



# REIKI: Accessing the Human Energetic System

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*Explore. Experience. Expand.*

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**MAIN TOPICS:** INTRODUCTION, DEFINITIONS, ENTER THE HUMAN LEARNING PROCESS, REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE SPIRITUAL IN NATURE, CONNECTING THE DOTS, A FINAL REFLECTION

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## Introduction

The old worldview of the body as a sophisticated machine, based on Newtonian physics, is gradually giving way to a new scientific worldview of the body as a complex energetic system. This worldview is based on a new perspective of Einsteinian and quantum physics that “the biochemical molecules that make up the physical body are actually a form of vibrating energy.” (Gerber, 2000, p. 5)

This new worldview has ushered in the emerging field of vibrational medicine, a science that draws on both the latest scientific discoveries and ancient arts of healing. Vibrational medicine views the body as a “complex, integrated life-energy system that provides a vehicle for human consciousness as well as a temporary housing for the creative expression of the human soul.” (Gerber, 2000, p. 4) Vibrational medicine theory views illness as caused not only by toxins, germs and trauma, but by chronic dysfunctional emotional-energy patterns and the unhealthy ways that people relate to each other and themselves. In this new worldview, then, consciousness and emotions play key roles in determining who becomes sick and who stays well, and different forms of energy are being employed to collectively heal the body, mind and spirit. Reiki is one form of holistic energy healing.

## Understanding Reiki

Touching to comfort and relieve pain, or the laying on of hands, is as old as instinct. When humans are hurt, they immediately put their hands on the spot. A mother’s touch or kiss provides soothing aid for a child’s hurts. A mother’s natural instinct with a sick child is to use her hand to feel for a fever. Animals immediately lick injuries, and touch and lick their young as they learn. These simple acts form the basis for healing techniques through touch.

This touching to heal has been recorded for thousands of years. The Tibetans possessed a “deep understanding of the nature of spirit, energy and matter, using this knowledge to heal their bodies, harmonize their souls and lead their spirits to an experience of unity.” (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, p. 15) These same concepts emerged in India and, later, appeared in Japanese, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and Roman cultures. Usually, this knowledge was preserved by the mystery schools, available only to priests or spiritual leaders, and passed on by word of mouth.

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Reiki is one of the five streams of Qigong, a form of physical and spiritual discipline originating in China. These five streams include the popular martial arts that employ mostly physical exercises to strengthen body and mind; medical Qigong exercises popular in Japan that combat disease by storing vital energy in the lower abdomen; Confucian Qigong aimed at calming the mind and making it receptive to moral wisdom; Taoist Qigong which includes breathing exercises, internal massage, visualization and physical exercises to achieve the perfect balance of body, mind and soul; and Buddhist Qigong exercises that focus on the expansion of inner awareness. Reiki is an offshoot of Buddhist Qigong.

Buddha and several of the Buddhas who followed him were called the “Great Physicians.” Although not labeled as Reiki, the Reiki form of healing was described in the Buddhist holy books, and transmitted through oral teaching. Holger Kersten, a German writer and researcher, believed the three wisemen took the young Jesus of Nazareth (at age two while fleeing Herod) to first Egypt, then India, where Jesus had access to Buddhist Mahayana and Vajrayana training. Kersten notes that when Jesus returned to Jerusalem as an adult, he was both a Buddhist adept and a Reiki healer. (Kersten, 1991).

The Japanese word *Ki*, from which the word Reiki is formed, is the essential life force, the energy and warmth radiated by the living body, human or animal. *Ki* is “an electrical type of energy that creates the body and determines the state of health.” (Stein, 1995, p. 16) Everything that is alive contains and radiates *Ki*; when *Ki* departs the living organism, life has departed. *Ki* is not a religion, or affiliated with any religion. It is older in concept and fact than any religious philosophy, and is the source of life itself, whatever name is used to describe that source. *Ki* has been recognized and explored throughout the history of mankind. Mary Coddington fills an entire book describing this energy in terms of different cultures. It has been called *Mana* by the Polynesian Hunas; *Orenda* by the Native American Iroquois; *Prana* in India; *Ruach* in Hebrew; *Barraka* in Islamic countries, and *Ch’i* in China. (Coddington, 1978)

*Ki* flows through the physical body through pathways that are called charkas, meridians and nadis, and around the physical body in a field of energy called an aura. The free and balanced flow of *Ki* is the cause of good health. (Rand, 1991, p. 1-9) Since *Ki* nourishes the organs and cells of the body, supporting them in their vital functions, the disruption of *Ki* brings about illness. Positive thoughts increase the flow of *Ki* and provide good feelings as well as health. Negative thoughts disrupt the flow of *Ki* and bring about “feeling poorly”. A blockage of *Ki* diminishes the vital function of organs and cells of the physical body and brings about illness.

Through Reiki it is possible to clear our internal channels, and open up the body to increased amounts of this life energy for use in our own bodies as well as passing on to others. This can happen in several ways.

