THE GATHERING AROUND THE MAZE

The Host's Guide

The Great Midlife Maze

Welcome

The Maze is not something you complete, it is something you enter. It is not a race to win, but a path to walk. One that twists and turns, pauses for breath, and leads you toward what you already know.

If you have chosen to gather women around this board, you are stepping into a beautiful role. It is the gift of bringing people together by opening your door, lighting a candle, and creating a comfortable space where friends can set down the noise of daily life. Welcoming others to the table makes room for something meaningful to happen.

Yet this role is an invitation, not a burden. You are not here to act as a guide, an expert, or a teacher holding answers for others. The game board, cards, and rules guide the conversation and pace naturally, you can simply sit in the circle as a peer, rolling the die, answering prompts, and enjoying your own gathering alongside the women you invited.

Take a breath. Set the space. And trust that ***The Maze always reveals what you are meant to remember.***

The Purpose of the Maze

This game was created for women in midlife who are ready to pause, remember, and reclaim.

It honors the real stuff we're navigating:

- Who am I now that things are shifting?
- What do I want, without guilt or apology?
- How can I trust myself again—and share what I know?

Each Quest provides a personal lens, each Key brings a spark of knowing, and each space on the board opens a chance to connect with yourself or someone else.

Whether playing with two friends or six, this is a moment to slow down and be present. Listen, share, and notice what unfolds. Honesty, curiosity, and showing up as you are will always be enough.

When women sit together at the table, laughter loosens the day, stories weave connection, and everyone brings a piece of wisdom they did not realise they carried. Each turn of the die becomes a simple act of remembering that even when our paths twist in different directions, we are walking the same ground.

Inviting Your Circle

Inviting friends to a game night focused on reflection should feel natural and effortless. Frame the evening with warmth and ease: a relaxed gathering with great conversation, laughter, and zero pressure.

When reaching out, let your friends know that no preparation or background is needed. You are simply creating a comfortable space to slow down, share stories, and enjoy an engaging game night together.

Here are three invitation templates you can copy, adapt, or text:

Option 1: Casual & Playful (For close, everyday friends)
Hey [Name]! I recently got a new board game called The Great Midlife Maze. It's designed for women to slow down, share a few stories, and have a good laugh. I'm opening up my living room on [Date] at [Time] for wine, tea, and game night. No prep needed, just bring yourself! Let me know if you'd like a spot at the table.

Option 2: Warm & Intentional (For a circle or mixed group)
Hi [Name], I'm hosting a special game night on [Date] at [Time] and would love for you to join us. We'll be playing The Great Midlife Maze, a game focused on pausing, reflecting, and connecting over where we are in this season of life. It's low pressure, deeply relaxing, and always opens up the best conversations. Let me know if you can make it!

Option 3: Quick & Direct (For group texts)
Game night alert! 🍷✨ I'm hosting a session of The Great Midlife Maze on [Date] at [Time]. Think delicious snacks, warm drinks, and great conversation with zero expectations. Bring a small personal item to use as your game token (a favorite ring, coin or crystal works beautifully!). RSVP so I can set a chair for you!"

Ways to Play

The Maze naturally adapts to the time, mood, and size of your gathering. Choose the flow that best fits your circle tonight:

- **Oracle Style (20–45 min):** No board or dice required. Use the Key cards as standalone reflection tools. Draw cards for personal or shared reflection.
- **Keys Reveal (60–90 min):** Play on the board with Key cards, dice, and tokens, but skip choosing Quests in advance. As players collect Keys through movement, their journey emerges naturally. At the end, players look at their collected Keys to discover what theme or Quest the Maze handed them.
- **Full Maze (2–3 hours):** The complete experience where each player chooses a Quest, travels the board, collects Keys, and answers their final reflective prompt.

Preparing the space

The physical environment sets the energy long before the first die is rolled. The Maze is a sensory experience, and a few thoughtful details signal to your guests that this evening is a sanctuary from daily routines.

- Table Setup: Gather around a round or square table whenever possible. A circular arrangement naturally balances energy, ensuring everyone sits as an equal participant and feels equally seen and heard.
- Atmosphere: Dim the lights, light a central candle, set out simple snacks or warm drinks, and play soft background music before play begins. These simple touches signal that this gathering is a sacred pause.
- Player Tokens: If friends bring a personal object from home, let them use it on the board to anchor their intention as their journey begins.
- Thoughtful Touches: Keep a box of tissues nearby discreetly without drawing attention to them.

