

Reiki: The Art of Spiritual Healing

By Pamir Kiciman, RM, CHt.

Health care is changing. Well known medical surveys report that approximately 50% of Americans are using complementary or alternative therapies. Research has shown that these therapies can help lessen anxiety, reduce pain, boost the immune system, and accelerate healing. When patients choose these options, there is a greater sense of participation and empowerment, and patient satisfaction is often increased.

These therapies are grouped under the heading of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)¹. Complementary means that it's used *together* with conventional health care. Alternative means that it's used *instead* of conventional medicine.

CAM therapies can be divided into five major categories:

1. Alternative Medical Systems, such as Homeopathy & Naturopathy, and Traditional Chinese Medicine & Ayurveda.
2. Mind-Body Interventions, such as Meditation, Prayer, art, music and dance.
3. Biologically based Therapies, such as herbs, foods, vitamins and supplements.
4. Manipulative and Body-Based Methods, such as Chiropractic & Osteopathic manipulation, and Massage.
5. Energy Therapies, divided into Biofield Therapies and Bioelectromagnetic-based Therapies:
 - Biofield Therapies affect the energy fields surrounding and penetrating the body, such as Reiki.
 - Bioelectromagnetic-based Therapies make use of electromagnetic fields such as pulsed, magnetic, alternating- or direct-current fields.

Reiki (RAY kee).

Reiki is a simple energy therapy that restores homeostasis to the body, equilibrium to the mind, and fulfillment to the soul. It's applied with the hands according to the needs of the client, without pressure or manipulation. The recipient draws the needed healing energy without effort. There are no side-effects or contraindications associated with Reiki. It's non-invasive and suitable to every age group and symptom.

Research is increasingly showing that when the body breaks down, the effects of emotions, attitudes, thoughts and relationships are to be taken seriously. Our bodies don't operate as islands onto their own, separated from the rest of us, and are in fact sustained or made ill by a variety of factors. The thinking that because the body is physical only physical, mechanical and organic factors influence its health is being steadily debunked.

Even when dealing with the body alone, a similar idea is at play: Liver disease can't be addressed only by concentrating on the liver, as that organ lives in a complex body, a complete system that intricately interacts with itself.

One reason CAM therapies are gaining respect in medical circles is because most of them have a holistic² approach, which has shown to be more effective in treating chronic conditions and lowering costs by addressing prevention.

According to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Reiki is a word representing Universal Life Energy. Reiki is based on the belief that when spiritual energy is channeled through a Reiki practitioner, the patient's spirit is healed, which in turn heals the physical body.

Energy Flow

It's helpful to know that healing traditions have existed since the dawn of humanity, predating the Western biomedical model. In these traditions, the ability to administer healing comes from knowledge and practices that are passed on from expert practitioner to student, who in turn becomes an expert practitioner. One of the core concepts of such teachings is that everything in the universe is made up of energy and this "life energy" flows all around us and is drawn in by the body nourishing the cells, organs, and glands. This same energy also radiates from the body. Energy flow in the body is not an easily understood or accepted concept. Simply put, when one's energy is depleted, imbalanced, or the flow is restricted, one is more susceptible to discomfort, further illness, and disease. When one's energy is restored, free-flowing, or balanced, the body's innate healing abilities are restored and activated.

Reiki is a low-risk intervention, which means it does no harm. By rebalancing the biofield, Reiki treatments address the whole person. A person receives Reiki healing on a treatment table, fully-clothed, with dim lighting and relaxing, inspiring music in the background for about 60 minutes. A minimum of 4 complete treatments is recommended before assessing clinical benefit.

Our bodies are like walking biographies, containing all the various experiences and influences of our lives. Healing energy goes to the most needed component of our make-up: Social, mental, emotional and physical, or a combination. Deep relaxation is experienced almost immediately and this in itself leads to the resolution or improvement of many conditions. Reiki treatments are insightful, uplifting and profoundly comforting. The body truly appreciates the care and kindness it receives and responds favorably.

A unique feature of Reiki is that it can be easily applied to oneself, making it a resource of self-care. Anyone can learn this great art; the ability to tap into the universal "life energy" is not dependent on intellectual capacity, belief, or innate skill.

New Perspective

One important factor that needs emphasis is that Reiki is spiritual healing first, and as the spirit heals, there's a ripple effect reaching other aspects of our existence. This is possible because spirituality is the one overarching, inclusive component, unifying *all* aspects of our life and being by giving meaning and structure, and empowering us to live from a core of our deepest values. People with a strong sense of spirituality are less in need of medical services, show resilient emotional health in the face of terminal illness, and have lower discomfort and loneliness. Such people cope better with life crises, have an expanded perspective and are able to interpret illness to produce spiritual growth.

Whether it's receiving treatments for yourself, or learning Reiki as self-care and for your loved ones including pets, Reiki is a beautiful gift in its simplicity and profound, direct healing effect, as exemplified by the following 5 Reiki precepts. Please feel free to put these in action and be well!

Just for today, do not anger.

Just for today, do not worry.

Be humble.

Be honest in your work.

Be compassionate to yourself and others.

-
1. As defined by National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), a component of the National Institutes of Health. NCCAM is the Federal Government's lead agency for scientific research on CAM. NCCAM is dedicated to exploring complementary and alternative healing practices in the context of rigorous science, training CAM researchers, and disseminating authoritative information to the public and professionals.
 2. Dealing with the patient as a whole human being, it considers not only physical health but also the emotional, spiritual, social, and mental well-being of the person. In looking at the body it sees not only the parts, but the sum and seeks healing by considering the entire system, rather than simply 'fixing' a part.

© 2004 Pamir Kiciman