

REIKI AND NURSING



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History: The English word *reiki* derives from the Japanese loanword *reiki* meaning “mysterious atmosphere” or “supernatural influence”. Its earliest recorded usage in English dates to 1975. Instead of the usual transliteration, some English-language author’s pseudo-translate *reiki* as “universal life energy”.

Reiki is a spiritual practice developed in 1922 by Japanese Buddhist Mikao Usui, which has since been adapted by various teachers of varying traditions. It uses a technique commonly called *palm healing* or *hands on healing* as a form of alternative medicine and is sometimes classified as *oriental medicine* by some professional medical bodies. Through the use of this technique, practitioners believe that they are transferring universal energy (i.e., *reiki*) in the form of *qi* (Japanese: *ki*) through the palms, which they believe allows for



self-healing and a state of equilibrium.

Branches of Reiki: There are two main branches of Reiki, commonly referred to as *Traditional Japanese Reiki* and *Western Reiki*. Though differences can be wide and varied between both branches and traditions, the primary difference is that Westernised forms use systematised hand-placements rather than relying on an intuitive sense of hand-positions, which is commonly used

by Japanese Reiki branches. Both branches commonly have a three-tiered hierarchy of degrees, usually referred to as the First, Second, and Master/Teacher level, all of which are associated with different skills and techniques. In Western Reiki, it is taught that Reiki works in conjunction with the meridian energy lines and chakras through the use of the hand-positions, which normally correspond to the seven major chakras on the body. These hand-positions are used both on the front and back of the body, and can include specific areas (see localised treatment). According to authors such as James Deacon, Usui used only five formal hand-positions, which focused on the head and neck. After Reiki had been given first to the head and neck area, specific areas of the body where imbalances were present would then be treated. The use of the chakras is widespread within Western Reiki, though not as much within Traditional Japanese Reiki, as it concentrates more on treating specific areas of the body after using techniques such as *Byosen-hô* and *Reiji-hô*, which are used to find areas of dis-ease (discomfort) in the auras and physical body.



Techniques of reiki therapy:

Usui Reiki Ryôhō does not use any medication or instruments, but uses **looking, blowing, light tapping, and touching**. According to Frank Arjava Petter, Usui touched the diseased parts of the body, he massaged them, tapped them lightly, stroked them, blew on them, fixed his gaze upon them for two to three minutes, and specifically gave them energy, and used a technique commonly referred to as *palm healing* as a form of complementary and alternative medicine. Through the use of this palm healing (sometimes referred to as “*tenohira*” (meaning “the palm”), practitioners believe that they are transferring universal energy (*reiki*) in the form of *ki* through the palms that allows for self-healing and a state of equilibrium.



Whole body treatment

In a typical whole-body Reiki treatment, the Reiki practitioner instructs the recipient to lie down, usually on a massage table, and relax. Loose, comfortable clothing is usually worn during the treatment. The practitioner might take a few moments to enter a calm or meditative state of mind and mentally prepare for the treatment, that is usually carried out without any unnecessary talking.

The treatment proceeds with the practitioner placing the hands on the recipient in various positions. However, practitioners may use a non-touching technique, where the hands are held a few centimetres away from the recipient's body for some or all of the positions. The hands are usually kept in a position for three to five minutes before moving to the next position. Overall, the hand positions usually give a general coverage of the head, the front and back of the torso, the knees, and feet. Between 12 and 20 positions are used, with the whole treatment lasting anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes.

Many Western practitioners use a common fixed set of 12 hand positions, while others use their intuition to guide them as to where treatment is needed as is the practise in Traditional Japanese Reiki, sometimes starting the treatment with a "scan" of the recipient to find such areas. The intuitive approach might also lead to individual positions being treated for much shorter or longer periods. A Western Reiki treatment is considered a type of large-scale treatment in comparison to the more localised-style treatment of Traditional Japanese Reiki.

The use of the 12 hand positions are believed to energise on many levels, by:

- ✓ Energising on a physical level through the warmth of the hands,
- ✓ Energising on the mental level through the use of the Reiki symbols,
- ✓ Energising on the emotional level through the love that flows with the use of the symbols,
- ✓ Energising on the energetic level though the presence of an initiated practitioner as well as the presence of the Reiki power itself.