By flowing through the affected parts of the energy field and charging them with positive energy, Reiki raises the vibratory level in and around the physical body where the negative thoughts and feelings are attached. This causes the negative energy to break apart and fall away. In so doing, Reiki clears, straightens and heals the energy pathways, thus allowing healthy *Ki* to flow in a natural way. Sometimes the entire blocking energy is lifted up to a higher field of energy where it is processed. Other times, it is melted away or burned up ... Once *Ki* is flowing naturally, the physical organs and tissues are then able to complete their healing process. (Rand, 1991, p. 1-10)

The process of attunement clears and opens the channels even further. Attunement, which will be discussed in depth later in this paper, is an initiation into Reiki, creating the healer and paving the way to use the Reiki approach for touch healing. During attunement, Reiki energy is passed directly from the master to the student. Over the past dozen years, the number of Reiki masters practicing in the United States has exploded. Why? Where did it come from? How is it spreading? Before further exploring the mechanics of the Reiki structure, let's look at the origins of the current Reiki movement and its spread to the United States.

## **The Reiki Story**

Mikaomi Usui of Kyoto, Japan, is credited with rediscovering this energy form of healing near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is he who named this energy *Rei-Ki*. The character *Rei* in Japanese translates into *energy, nature, talent and feeling*. When combined with *Ki* (the essential life force), the term *Reiki* is translated as *universal life energy*.

There is mystery surrounding the life of Makaomi Usui, who is generally referred to as Dr. Usui, although there appears to be no record of conference of that title in a formal educational setting. There are also a variety of stories around just how he rediscovered the Reiki energy. Perhaps the most authoritative source of Usui's character is the inscription on his memorial stone at the Saihoji temple in the Toyotama district of Tokyo. The inscription begins:

Someone who studies hard and works assiduously to improve body and mind for the sake of becoming a better person is called "a man of great spirit." People who use that great spirit for a social purpose, that is, to teach the right way to many people and do collective good, are called "teachers." Dr. Usui was one such teacher. He taught Reiki of the Universe. Countless people came to him and asked him to teach them the great way of Reiki and to heal them.<sup>2</sup>

The story of Dr. Usui's life on this inscription cites his birth as August 15 in the first year of the Keio period (1864) in the village of Yago in the Yamaga district of Gifu prefecture. The inscription describes Usui as traveling to several Western countries and China to study, and training himself arduously even when he ran into some bad luck. At the end of a 21-day retreat to Mount Kurama he suddenly felt the great Reiki energy at the top of his head. However, it is also recorded that he discovered the key that led to the recovery of this old tradition of healing in 2,500-year-old Sanskrit sutras stored in a Buddhist temple. Whatever the manner of rediscovery, from this experience grew the Reiki healing system, which Usui first used on himself, then his family and friends, and finally the public at large. In 1921 he opened a clinic and began hosting workshops to spread his knowledge. When the devastating Kanto earthquake occurred in 1923, Dr. Usui became a national hero as he treated the survivors. His fame and success continued to flourish until his death in 1926.

The robust memorial stone inscription describes Dr. Usui as a very warm, simple and humble person, never physically ill and well-proportioned. He was courageous in the face of adversity, never showed off and always had a smile on his face. The inscription continues:

His talents were many. He liked to read, and his knowledge of medicine, psychology, fortune-telling and theology of religions around the world was vast.

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<sup>2</sup> Memorial stone located at the Saihoji temple in the Toyotama district of Tokyo.

This life-long habit of studying and gathering information certainly helped pave the way to perceiving and understanding Reiki. Reiki not only heals diseases, but also amplifies innate abilities, balances the spirit, makes the body healthy, and thus helps achieve happiness.<sup>3</sup>

Diane Stein fills out this history in her book *Essential Reiki: A Complete Guide to An Ancient Healing Art*, with stories handed down through those who can trace their Reiki teachings back to Dr. Usui. (Stein, 1995, pp. 8-15) According to these stories, Dr. Usui returned from traveling in the United States and took up residence in a Zen Buddhist monastery where he discovered texts describing the healing formula, reading these texts in their original Sanskrit. The material, however, did not include information on how to activate the healing energy. For three weeks Usui meditated and on the final day of his quest, just before dawn, the light came to him, bringing with it the Reiki symbols and information about this ancient method of healing.

Usui developed a very structured system for the passing along of this healing and the development of Reiki masters. The story goes that Dr. Usui worked for several years in the slums of Kyoto healing beggars, and that he began to realize that many of those he healed would come back again and again, unable to start a new life. Even those whose ailments did not return were angry because “with their dis-eases healed, they could no longer make their way as beggars and would now have to work.” (Stein, 1996, p. 13) During Dr Usui’s wanderings as a pilgrim, lecturing and healing as he traveled on foot throughout Japan, he came to the realization that you could not just heal the body, that you must simultaneously heal the mind and body. This important relationship between body and mind surfaces again and again in the Reiki literature.

During his travels, Usui trained Chujiro Hayashi, a retired naval officer, as a Reiki Master. When Usui died in 1926, Chujiro Hayashi went on to train teams of masters who set up the first Reiki clinic. From there, Reiki followed a crooked path to reach the United States. The path begins in 1935, when Hawayo Takata, a patient in the Maeda Medical Hospital in Akasak, Japan, (severely ill with gall bladder disease complicated by a serious respiratory condition preventing the use of anesthesia) was told that she would not live without surgery. Her surgeon’s sister took Hawayo Takata to the Chujiro Hayashi’s Reiki clinic. Takata lived at the clinic for four months receiving Reiki, and when she departed was complete healed in body, mind and spirit. In the Spring of 1936, Takata received her first Reiki training. For two years she worked at the clinic in Japan, then returned to her homeland of Hawaii and set up a Reiki clinic in Kapaa. In 1938, Chujiro Hayashi visited Takata in Hawaii, and, because of Hayashi’s fear that the political environment in Japan and impending war would suppress his work, Takata, a foreigner, was announced as his successor.

