finger labyrinths can be encouraged to mindfully draw the path they actually “walk”, ie a mindful visualisation or representation of the path by starting at the first step and continuing until they reach the centre. (There is no right or wrong here; it is a completely open-ended exercise!)</p> <p>A reduction method could be to start with a 3,5,7,9 or 11 circuit labyrinth design drawn in lead pencil (see Teacher Notes: Drawing Classical Labyrinths), the path itself then traced in coloured pen or pencil, and the lines of the original design erased to leave just the path.</p>
<p>Self-Management</p>	
<p>Body Awareness</p>	<p>Mindful Movement</p> <p>On a walking labyrinth indoors or outdoors.</p> <p>Select from one of the options below (some will need preparation/prior planning), students move along the labyrinth path according to the routine or movement sequence chosen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do This, Do That (slow, fast, flowing, jerky, thrusting, hanging moves; stopping, starting and stillness) • Balance – Walk Routines • Qigong or Tai Chi Movement Sequences • Pilgrim Walk/Dance https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DKNmk-io2M • Self-choreographed Dance Movements <p>Reflect: How did you feel? What did you notice in your body?</p>

<p>Manage Emotions</p>	<p>Calming Walk Introduce students to a walking labyrinth and/or finger labyrinths. (See <i>The Basics of Introducing Young People to Walking a Labyrinth</i> in Teacher Notes.) Invite them to walk the labyrinth with one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What colour has your day been? What made it that way? What colour might it be tomorrow? • What shape would best fit your day? What shape would you like tomorrow to be? • Think about special peaceful moments. Where were you? What made it peaceful? • Recall a moment when you felt the presence of peace. Walk with that moment.
<p>Reflective Walks</p>	<p>Taking a Concept for a Walk Because there is no thinking involved in ‘where’ to walk on a labyrinth it is an ideal tool for incorporating movement into reflective thinking; the feet do the walking and they free up the mind to do the thinking. Concepts can be the springboards for challenging assumptions and opening up new or alternative perspectives. Work with focus questions, 2 or 3 are a good number. Put the questions on cards that are easy to handle, eg half A5 size or half again. Alternatively, students could write the questions on the cards themselves. This enables them to begin internalising what they’ll be thinking about. After they have walked in, allow them to sit, stand or lie in the centre of the labyrinth for as long as they need to reflect. After all have finished their walk, and before any discussion, invite them to record their thinking individually. They could do this on the backs of their cards. Or use a journal. Then open it up for a philosophical discussion, eg Is it so important to..., ? Does being...? Is wanting to...? Can you still be...? Choose an inviting space/environment for this discussion. Here are some concept suggestions for reflective walks:</p> <p>Courage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is courage? • Do you only need courage when you face danger?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does it take courage to be different? • Is it easier to be courageous when you are supported by others? <p>Kindness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does kindness look like? • Is it ever wrong to be kind? • Does kindness always involve helping someone? • Is it easier to be kind if you are a rich person? • Do you agree with the proverb: Sometimes you must be cruel to be kind? <p>Happiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it like to be happy? • Is happiness the same as contentment? • Do some people seem to be more happy than others? • Is it possible to be totally happy all the time? • Is being unhappy a natural state? <p>Others concepts could be Respect, Care, Integrity, Personal Strengths, Responsibility, . . .</p>
<p>Notice & Name Feelings of others</p>	<p>Harmony Problem Solving Labyrinth – designed by Lisa Gidlow Moriarty (permission for use granted)</p> <p>The harmony labyrinth is designed to be walked by two simultaneously, seeking to resolve conflict and seek harmony. Step 3 of the 5-Step process for problem solving/conflict resolution in Lisa Gidlow Moriarty’s approach focuses students on recognising the feelings of the other. There are four documents that relate to the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Psychology of the Path Progression in the Harmony Problem Solving Labyrinth (with four Harmony Design variations). • Cross Roads/Harmony Problem Solving Labyrinth (template and steps for participants) • Labyrinth template with words • Labyrinth template without words