It is reported that the recipient often feels warmth or tingling in the area being treated, even when a non-touching approach is being used. A state of deep relaxation, combined with a general feeling of well-being, is usually the most noticeable immediate effect of the treatment, although emotional releases can also occur. As the Reiki treatment is said to stimulate the body's natural healing processes, instantaneous "cures" of specific health problems are not normally observed. A series of three or more treatments, typically at intervals of one to seven days, is usually recommended if a chronic condition is being addressed, and regular treatments on an on-going basis can be used with the aim of maintaining well-being. The



interval between such treatments is typically in the range of one to four weeks, except in the case of self-treatment where daily practice is common.

Localised treatment

A Reiki treatment in progress.

Localised Reiki treatment involves the practitioner's hands being held on or near a specific part of the body for a varying length of time. Recent injuries are usually treated in this way, with the site of injury being targeted. There is great variation in the duration of such treatments, though 20 minutes is typical. Takata described "localised treatment" as 'hands-on work,' compared to distant or "absent healing.

Some practitioners use localised treatments for certain ailments, and some publications have tabulated appropriate hand positions. However, other practitioners prefer to use the whole body treatment for all chronic conditions, on the grounds that it has a more holistic effect. Another approach is to give a whole body treatment first, followed by a localised treatment for any specific ailments.

Usui used specific hand positions to treat specific ailments and dis-eases (discomfort), which included disorders of the nervous system (such as hysteria), respiratory disorders (such as inflammation of the trachea), digestive disorders (such as gastric ulcers), circulatory disorders (such as chronic high blood pressure), metabolism and blood disorders (such as anaemia), urogenital tract disorders (such as nephritis), skin disorders (such as inflammation of the lymph nodes), childhood disorders (such as measles), women's health disorders (such as morning sickness), and contagious disorders (such as typhoid fever).









Breathing

Though the specific use of breath and breathing is central to many styles of Japanese Reiki, it is often a neglected topic in Western Reiki. Usui taught a technique called *Joshin Kokyu-ho*, which roughly translates as "the breathing method for cleansing the spirit," though literally translates as "Goddess Breath Method". *Joshin Kokyû-hô* is performed by sitting straight, with the back aligned, breathing in slowly through the nose. As the



practitioner inhales, s/he also breathes the Reiki energy in

Reiki Benefits

-  *Adapts to needs of recipient*
-  *Helps meditative states*
-  *Promotes personal awareness*
-  *Enhances spiritual connection*
-  *Fosters natural self-healing*
-  *Relaxes and reduces stress*
-  *Balances energies in the body*
-  *Relieves pain and discomfort*

through the crown Chakra in order to purify the body and make it fit for the flow of Reiki, and is drawn down into the tanden.

Reiki benefits:

Reiki for nurses:

As nurses, we all have a week, a day, or even a shift where things go any way but smooth. We are faced with sadness, anger, worry, and even death. We must “be strong” through the unknowns of disease. We must wear the “brave face” at all times and are expected to do our best in every situation.

So what can we do to break free from stress? How can we lighten the heaviness of tension? What can we do to shift our own experience so that the next time we walk onto our unit and feel tension in the air, we are able to continue with our shift but from a space of love, healing, and acceptance.

As a nurse who has had a very intimate experience with burnout and poor health, I have been on my own healing journey. My path has led me to embrace and understand many modalities of wellness: from eating



well to exercising, from journaling to reading, from meditation to acupuncture. Yet I have found, healed, trained, and embraced one modality above any other: the healing energy of Reiki.