Takata felt that Reiki was the greatest secret in the science of energetics. In an interview printed in *The Times* of San Mateo, Hawaii, on May 17, 1975, Takata described Reiki in these words:

“Reiki means Universal Life Energy. It was explained to me this way: Here is the great space which surrounds us – the Universe. There is endless and enormous energy in it. It is universal ... its ultimate source is the Creator ... It is a limitless force. It is the source of energy that makes the plants grow ... the birds fly. It is Nature. It is God, the power He makes available to His children who seek it. In Japanese, this is *Reiki*.” (Muller and Gunther, 1995, p. 21)

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Takata lived to be 80 years old, spreading Reiki to the mainland U.S., and finally to Canada and Europe. By her death in 1980, she had trained hundreds of people in the Reiki healing system and initiated 22 Reiki masters, both men and women. “In her healing clinics, if a client was seriously ill and needed many healings, she trained someone in the family in Reiki to do the treatments. When the client was strong enough, they took the training as well.” (Stein, 1995, p. 14) Takata taught by example and by telling stories. These stories have spread with the spreading of Reiki.

In August 1980 Takata founded the American Reiki Association to organize and coordinate the passing on of the knowledge of Reiki. Takata’s granddaughter, Phyllis Furomoto, was Takata’s successor and was named the Grand Master of the Usui tradition.

After Takata’s death several other branches of Reiki evolved, with various philosophies of teaching and initiating. While these do not follow the traditional path and structure developed by Usui, their lowering of prices and streamlining of the attunement process are allowing Reiki to reach more people. Among these organizations are two that evolved out of the original American Reiki Association. These are the Reiki Alliance and the American International Reiki Association, Inc. The Reiki Alliance, founded by Phyllis Lee Furumoto, who holds the position of Grand Master, started in 1981 as a group of 21 Reiki masters. By 1987 there were over 100 Reiki masters in the U.S and Europe. The Alliance follows the traditional approach set up by Dr. Usui. Since this group believes that “the Truth finds its way to the hearts of those open and prepared for it” they rarely advertise. (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, p. 28)

The American International Reiki Association, Inc. (A.I.R.A.), was founded in 1982 by Dr. Barbara Weber Ray, who had also been trained by Takata. The A.I.R.A. is largely focused on the scientific aspects of Reiki. They have founded a Reiki documentation center that holds symposiums, conferences and exhibitions and is active in public events. And the appearance of more and more manuals on the subject of Reiki, and many books connecting Reiki to other areas of spirituality and methods of evoking energy, is a testament to the increasing interest in Reiki.

## **Preparing for Reiki**

Reiki energy heals the whole person – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. The physical part of the person is a dense body that can be perceived by sight and touch. The emotional, mental and spiritual parts of a person are nonphysical energy bodies comprised of Ki. These nonphysical bodies are intertwined with the health of the physical body. The Reiki principle is that healing cannot be to the physical alone, but must include all the vibrational energy bodies. Reiki healing, therefore, goes far beyond traditional western medicine, getting to the emotional, mental and spiritual sources of dis-ease. “Most metaphysical healers believe that all physical pain has nonphysical roots in emotional trauma, negative mental patterns, or spiritual despair. To heal the dis-ease, these roots must be discovered and treated.” (Stern, 1995, p. 18)

In preparing an individual for giving and receiving holistic healing, Dr. Usui passed on a set of simple rules to his students that were to be repeated and honored each day, thus making Reiki a way of life. This simple set of rules was later published by Takata and, while numerous versions have appeared through the years, each version carries the same powerful message:

*Just for today I will give thanks for my many blessings.*

*Just for today I will not worry.*

*Just for today I will not be angry.*

*Just for today I will do my work honestly.  
Just for today I will be kind to my neighbor and every living thing.*  
(Arnold and Nevius, 1982, p. 27)

Usui adopted these five principles from the guidelines for a fulfilled life laid down by the Meiji Emperor of Japan (1868-1912). These principles are considered stepping stones on the path to awareness. The connecting thread running through these principles is a oneness of the individual and the universe.

To communicate the importance of these principles, Reiki masters continue to harness the power of story. For example, the following ancient story was recited by Reiki Master Osho Rajneesh in his teachings. While it specifically addresses giving thanks for many blessings, it builds on elements of the values expressed collectively by the set of Reiki principles: looking at life every day with new eyes, and finding a harmonious balance in the beautiful quest of life.

In a little village out in the country, there lived an old man, who owned a very beautiful horse. Even though he was very poor he always turned down offers to buy his horse because it had become like a friend to him. The other villagers thought him eccentric and stupid because he could have ended his poverty by selling the horse. One day, the horse's stable was found to be empty. The villagers were convinced that the animal had been stolen and agreed that the old man would have been better off selling it in the first place. The old man remarked that the only ascertainable fact was that the horse was absent from the stable and told the others not to judge the situation. A while later, the horse came back by itself bring with him a dozen wild horses. Now the villagers thought that a great fortune had come to the old man, but again he told them only to look at the facts and not to judge a small fragment of reality without knowing the whole.