	<p>So that the process is fully understood we would recommend that these documents (see Teacher Notes) be read in entirety before proceeding.</p>
<p>Mindfulness</p>	<p>Pebble in my Pocket This activity is a modification of Thich Nhat Hanh’s <i>Pebble for your Pocket</i> mindfulness practice. Take students for a walk to find a pebble that appeals to them, one that they really like, and to hold it in their hand while they walk the labyrinth. Use a walking labyrinth, either indoors or outdoors. Starting at the labyrinth entrance, students form a line around the outside perimeter, standing 1.5 to 2.0m apart. Focus students on calming their breath (see Teacher Notes). Begin the walk into the labyrinth, encouraging students to maintain their spacing distance. When they reach the centre they find a place to sit (anywhere on the labyrinth that’s not in the way of other walkers). Ask them to hold the pebble in their hand and to sit quietly with it for a while, thinking eg <i>“this is my pebble, it will be my pocket companion during the day. when things don’t go as planned I will take the pebble in my hand and I will become aware of my breath to allow my body and mind to become more at ease.”</i> They place the pebble in their pocket and one by one they make their way back to the centre of the labyrinth and follow the path back out again. Reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel? • What did you notice? • When might you use this practice in the future? <p>NB. If a walking labyrinth is not accessible, adapt the activity for finger labyrinths.</p>
<p>Settling & Focusing</p>	<p>Quiet the Mind</p>

	<p>Provide each student with a finger labyrinth worksheet, or students follow seed pattern directions (see Teacher Notes) to draw their own labyrinth.</p> <p>Focus students on calming their breath (see Teacher Notes). Using a finger of their dominant or non-dominant hand, they follow the path at their own speed, pausing at the centre to take several more calming breaths before retracing the path back out again.</p> <p>Encourage them to sit quietly for a few moments and to reflect on their experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did it feel to be taking a slow walk? • What did you notice about your body? • When might you use this practice in the future?
<p>Social Awareness</p>	
<p>Perspectives: Self & Others</p>	<p>The Labyrinth of Compassion (permission for use granted)</p> <p>In this video Ronald Esquivel, a Costa Rican author and designer of unique labyrinths based on sacred geometry principles, shows and describes the development and purposes of the Compassion Labyrinth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the problem of bullying • developing empathy • walking in other’s shoes • developing consciousness of “not me” but “the other”
<p>Empathy</p>	<p>The Labyrinth of Compassion (permission for use granted)</p> <p>In this video Ronald Esquivel, a Costa Rican author and designer of unique labyrinths based on sacred geometry principles, shows and describes the development and purposes of the Compassion Labyrinth:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the problem of bullying • developing empathy • walking in other’s shoes • developing consciousness of “not me” but “the other”
<p>Respect for Others</p>	<p>Labyrinth Reconciliation Walk</p> <p>You will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a labyrinth that can be walked indoors or outdoors, OR, a finger labyrinth (see Teacher Notes) • 4 bowls of dried seeds/pods, eg Australian species: quandong, sheoak, wattle, banksia, hakea, OR, dried purchased bean or corn seeds • a heart drawn or marked in some way in the centre of the labyrinth <p>Place the 4 bowls of seeds at various points along the labyrinth path. Gather students around the labyrinth, either standing or sitting. Explain that the walk will be one with intention for reconciliation.</p> <p>In this walk they consider that their hearts are like soil, where good things can grow, and that these good things can be thought of as seeds. On the walk in they will collect a seed from each bowl,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a seed for empathy, • a seed for love • a seed for kindness • a seed for unity. <p>The Walk</p> <p>As each seed is collected they think about how they are these things and how they are not these things sometimes</p>

	<p>At the centre they sow their seeds in the heart. On the walk out they join hands (or hold scarves) to create an energy force - a force that flows onwards and outwards on the twists and turns and beyond.</p> <p>Friendship Waves</p> <p>This activity is suitable for finger labyrinth walking or on a large indoor or outdoor labyrinth. Before the walk, discuss and focus students on various elements of friendship such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the qualities of a good friend • ways friends communicate • ways friends resolve conflict? • the permanence or impermanence of friendship <p>Invite each student to focus on one aspect of the friendship discussion and to set an intention for their walk, ie what aspect of friendship they will take into the walk with them. They could write it down.</p> <p>Focus students on calming their breath (see Teacher Notes) and to mindfully allow their friendship waves of intent to flow as they walk.</p> <p>When all have completed their walk invite them to reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did I notice about me? • What do I need to think about more?
<p>Appreciating Diversity</p>	<p>Belonging</p> <p>This activity is suitable for finger labyrinth walking or on a large indoor or outdoor <i>labyrinth</i>. Before the walk, discuss and focus students on various elements of <i>belonging</i> such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what makes people unique • why might someone feel they don't belong? • is it important to belong? • are there good things about not belonging? • can someone belong and not belong at the same time?