Reiki is a Japanese healing modality that shifts energy on a physical, emotional, and spiritual level so that your whole

mind-body-spirit is in balance. Reiki helps clear blocks so the energy can flow smoothly. When our energy is free-flowing, without disruption, we are healthier and more whole. Mrs. Takata, who was responsible for bringing Reiki from Japan to the West, often said, “Reiki you first.” She understood the importance of being balanced and caring for oneself, before offering the gift of Reiki to another. Now how can Reiki relate to nursing? Where and when can this practice tie into my busy nursing career? Here’s how Reiki can be experienced and used:

Uses of reiki therapy in nursing:

Reiki as a self-care modality. At the first level, Reiki is only to be used on the self. Practicing self-Reiki can be a great way for any nurse to recharge, heal, rebalance, and grow. Doing Reiki on the self allows one to bring a state of peace and healing to any situation. So like my story above, when we walk onto our unit and feel the tension in the air, if you have been practicing Reiki on yourself you have the ability to shift your energy within so that you assist the outer circumstances and environment in a healing process.

Reiki with patient care. As the more advanced levels are learned, Reiki can be used as a complementary addition to the standard and usual care practices of every nursing role. Since Reiki energy can do no harm and only is used for healing and good, it can be given to a patient to help reduce stress, ease pain, and aids healing. Reiki can rekindle the bond between nurse and patient and bring the healing touch back to our profession.

Reiki in a health care system. Once one person embraces and accepts the healing energy of Reiki into their practice their thoughts, feelings, and actions will shift. Others will take notice and question how or why that person is so patient, loving, and trusting. Health care professionals will desire the balance, peace, and joy that others exude. When the vibration of energy is raised, an entire nurses health care system has the potential to shift. Carolyn Myss, a well-known medical intuitive and healer, has reminded us that we cannot drink from a well if the well is empty. This indicates the importance of filling one’s own vessel first before inviting another to drink from it. And the old saying “Physician, heal thyself” is also another good reminder of how important it is to take care of oneself so that we can come from our abundance and not our lack. Nursing is a rewarding profession. Many believe it is a call to service: a desire to help and/or reduce the suffering of others. For many it is not just another J.O.B. When a nurse is a Reiki practitioner.

as well, their dedication to being of service is often intensified, making them even more susceptible to burnout and stress. Not only can it be stressful to the body (long hours; physical workload; over whelming responsibilities), it can also be draining on one’s mind and



spirit. Being with people every day who are in pain and suffering, dealing with death and dying, dealing with challenging situations can be draining for a person with a compassionate heart.

A recent study discussed the importance of a single Reiki treatment for nurses diagnosed with Burnout Syndrome. Diaz-Rodriguez et al.(2011)investigated the immediate effects on immunoglobulin a(sIg A) (an indicator of immune system function), a - amylase activity and blood pressure levels after a 30 minute Reiki or placebo session. The Reiki treatment showed a statistically significant improvement of both immune system function and blood pressure regulation. It also suggested that Reiki treatments could be a cost effective way to manage and prevent job stress for those at risk for burnout.⁴ Bringing Reiki to our working world can be



rewarding. But it is important to start with ourselves first. As we give Reiki to ourselves, it automatically radiates out into our energy field causing our clients and patients to feel better just by being in our presence. Being in a state of health and well-being allows one to provide greater benefit to those one is caring for.

REIKI YOU FIRST: Three minute pick me up Here is a simple yet effective three minute pick me up to nourish your spirit. It can be done before you begin your work day or during a break, or it can be modified so that you can do it while working, like a moving meditation.

- Find a place where you can be quiet for a few minutes.
- Begin by becoming aware of your breath. You can close your eyes or leave them open. (Depending on how much time you have take 10-25 deep breaths as you do this.)
- Place one or both hands on your power center (solar plexus or 3rd chakra).
- Allow the Reiki to begin to flow. Observe it filling that chakra.
- As you inhale, say to yourself “I fill myself with Reiki. It restores and replenishes my energy.” or “I breathe in Reiki energy. It restores and replenishes my energy.”
- As you breathe out focus on allowing any tension or stuck energy to release.

- Then move your hands to your heart chakra. Become aware of your breath again, and this time say to yourself: “I fill myself with Reiki. It restores and replenishes my spirit.” Or.... “I breathe in Reiki energy. It restores and nourishes my spirit” This should take you anywhere from two to five minutes and keep you fueled for your work day. And this is not just for nurses it’s a quick way to keep anyone balanced throughout the day.

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