The old man's only son started to train the wild horses. One day he fell and broke his legs. The villagers again thought that this was a great calamity since he was the only help his father had. But the old man stuck to his non-judgmental viewpoint. Soon after a war broke out with a neighboring kingdom and all of the young men of the state were drafted except the old man's crippled son ... (Petter, 1997, pp. 33-34)

Thus goes the stream of life. We can thoughtfully and peacefully guide our own quest for being, or we can overreact with knee-jerk actions which erode our own flow of universal energy and that of those around us.

### **The Traditional Reiki Structure**

There are traditionally three levels of Reiki training, with the third, or master, level often divided into the two elements of practitioner and master teacher. These levels are achieved through the process of attunements introduced earlier, initiations that enable the life force energy to flow through the receiver more intensely. The number of attunements given depends on the Reiki Degree being conferred. The only prerequisite to receiving attunements is the desire to use Reiki for the benefit of yourself and others. (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, p. 46)

Special symbols are used in Reiki attunements. A symbol is a pictorial drawing, a visual representation of the symbol, and a name (or *mantra*) that allows you to hear its sound. Sound, such as music, has long been used to influence individual feelings and behavior. The attunement

process uses symbols and mantras to create a “similar but much higher vibration than music is able to and to channel universal life energy.” (Honervogt, 1998, p. 40) These symbols are confidential and only passed on to initiates at the second and third degree levels, although in *Essential Reiki*, author and Reiki master Diane Stein has dared to publish the symbols.

The first symbol activates any generally available energy. The second symbol adds the qualities of peace, harmony and balance to the etheric body, an energy field surrounding and interpenetrating our physical body that is an invisible duplicate of the physical body. It is the first of what are called the higher spiritual bodies. The third symbol works at the mental level and strengthens an individual’s ability to “see.” The fourth symbol (only provided at the master level) strengthens an individual’s ability to receive and channel higher vibrational energies for healing.

The transmission of energy that occurs during all of these attunements opens up an individual’s inner healing channel, releasing blocks and toxins that may be present, allowing the free flow of universal life energy. How much opening occurs and the frequency of vibration is dependent on the individual’s spiritual development, since Reiki energy builds on what is already known and felt in terms of vibrational energy. This higher vibrational level stays with you for life.

The experience of attunement has been described by different people in many ways. For example,

- “During and after the attunement I had a tremendous energy release at the center of my heart and I felt very vulnerable. I think I have grown a lot softer and seek not to judge so much ... “
- “It was like being reconnected to the source and I felt more complete. There was a tremendous sense of relief ...”
- “I felt very good and experienced 100 percent energy for at least three weeks, after my attunement. I feel Reiki has strengthened everything. It has opened my intuition on a deeper level.”
- “I experienced Reiki as helping me to travel down my new road by providing energy and fresh insight, and helping me to let go of old, less healthy, ways of being.”
- I feel very privileged to have been given this gift and to be able to share the experience of Reiki with others both in giving and receiving.

(Honervogt, 1998, 40-41, 46, 48-49)

During the process of attunements and for a varying number of weeks following attunements, the receiver often experiences physical and/or emotional changes. Each attunement triggers a form of cleansing, bringing out what is hidden below the surface to provide healing and balance. Reactions may range from physical exhaustion to total revitalization, from a headache to feeling pins and needles on the back of the neck. The more frequently the Reiki energy is called upon, the stronger the energy flow becomes.

The first degree attunement is equivalent to the first Buddhist empowerment that opens the channels and cleanses on the physical body level. Reiki energy will start to flow through the first initiate’s hands. “The Master may have told you to put your hands on yourself beforehand and watch what happens. When you do the same thing afterwards, you will notice a definite

difference, for a fine form of energy will be flowing through your hands, warm, pleasant and healing.” (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, p. 46)

Second degree attunements, called *Oku Den* (meaning deeper knowledge of self) in Japanese, set much into motion, cleansing the emotional and mental bodies. Using the symbols shared at the second degree level, the initiate now has the ability to send healing energy across distances, and to address deep emotional and mental problems. This attunement sharpens the intuitive and imaginative capabilities.

Third degree attunements are provided to individuals who have decided to follow the path as Reiki master ... to give and receive healing. Third degree attunements go directly to the spiritual essence, the soul body, resulting in profound changes in one's life. When you receive a third degree attunement you make a commitment to practice, teach and live Reiki. This attunement lifts your energy and consciousness levels to a life-changing level, triggering deep-reaching development and personal growth. The fourth Reiki symbol is communicated during the process of the third level attunement, providing initiates the ability to activate the higher vibration of the fourth symbol, and feel that vibration within themselves.

Reiki energy can also be used in conjunction with other forms of alternative healing, such as crystals, aromatherapy and meditation, and it is often used in conjunction with prayer and guided visualization.

## Using Reiki to Heal

The healing process of self begins with the first Reiki treatment and continues as the Reiki energy is channeled, eventually, over a lifetime, becoming an automatic response to an individual's intent. This concept of intent bares some discussion here.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German writer and scientist, once said that all that is visible is but an allegory, or that all that is visible is a manifestation of an intention or idea. Our bodies, then, are outward signs of inward consciousness, much like the paintings of an artist. How far is this idea from Einstein's formula  $e = mc^2$ , describing how matter and energy are exchangeable. Baginski & Sharamon say ideas and intentions seek physical matter or events which they can express themselves with. In the case of illness there will be viruses, bad eating habits, etc.” (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, p. 123) Otherwise, illness itself is the product of intent, of the unconscious. Reiki energy is channeled with the intent to heal. If both the Reiki healer and the Reiki patient come to the Reiki experience with the intention of healing, then healing energy will be attracted to and reflect this conscious and subconscious intent.