	<p>Invite each student to write on a card one or more of the questions from the belonging discussion that they would like to think about some more as they walk the labyrinth. When all have completed their walk, invite them to record their thinking individually. They could do this on the back of their card. Then open it up for a philosophical discussion, eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is wanting to belong a sign of weakness? • do we try to define ourselves by wanting to belong? • can you be in community and not belong? • is being included in something the same as belonging?
<p>Kindness</p>	<p>Kindness Looks Like . . .</p> <p>Individually, students draw a 3-circuit labyrinth following the seed pattern directions (see Teacher Notes).</p> <p>To accommodate the activity, ask them to draw another one, this time exaggerating the size of the centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the outer path they write what kindness LOOKS like. • On the next path they write what kindness SOUNDS like. • On the inner path they write what kindness FEELS like. • In the centre they write what kindness THINKS like. <p>Alternatively, this could be carried out as a group project, with a large 3-circuit labyrinth drawn on a paved surface, and all of the students contributing.</p> <p>Create a Kindness Labyrinth</p> <p>Find a suitable open space to draw/mark a large labyrinth. It could be in a gymnasium marked with tape or rope, on a paved surface marked with chalk, or on a grassed area marked with rope or anything to hand. Invite students to fill the paths with KINDNESS images, words, quotes, thoughts.</p> <p>Take a class vote to decide what might be the absolute best KINDNESS word, image or quote to place in the centre for contemplation.</p> <p>Then invite other classes, groups, staff, parents to walk the labyrinth.</p>

	<p>Share Kindness Make school-to-home connections utilising a learning platform app (eg Seesaw) to record and share students' kindness work: the labyrinths they've made, and their reflections on what they've experienced and learned, eg. something that has inspired them to do and be kindness.</p> <p>Random Act of Kindness November 13 each year is observed as World Kindness Day. As a random act of kindness, students could make a kindness-themed finger labyrinth for someone else. Use the templates that can be found in Teacher Notes, or search Pinterest for all kinds of amazing labyrinth creations. A labyrinth is a gift that keeps on giving (when it is walked!). It might be a good idea to give some hints for walking along with the gift.</p>
<p>Social Management</p>	
<p>Working Together</p>	<p>A Group Project Making a labyrinth large enough for a group-sized walk makes an excellent project for working together. From figuring out the design, to calculating the measurements to deciding on the materials, it will develop skills of cooperation, collaboration, decision-making and problem solving – not to mention the whole creative side of things. See Teacher Notes for a start on labyrinth designs. Students could be grouped in 4s or 6s. Start by letting them draw finger labyrinth-sized labyrinths of different sizes before setting out on the larger project. Another option could be to have the group put their design onto a board (approx. 90 x 90cm) that could be mounted on a wall in a quiet space for individual finger walking and contemplation.</p> <p>Walk and Talk</p>

	<p>Walk with a partner who remains silent throughout the walk. Decide if you want the partner to walk in front or behind. If using finger labyrinths, then each have identical ones. As you walk, talk through something, a thinking point, that you are taking into the labyrinth with you, eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you feeling about today? What happened? What changed for you? • What have you learned about yourself today? this week? • What have been some of the challenges today? What could you do differently? • What was your greatest accomplishment today? What made it so? • What makes you a good student? What would make you a better one? <p>Thank your partner for being there for you.</p>
<p>Responsible Decision Making</p>	<p>Solving our Problems with the Clark Bee Labyrinth In this video you will see how the steps for each stage of problem solving using a labyrinth are carried out. At the end students share their reflections on the process. The labyrinth can be constructed easily using a series of 6 concentric circles, and simply erasing where the walk-throughs need to be.</p>
<p>Problem Solving/ Conflict Management</p>	<p>Harmony Problem Solving Labyrinth – designed by Lisa Gidlow Moriarty (permission for use granted) The harmony labyrinth is designed to be walked by two simultaneously, seeking to resolve conflict and seek harmony. The steps involved in the process are marked on the path. There are four documents that support the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Psychology of the Path Progression in the Harmony Problem Solving Labyrinth (with four Harmony Design variations). • Cross Roads/Harmony Problem Solving Labyrinth (template and steps for participants) • Labyrinth template with words • Labyrinth template without words

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