



Karen Pischke RN, (left) Reiki Master Teacher, giving Reiki to a patient before surgery.

Reiki and Surgery

BY KATHIE LIPINSKI RN, MSN, CH

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CASEY DEMOREE

Research studies repeatedly show that people who prepare for surgery are less anxious, have less pain, fewer complications, and a faster recovery. Reiki as a healing modality provides one of the easiest and most beneficial ways of doing this. The efficacy of Reiki is born out by the increasing number of hospitals that offer Reiki to patients undergoing surgery.

Portsmouth Regional Hospital in New Hampshire was a pioneer in making Reiki available to patients preparing for surgery. Patricia Alandydy RN, nurse manager of

the Operating Room, initiated this highly successful program in 1995. The first program began as a hospital sponsored Reiki clinic, offering Reiki to the community two times a week. In 1997, it expanded to the pre-op area as a trial to see if it could decrease patients' anxiety and stress. The program was so successful that the option of receiving Reiki before surgery was included in the initial pre-op phone registration. (See Spring 2004 issue of *Reiki News*.) The Reiki program then expanded to every department of the hospital. People having surgery began to request sur-

gery at Portsmouth because of the Reiki program! Neighboring Wentworth-Douglas Hospital in Dover, NH saw the popularity of the program and in 2000 began an Integrative Therapies program, which included Reiki.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Mehmet Oz, FACS, a renowned cardiovascular surgeon at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York, (now Professor and Vice Chairman of Surgery, as well as Director of the Cardiovascular Institute and Vice Chairman, Cardiovascular Services), formed a center to do research and inform

the public about alternative therapies. He was a pioneer in setting up a program that combined the best of Western medicine with complementary therapies. The program offered touch therapies, hypnosis, guided imagery, chi gong, and other modalities to patients undergoing radical lifesaving procedures such as coronary bypass surgery and heart or lung transplants. In his book, *Healing from the Heart*, Dr. Oz describes how complementary therapies can alleviate pre-surgical anxiety and change fear into relaxed, positive mindsets that nurture the spirit and help heal the heart.

Dr. Oz invited energy healer Julie Motz to be a member of his team. During surgery, Julie sat at the foot of the operating table and ran energy through the patient's feet. It was noted (among other beneficial outcomes) that none of the heart transplant patients experienced the usual post-operative depression when Julie was pres-

ent during their surgery. She later moved to California and became an integral part of a similar program at Stanford University Hospital and subsequently at other hospitals across the country.

Karen Pischke, an RN and Reiki Master Teacher based in Massachusetts, has been employed as Reiki practitioner for the Heart and Wellness department at North Shore Medical Centers (NSMC) in Salem, MA since 1999. In 2000 she began to teach Reiki at the hospital and in 2001 began the hypnotherapy program there, offering Reiki alone and in combination with hypnotherapy for behavior modification and cardiac risk factor reduction.

In 2001 Karen began offering Reiki and hypnotherapy for surgical and hospital support through her private practice. In 2003 she supported a patient through a needle-guided breast biopsy, accompanying the patient throughout the process from radiology, to the pre-op holding area,

during the surgery, and into the recovery room, a process that lasted over five hours.

That case opened up the doors for Reiki and hypnotherapy to be offered for surgical support at the North Shore Medical Centers (NSMC) in Salem, Lynn, Peabody, and Danvers MA. In 2003, upon patient request, the Salem Hospital's Heart & Wellness department began offering surgical support with Reiki and Hypnotherapy. Reiki is currently offered on a "fee for service" basis through the NSMC Wellness and Integrative Medicine department, both inpatient and outpatient, in the acute care and rehabilitation setting, and for surgical support (before, during, and after surgery). Reiki services are also provided at no charge in the NSMC cancer center during treatment, and by donation, through a Reiki clinic coordinated by Reiki Masters Florence Whipple and Kristin Webb.

NSMC patients who receive Reiki prior to surgery are sent a follow up survey to evaluate their response. Patients have reported decreased anxiety, decreased discomfort, an improved sense of calm before and after surgery, and a great deal of satisfaction. One patient wrote, "The Reiki took away all fear and apprehension and anxiety." Another patient, having undergone gastric bypass after preparation with Reiki and hypnotherapy, wrote, "My recovery was so much faster and relatively pain free (compared to four other prior major surgeries). The calmness and serenity I felt postoperative was amazing."