To channel the universal life energy of Reiki, an individual need only to call upon the energy, or express silently or aloud the intent to channel Reiki energy. While every human being has this capability, the process of attunement heightens this innate capability and builds an understanding of how to effectively use it.

The list of benefits attributed to Reiki is long and varied. Benefits include balancing the organs and glands and their bodily functions as well as balancing the energies in the body. Adapting to the natural needs of the receiver, the Reiki energy releases blocks and suppressed feelings, relaxes and reduces stress and relieves pain. It promotes natural self-healing and heals holistically, strengthening the immune system while treating the symptoms and causes of illnesses. It strengthens the life force energy, enhancing personal awareness, promoting creativity and strengthening intuition. (Honervogt, 1998, pp. 28-29)

This is accomplished primarily through the laying on of hands with the Reiki initiate intending to serve as a conduit for the energy, and the receiver receptive to the energy. There are specific suggested hand positions for both self-healing and the healing of others, some for



generic treatment and others with specific focus, some requiring a significant time investment, other short treatments recommended for such things as stressful situations and headaches. There are literally dozens of small paperback books emerging around the world that provide specific hand positions for emotional, mental, psychic and physical dis-eases. For instance, here are some suggested healing approaches for the following:

- Fear: Hands on the solar plexus, adrenal glands and the back of the head. Also mental treatment with the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (an initiate at the second degree level, using the specific symbol for mental healing).
- Insect Bites: Apply hands directly onto the bite for 20 to 30 minutes. No swelling will occur if Reiki is given immediately.
- Stroke: Immediately call a physician. Until a physician arrives apply hands onto the upper and lower stomach, not directly onto the heart.
- Wounds: Onto the injury, perhaps in intervals. Later onto the bandage.
- Burns: Apply Reiki on the injured area from a distance, for 20 to 30 minutes, possibly in intervals. Pain may increase at first, but will then recede. Blisters can be avoided if Reiki is given immediately.

(Muller, 1995, p. 97)

As suggested for burns, there are also alternative healing approaches to channel healing energy without touch, though the hands are still used as the point of energy emergence. One effective method is to use the same hand positions but stay one to four inches away from the body. This approach sends the Reiki energy through an individual's aura, then into the body. Other non-touch techniques such as scanning and beaming are purported to facilitate the channeling of Reiki energy. Scanning is the process of moving the hands slowly from head to toe about three or four inches above the receiver (or patient) and with open palms toward the patient. This process of scanning can identify changes in the patient's energy field. These are sensed through the open palms in the form of a temperature change, tingling, pressure, little electric shocks, pulsations, distortions, irregularity or a pulling sensation. (Rand, 1991, p. II-59) Beaming uses the distant healing symbol but at close range to the patient.

The healers at Chujiro Hayashi's Reiki center in Japan worked in teams. The energy channeled through a group laying on of hands is amplified and the amount of time for treating the full body is shortened. This approach is used in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on cancer and AIDS patients to help stabilize patients. (Horan, 1995, p. 110) This process can be amplified even further by an outer circle of Reiki practitioners laying hands on the shoulders of the Reiki practitioners who are administering Reiki to the receiver. Muller and Gunther report that this is a wonderful experience for everyone present. (Muller & Gunther, 1995, p. 109)

There have been over 200 scientific studies on spiritual healing. Most of these have shown positive results. This research was performed by both medical practitioners and Master and Doctorate degree candidates as part of their thesis/dissertation requirements. Here are a few overviews of research and recorded results:

STUDY by Wendy Wetzel, a registered nurse working for a Masters Degree in Nursing at Sonoma State University: "Reiki Healing: A Physiologic Perspective". She used a protocol developed by Dr. Delores Krieger, professor of Nursing at New York State University. Wetzel's study involved 48 people, ten of which formed her control group.

All 48 had blood samples taken at the beginning and end of the experiment. All those not in the control group received First Degree Reiki training. Blood samples were measured for hemoglobin and hematocrit (the ratio of red blood cells to total blood volume) values. In a 24 hour period, people in the experimental group who received Reiki training experienced a significant change in these values. Twenty-eight percent experienced an increase and the rest experienced a decrease. The control group recorded no significant change in these levels. One individual who had been experiencing iron deficiency anemia, after continuing daily Reiki sessions for three months, demonstrated continuing improvement. Blood pressure measurements were made of both groups. There was no change in the control group. In the treated group, those that were normal before remained normal, everyone with high blood pressure returned to normal levels, and one woman with low blood pressure had hers come up to normal. (Morris, 1993, pp 141-145)

STUDY by Otelia Bengssten, M.D. using Therapeutic Touch, a technique similar to Reiki. A group of 79 sick patients were used in the study who had a wide range of diagnosed illnesses including pancreatitis, brain tumor, emphysema, multiple endocrine disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, and congestive heart failure. Laying on of hands was performed on 46 patients, and 33 were used as controls. Treated patients showed significant increases in hemoglobin values, with the majority of patients reporting improvement or complete disappearance of symptoms. (Rand, 1998, p. 68)