What you need on the table:

- The Game Board
- A die: standard six-sided die
- Player tokens: you can use the pawns included in your set, or invite friends to bring a small personal object like a coin, button, ring, or crystal
- Card Decks, separated into three neat piles: Quest Cards, Key Cards, and Surprise Cards
- Printed Journal pages or a notebook with pens for each player
- The Game Guide, placed on the table for easy reference during play

Hosting With Ease

Your main role at the table is simply offering present, undivided attention. You are participating as an equal guest, and these practical reminders will keep the evening relaxed and comfortable for everyone:

- **Let Silence Breathe:** When someone finishes sharing, give their words a moment to sit in the room. A brief pause lets everyone absorb what was said without rushing to fill the air.
- **Protect the "Pass":** If someone chooses to pass, simply nod and move to the next person. Honoring silence shows that the space is safe and free of pressure.
- **Focus on Listening:** Midlife stories invite us to reflect on our own lives, but try to let each person's story belong entirely to them. Hold space by simply listening, allowing their truth to stand on its own.
- **Keep the Flow:** If a side conversation starts to drift, wait for a natural breath and bring focus back to the board: "Let's see where the die takes us next."
- **Welcome Real Emotions:** If tears or heavy feelings surface, pass a tissue, offer a patient silence, and let them set the pace for when they are ready to continue.

Game at a Glance

Keep your explanation brief before starting. There is no need to teach every rule upfront. As the Host, you can simply share the basic rhythm:

- Roll the die and move your token along the maze.
- Read the space or card you land on (Key, Surprise, or Quest).
- Share or reflect: Answer the prompt, jot down a note in your journal, or pass.

A Gentle Note for the Table: Remind your guests that there are no wrong answers, no time limits, and zero pressure. If a player lands on a prompt they aren't ready to speak aloud, remind them they can always journal it quietly or say "Pass."

Choosing Your Quest

Before you open the circle, give everyone a few moments to choose their Quest—the personal theme or lens for their journey.

- Remind your friends not to overthink it. They should pick the card that catches their eye, stirs curiosity, or speaks to where they are in life right now.
- If anyone feels stuck, keep it light:
- Draw blindly: Let the Maze choose for you.
- Pick a number: Have them call out a number from 1 to 32 and see which Quest appears.
- Let someone else choose for you
- Walk together: Choose a single Quest as a group and walk different paths through the same theme.

Entering the Maze

Opening Ritual & Space Agreements

The Opening Ritual marks the shift from everyday busywork into a shared space of presence. As the host, your role here is simply to light the central candle, invite everyone to take a deep breath together, and read these words aloud to your circle:

Welcome to the Maze.
This is a sacred space - a pause from the noise.
We are not here to perform or be fixed.
We are here to be real,
to speak honestly and listen with care.

Whatever is shared at this table stays here.
You are always free to share, stay silent or simply say 'pass.'

We step onto this path with curiosity,
trusting what we already know.

Let the Maze reveal what you're ready to remember.
And let the Quest begin.

If you want to deepen the space right after reading the opening words, try one of these:

- Go around the table and have each person share one word for the night (e.g., Clarity, Laughter, Ease).
- Pause for ten seconds of silence while everyone holds their game token before placing it on the board.

Leaving The Maze

The Closing Ritual

When you're ready to end the game, take one final breath together. Place one hand on your heart, and one hand open in offering. Let silence wrap around the moment.

Then, read aloud:

"Thank you for your honesty,
your presence, and your care tonight.

What was shared here remains in this circle.

May we carry the light of these stories,
the wisdom of our own knowing,
and the joy of connection back into our lives.

The Quest is complete, but the path continues."

Gently blow out the candle together.

Invite anyone who wishes to share one word from their journey or place their token in the center of the board. Thank everyone for taking the time to gather, listen, and share, then leave plenty of unscheduled time for relaxed hugs and unhurried goodbyes.

After The Maze

The Maze asks nothing more of you tonight.

What surfaced around the board does not need to be explained, fixed, or acted upon right away. Some insights settle quietly. Others return later, in unexpected moments when you least expect them.

You can return to the Maze whenever it feels right. It will meet you differently each time, not because the cards have changed, but because you have.

There is no prescribed path to follow from here. No daily practice to maintain, and no insight to perform. Simply carry what feels true to you and leave the rest behind.

If you ever feel moved to share a sentence, a quiet reflection, or a moment from your gathering, I would love to hear it. Many of the words that shape this game came directly from women who chose to share what the experience revealed to them.

Thank you for bringing this space to life, and for trusting your own timing.

With care,

Alenka, The Maze Keeper Alenka

p.s. Your journey with The Great Midlife Maze continues long after the game is set aside.

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