

Letting Go Meditation by Elizabeth Galen, Ph.D.
Opening Reflection for Fall Labyrinth 2015

(I wrote this meditation for an outdoor labyrinth walk which will happen on September 27, 2015. The labyrinth we are walking is situated in an area surrounded by trees and a wet weather creek. The bird section of this was inspired by "Love and Attachment" in *The Meditation Bible* by Madonna Gauding, p 270-1.)

Take a moment to close your eyes if you feel safe doing so. Depending on how you are sitting, allow either your tailbone or your feet to make contact with the Earth. Feel the energy and strength of all that is below you. Take a deep inhalation in, smelling the fresh air that surrounds and supports you. Exhale, releasing not only the carbon dioxide from your lungs, but also beginning to let go of anything that is burdening you. Take several more deep breaths, inhaling the nourishing oxygen and exhaling all that no longer serves you.

As you settle into a more relaxed state of being, take a moment and listen to the world around you. What do you hear? Are there crickets chirping? Cicadas humming? What about wind in the trees? Can you hear the trees rustling? What noises has nature brought to join us in this evening of reflection?

Now, whether you can hear birds or not, imagine a beautiful bird lands near you. Take a moment to look at this bird and appreciate its beauty. ...

What type of bird is it? ...

What color are its feathers? ...

How big is it? ...

Is it watching you, or is it watching something else? ...

Is it still or moving? ...

Ask the bird if it has a song to sing. If it does, take a minute to hear what it has to say. Is its song soft or loud? Smooth or rough? Calming or alarming? ...

Take another moment to just sit and observe this bird, this beautiful miracle of creation that shares the planet with us. As you watch this bird, allow your heart to be filled with joy. Know that the bird is enjoying being in your presence as much as you are enjoying its gift of presence to you.

Suddenly, a breeze begins to blow. As it does, the time for the bird to depart has arrived. Even though you have enjoyed your time with the bird, both of you recognize that you must move on to other things now. In your heart, whisper words of departure to the bird and allow it to fly away, unrestrained by anything that might have kept it close to you.

You are now alone in nature again, though you are not truly alone. The trees and their leaves surround you. The Earth is firm beneath your feet. You hear the rustle of other friendly creatures in the woods, and you know that even though your aviary companion has flown, you still are part of the greater creation around you. Take a moment to offer gratitude for the time you got to spend with this bird, even if the time was short. No matter how long the encounter was, it still was a blessing to experience.

Just as the beautiful bird has left you, so too is it time to let go of other things. Autumn is a time of reflection and release. The crops are harvested and processed, and the fields will lay fallow for the winter season. The trees, too, know that this journey around the sun has come to

another turning point, and they release their leaves to help nourish the earth as the leaves decay. Soon their bare branches will be resting their arms for the winter, preparing internally for the spring that will always come again.

Take a moment to think about what you need to let go of in your life. Perhaps you are still clinging to a dream that will never take place. Maybe you are having trouble letting go of a lover whom you wish was still with you. Even though you know the spirits of your loved ones will always stay close to you, you may be clinging to their memory and wishing they were still here with you in bodily form. Yet for everything, there is a season, and now is the season of letting go. In your heart, you know what it is that you don't want to let go of. You know that clinging to whatever this is does not serve your higher good. You know that the best way you can serve yourself is to release this and allow yourself to move forward into the next season of your life.

Before you let go of whatever it is that is holding you back, take a moment to offer gratitude for it just as you did with your encounter with the bird. Know that even if you are letting go of a dream that never came true, whatever this is that you are releasing did serve a purpose in your life. Maybe it gave you inspiration or hope. Maybe it provided you with love and security. Maybe it just taught you soul level lessons that you needed to understand. Regardless of its purpose, whatever you are releasing did serve you in some way, and offering gratitude for that service will make it easier to release....

The time is now nearly here for you to walk the labyrinth with your topic of release in mind. One by one, we will slowly enter the labyrinth, walking at our own pace. We will each be walking together yet separately just as in life we are together yet on our own. Take care as you walk to notice any rocks, holes, or other obstacles that you may encounter, and just as you take slight steps to detour around hazards in life, do the same on your labyrinth walk. Know that you can never get lost in a labyrinth. There is only one way in and one way out. The destination is long and winding. You will come close to the center, to the goal, only to be taken away from it again. Keep walking your path at your speed and reflecting on whatever you need to let go of. This journey is about you. Open your heart and your mind to receive any information that your higher self, your spirit guides, your angels or your higher powers might be providing for you. They will often provide comfort and wisdom as you let go of whatever no longer serves you.

As you walk the path, you may smell fresh rosemary that I have scattered along the path. Rosemary is used in spiritual healing "for inner strength, for self-confidence, for mental clarity, for focus of intent, to break apathy and inertia, for protection, for purification, for cleansing of sacred space and ritual objects, for spiritual awareness and understanding, for memory, to assist transition into the spirit realm, for funeral rites, and for rites of passage." (<http://www.spiritual-path.com/aromatherapy.htm>) Know that the rosemary is supporting, blessing, and cleansing your journey of release.

When you get to the center of the labyrinth, you can leave whatever object of nature you brought, be it flowers, herbs, or fruits. Whatever you place there is an offering of thanksgiving to the Earth and to higher powers for supporting you in your journey in life. It is also symbolic of leaving behind whatever issue you that is no longer serving you.

You may stay in the center of the labyrinth as long as feels right for you. When you determine it is time for you to leave, then simply head back out the way you came in. Again, just as it was on your way in, your departure is about the journey, not the destination. Take your time on the way out, feeling the strength of the earth beneath you. Hear the nature around you. Listen for insight

from your higher powers and guides that may help you in this process of release. If you encounter another group member along the journey, simply step to the right side so each of you may pass peacefully and in silence. When you reach the exit of the labyrinth, you may take some time to journal about your experience both meditating and walking the labyrinth.

Now, as you feel ready, open your eyes and prepare for your journey of letting go.

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