STUDY by Janet Quinn, Assistant Director of Nursing at the University of South Carolina, in conjunction with St. Vincent's Medical Center in New York. The design of the study was to rule out the placebo effect. It included 30 heart patients who were given a 20 question psychological test to determine their level of anxiety, then treated by a group in Therapeutic Touch. A control group was treated by sham healers who imitated the same actions as the healers. The group treated by the trained practitioners of Therapeutic Touch showed a 17 percent drop in anxiety levels after only five minutes of treatment. There was no change in the control group. (Rand, 1998, pp. 68-29)

STUDY by Penny Devine as part of a research project at The Evergreen State College, Olympia, Washington. Data and vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, temperature and respiration) were taken on 25 Reiki students at the beginning and end of the first day of a Reiki class, at end of the class, and one week following the class. Participants were tested with biofeedback before the treatment began and throughout the entire treatment. Anecdotal data was also gathered using a participant profile form and self-evaluation form. A control group received the same testing series in the same time frames as the Reiki group. The testing of vital signs showed a significant lowering of all four indicators (blood pressure, heart rate, temperature and respiration) during the class session. All but one of the participants met the "low relaxed norm"; and 12 participants experienced deep relaxation in an average time of 14 minutes. The therapist's perceptions of energy fluctuation were confirmed by biofeedback. (Morris, 1993, pp. 147-150)

STUDY by Daniel Wirth of Healing Sciences International, Orinda, California. Identical minor wounds were inflicted by a doctor in the right or left shoulder of 44 male college

students. Twenty-three of these then received Therapeutic Touch. The study was tightly controlled, with students extending their arms through holes so that there was no eye contact, and the same touching techniques used on each injury. The doctors who evaluated the results were told that the study was about the electrical conductivity of the body, not about healing. After eight days the treated wounds has shrunk 93.5 percent compared with 67.3 percent for those not treated. After 16 days, the figures were 99.3 and 90.9. (Rand, 1998, pp. 69-70)

In a different vein, Kirlian photography has been used to capture the differences in bioenergetic radiation before and after Reiki treatment. Two Russian scientists, Semjon and Walentina Kirlian, are attributed with first showing the bioenergetic radiation, or aura, of the human body, leaves, or other objects to the human eye. (Muller & Gunther, 1995, p. 151) Dr. Thelma Moss at U.C.L.A. is the leading U.S. scientist in this work.

Dr. Bernard Grad of McGill University, Montreal, Canada, planted barley seeds in pots and watered one group with a saline solution known to retard their sprouting and growth. Using elaborate double-blind conditions, the saline water used for one group of seeds was treated by a healer prior to use. The plants watered with healer treated saline solution grew faster and were healthier, producing 25% more weight and a higher chlorophyll content. These experiments have been replicated. (Rand, 1998, pp. 70-71)

As the spreading of Reiki in the U.S. deepens, more and more studies are becoming available that validate the healing powers of Reiki. A book by Dr. Daniel Benor, M.D. titled *Spiritual Healing, Does It Work, Research Says Yes* describes over 200 scientific studies in the areas of Spiritual Healing, many of which use touch energy healing. Meanwhile, hospitals across the nation are recognizing this power and including it as part of their holistic healing approaches.

“Reiki sessions cause patients to heal faster with less pain,” says Marilyn Vega, RN, a private-duty nurse at the Manhattan Eye, Ear and Throat Hospital in New York. “[Reiki] accelerates recovery from surgery, improves mental attitude and reduces the negative effects of medication and other medical procedures.” (Rand, 1991, p. B-1) Evidently more patients are realizing this value as well. A study conducted by David M. Eisenberg, M.D., Boston Beth Israel Hospital, indicated that one in every three Americans has used complementary health care, “spending over 14 billion out-of-pocket dollars on alternative health care in 1990 alone!” (Rand, 1991, p. B-1) Here are few examples of Reiki programs underway at U.S. medical centers.

- At Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, New York, a noted cardiothoracic surgeon used Reiki and other subtle energy techniques during operations. He reported elimination of post-operative depression in those treated.
- At Tucson Medical Center, the Support Services Coordinator for Oncology has set up a Reiki Clinic. Reiki was first administered to cancer patients and now is used more broadly. It is requested by the attending nurse with the patient’s permission, and administered by two-person teams. Positive responses has been recorded for all patients treated. An interesting anecdote is that the term “Reiki” is not used with patients, rather the process is described in terms of energy exchange.
- At Portsmouth Regional Hospital, the Assistant Director of Surgical Services has developed Reiki services in support of the Surgical Services Department. Reiki is included as an option in interviews with pre-op patients. From 1997 to 1998, 400

- patients received sessions either pre- or post-operatively with positive results recorded, especially in stress reduction and relaxation.
- At the California Pacific Medical Center a pediatrician and internal medicine specialist teamed to offer Reiki treatments to patients. Dr. Mike Cantwell, the pediatrician, states: “I have found Reiki to be useful in the treatment of acute illnesses such as musculoskeletal injury/pain, headache, acute infections, and asthma. Reiki is also useful for patients with chronic illnesses, especially those associated with chronic pain.” Despite the fact that the treatment is not yet covered by insurance, the waiting list is always over 100!

(Taken from Rand, 1991)

Reiki can be comforting to those that are dying. The simple act of hand holding itself passes some of this universal life energy. According to Muller and Gunther, “[Reiki] will let the natural process of dying take place, because Reiki is an intelligent force and follows the course of life.” (Muller & Gunther, 1995, p. 111) The plethora of handbooks for Reiki practitioners appearing in book stores contain many personal accounts of the use of Reiki during the dying process. Here is one.

When we arrived in England last spring, my girlfriend’s mother was dying. She was constantly vomiting, choking and was very nervous. I was alone with her and gave her Reiki for a few minutes. When my girlfriend returned, she was surprised at how quiet her mother now was. She had stopped vomiting and was resting in her bed. I gave her distant Reiki for one or two days, and she died very peacefully on the fifth day.

Distance healing can be a very effective use of the Reiki energy.

### **Distance Healing**

Distance healing, or absentee healing, is a process of visualizing while in a meditative state. Distance healing is done often by people who have never heard of Reiki in the form of praying, sending love, lighting a candle, or just thinking of someone. Reiki distance healing begins with imagining the person to be healed while in a light state of concentration. Next, permission is asked of the receiver for the healing, the same principle that is used with the laying on of hands. If the practitioner is unsure of the answer, then Reiki can be sent with the proviso that if the designee does not desire the energy it can go instead toward healing the Earth or someone else who needs it.

When permission is granted, or the proviso made, the practitioner imagines sending light, with whatever colors appear, to the receiver. Now the practitioner uses the Reiki symbols: perhaps the Cho-Ku-Rei to increase the power of healing, and the Sei-He-Ki to treat the emotional components of the dis-ease. If the practitioner is a Reiki III Master, the Dai-Ko-Myo can be added to heal the soul. In every case of distance healing, the Hon-Sha-Ze-Sho-Nen is used to transmit Reiki across space and time. The session is ended by the practitioner visualizing the person recovered and well. “This simple process ... has profound effect. Healing done in this way can be as effective as a hands-on session, but takes seconds instead of more than an hour.” (Stein, 1996, p. 69) Using the Hon-Sha-Ze-Sho-Nen, the practitioner can direct the healing to repeat as often as is desired, but the cautionary phrase for the energy *to repeat for as*

*long as the person needs it is generally added. These techniques can also be used when a person is present.*

There are many variations on the process of distance healing. For instance, the person to be healed can be imagined as present and the practitioner can administer Reiki through the standard hand positions for laying on of hands. Or the practitioner can imagine the receiver as very small, cupped in the hands. Objects can also be used to focus, such as a photo, or even the practitioners own knee representing the receiver. Finally, energy can be sent to an object such as a teddy bear or a pillow, then the receiver asked to take from that object the energy they require.

## **Professional Ethics and Legal Issues**

There are clear ethical and legal issues involved with the laying on of hands, and these issues vary in different countries of the world. However, no matter what your profession, the potential value of Reiki is based on the practitioner's intention to channel Reiki for the greater good, and the receiver's intent to receive this energy.

Morris has developed a good set of professional ethics for the Reiki practitioner. These include:

- Never diagnose or prescribe unless you are licensed to do so (i.e., an M.D., Chiropractor, Acupuncturist, etc.)
- Never go beyond the limits of what you are trained to do (i.e., only do Chiropractic adjustments if you are a Chiropractor, only do massage if you are trained in massage, and never do counseling unless you are trained in counseling).
- Never touch anyone inappropriately.
- Never take advantage of the bond that develops between you and the person you are treating.
- Respect the confidentiality of information given to you by your Reiki clients.
- Be honest and accurate in the way you present yourself to the public regarding your level of Reiki training and other training and/or licensure.
- Commonsense should always be used when doing Reiki.
- Reiki is simple; keep it that way. Don't let your ego make you think YOU are doing the healing. Reiki does the healing.

(Morris, 1993, p. 41)

Baginski and Sharamon strongly suggest Reiki practitioners take a close look at what they're allowed and not allowed to do before carrying out Reiki as part of their work. Then state:

The following is of absolute importance, however, you should never make a diagnosis or make use of the word; you should not undertake any kind of action that goes beneath the surface of the skin and, of course, you should not prescribe any kind of medication or advise your patient to discontinue taking any.

(Baginski and Sharamon, 1985, pp. 111-112)

The clear message is for practitioners who are not doctors to remember their role as Reiki practitioners.

A primary concern is to ensure any receiver has an understanding of Reiki and the techniques to be used. Reiki can be done by the laying on of hands (to the clothed body) or placing the hands six inches above the body, or at a distance with the use of symbols. It is also suggested that hand positions be discussed with the receiver before Reiki treatment to ensure comfort with the approach taken.

An additional issue discussed in every Reiki text is payment for Reiki services. The concept is that an exchange of energy needs to occur for the receiver to value Reiki. In our society, this exchange is primarily through money, but in Japan it was often an exchange of goods and/or services. There is a story passed down from Dr. Hayashi's Reiki Clinic in Tokyo that emphasizes the importance of payment.

Once, a very rich but very ill lady came to the Clinic for treatment and her case soon proved to be very problematic, since treatment did not seem to be having any effect. Apparently, she was unable to take on Reiki energy for some reason. The lady in question was paying the usual fees, but the amount involved meant very little to her. Then someone got the idea to train her to become a Reiki channel herself and have her treat other patients so that an exchange of energy could take place. Much to the surprise of her practitioner, she agreed to the idea. No sooner had she started treating other people than her own treatment began to take effect and she began to get better. Because the cycle of energy has been closed, she was able to receive Reiki herself. (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, pp. 114-115)

Much of the Reiki literature deals with the importance of balance, the balance of give and take as well as the balance of body and mind. The analogy of breathing in and breathing out is used as an example of the healthy flow of energy.

One way practitioners approach advertising Reiki is by guaranteeing relaxation and stress reduction, and to suggest a health care professional for medical or psychological problems. A final note put forward by Morris is to remember "It is not your responsibility to heal the world. You do not have to treat everyone. If it doesn't feel right to treat someone, don't do it." (Morris, 1982, p. 41)

### **Treating food and water, plants and animals**

Reiki can be used to enrich food and water with universal life energy. Reiki symbols drawn mentally above the plate, or sketched in the air with the hand, add specific value to the food. The Cho-Ku-Rei increases the nutritional value and offers thanks for the meal, and the Sei-He-Ki ensures cleansing and purification.

It really is a spiritual blessing of the foods. Since all matter has a certain vibrating frequency, we can increase this frequency through Reiki. For example, if we eat in restaurants a lot, we are able to ... Everything that is touched with Reiki hands will receive this energy ... It has been reported that the taste of water or other drinks changes considerably after being treated with Reiki. (Muller & Gunther, 1995, p. 126)

Treating water can affect the plants and animals that receive the water. Reiki energy can also be channeled to plants, their root systems, and sent to whole forests. Trees can also return energy. “Trees act as wonderful companions for meditation. Stand close to a strong tree and place your palms on its trunk or embrace it. After a while you will sense its powerful, calm presence.” (Lubreck, 1997, p. 149)

Pets seek energy from their owners, and often encourage the touch of their owner’s hands. The most noticeable reaction of domestic animals is a tendency toward calmness and quietness. But, according to Baginski and Sharamon, all animals can benefit from Reiki. “Something in them seems to let go and relax. The principles of treatment will always be the same, whether you are a vet treating a circus elephant or a mother taking care of a frog found by her children. You will soon notice that Reiki literally flows into animals, just as it does with people.” (Baginski & Sharamon, 1985, p. 94)

### Reiki as a Way of Life

*In everyday life*, Reiki energy can be a powerful tool for affecting our behaviors, and the environment and world around us. One important use is in changing negative behavior patterns and habits such as biting fingernails or smoking or overeating. Visualizing the Sei-He-Ki at these times cleanses negative energy and clears thinking.

The Sei-He-Kis symbol can also be used in the corners of rooms and over the windows of a house to clear the energy of a room or home. Then use of the Cho-Ku-Reis throughout the house increases the qualities of a peaceful home such as love, harmony, friendship, prosperity and wellness. (Stein, 1996, p.73) This clearing can also be done around a house and the perimeters of the property.

The Cho-Ku-Rei is a powerful aid to manifesting abundance. Reiki energy is part of the life force energy of the world, a world full of abundance. The philosophy behind the use of Reiki is that every goodness is available for those who ask and are ready to receive. Stein cautions to “make sure to be totally positive and ethical in what you ask for, and to ask carefully for only what you really want.” (Stein, 1996, p. 72) The ethics of asking are simple: Do not ask for anything that belongs to someone else or that will bring harm to others. Stein presents specific guidelines for using Reiki to manifest.

In manifesting a relationship, Stein suggests that you prepare a list of the qualities of the type of person you would like to be in relationship with, and use the list to focus a visualization exercise, holding the image of this person in your mind and sending the Cho-Ku-Rei, or even double Cho-Ku-Reis. This same process can be used when visualizing other things you want, such as a new car or apartment.

You will not always receive what you ask for. Rand notes that “One of the most important, yet least explained, benefits of Reiki is its ability to guide your life in a way that is exactly right for you.” (Rand, 1998, p. 92) He states that Reiki can inspire a change in attitudes or beliefs about situations, leading to changes in perspective, as well as providing positive personal energy to change the circumstances that surround you.

Lives are created from the decisions and actions we take. The focused positive energy of Reiki, coming from the highest source, creates lasting change and moves us along our spiritual path of growth to discover our true nature. “Reiki is able to surround your life and everything you do with a wonderful glowing radiant energy that smoothes the way, making things easier than you thought it could be.” (Rand, 1996, p. 96) Rand suggests that asking for guidance and to be of greater service to others is key to successfully using the Reiki energy for growth. He

suggests that day or night, whenever there is a wakeful pause, Reiki initiatives continually send energy in general to all those who need it

Nearly every Reiki text includes paragraphs, or chapters, on the use of Reiki energy to heal the world and usher in the new world order. Stein states:

We live in a time of accelerated change, and personal and planetary pain. Time has speeded up with the magnetic shifting of the planet's poles, resulting in chaos at every level of planetary life ... The Earth is in physical crisis as well ... There are new incurable dis-eases and harder to treat recurrences of old ones thought long gone ... The old is making way for the new ... a new birth is clearly happening. (Stein, 1996, p. 141)

This call to action is for Reiki healers to reach out to the Earth and her people and animals, sharing the benefits of this universal energy with our troubled world.

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