Anesthesiologists, surgeons, and nursing personnel have observed that the patients utilizing these adjunctive therapies appear to require less sedation and



Patients who have received Reiki prior to surgery have reported an improved sense of calm both before and after.

pain medicine, ambulate sooner and more comfortably, have decreased lengths of stay, and appear to do better as compared with patients who did not utilize these services. NSMC surgeon Dr. Frederick Buckley Jr. commented, "It has been a very positive experience. Because of these observations, we have planned a pilot study to further determine the efficacy of using Reiki and hypnotherapy to prepare for gastric bypass surgery."

George Washington University Hospital (Washington, D.C.) conducted a six-month pilot program from December 2003 to June 2004 in which Reiki was given before patients underwent a cardiac catheterization procedure. Even though the response group was small, they found that patients reported increased confidence going into the surgery and reduced anxiety. Very important factors for successful outcome and healing!

I have given Reiki training to nurse anesthetists and anesthesiologists (MDs), and know others, who give Reiki while they are administering anesthesia. They have found that it is easier for the person to go under; often less anesthesia is required, and the patient wakes up more easily and has a better postoperative experience—less pain and less nausea and vomiting. This can be easily explained because Reiki induces the relaxation response. As a person relaxes, their muscles relax and their breathing improves, making it easier for them to receive the anesthesia. Recovery room nurses and aides have also noticed that patients who receive Reiki before and/or during surgery have an easier time releasing the anesthesia and also have less postoperative pain.

Years ago, a friend's father was having prostate surgery. The surgery was being done in a Veterans Hospital and his surgeon had done thousands of these operations. My friend, who is also a Reiki practitioner, gave him Reiki as often as she

Healing Images and Statements

- My body is healthy and strong.
- I am divinely protected before, during, and after the surgery.
- I know all will go well during my surgery/procedure.
- My body is completely relaxed throughout the procedure.
- Any medication, injections or tubings that are needed during the surgery are received easily before, during, and after the surgery.
- My body easily and safely receives and processes the anesthesia.
- The surgeon will perform masterfully and expertly, bringing me the best outcome.
- After the surgery, the anesthesia is easily cleared from my body.
- When I awake from surgery, I will feel comfortable and will heal very well.
- I thank my body for undergoing this surgery so that my health is restored.
- All will go well.
- I see myself fully recovered and restored to health.

Imagery during session

Give Reiki for 15 -20 minutes to help person relax. Then begin to speak the following words to client.....pause 15-20 seconds between each statement. Bring in Reiki symbols when guided.

"See yourself a few hours and moments before the surgery..... See yourself breathing easily and relaxing deeply..... A pleasant calm comes over you and you relax even more..... As you relax even more, you know you are being taken care of... By the time you enter surgery, you are deeply relaxed..... The surgeons are experts and extremely capable..... You are just fine, you are just fine..... The surgery goes very well..... Now imagine yourself in recovery and just opening your eyes..... You feel relaxed.You feel comfortable and relaxed..... ALL IS WELL."

"Imagine yourself a short time into the future, your successful surgery is behind you..... Every day you feel stronger and stronger.....You continue to regain your strength You are getting back to your every day routine..... You feel great!..... See yourself doing what you enjoy, being with friends and family, and feeling strong and energized..... Each day you get better and better, stronger and stronger..... You are healing well." ■

could and brought him to me the day before surgery, so that we could give him a treatment together. The surgery was a success, and afterwards, the surgeon told her that in all the years he had performed prostate surgery, her father had lost the **least** amount of blood of any patient he had ever operated on! If you think of the blood as the carrier of the life force through the body (as well as oxygen and nutrients), and knowing that Reiki is a form of healing life force energy, it makes sense that blood would respond positively to Reiki!

Surgeons can perform operations. That is the technical part. However, they don't have the power to heal the tissues that have been injured. That is up to the patient and the body's natural ability to heal itself. This is where Reiki and other healing modalities come in. Complementary therapies help the person harness the healing power of the human body and the human spirit. They empower patients to be partners in their own healing process. They acknowledge the mind-body connection that is so important in the healing process.

If you, or someone you know is facing surgery, seek out hospitals or private practitioners who can support the healing process through Reiki. A hospital may not have an Integrative or Complementary therapy department per se, but many have nurses, volunteers, or other staff available for Reiki sessions. A Reiki Master I know had to have emergency surgery. As she was lying in the Emergency Room waiting to be taken to the OR, she called out, "Is there anyone here who does Reiki?" Several nurses rushed to her side and began treating her.

You can begin by calling the hospital where you will be having surgery. If the person you are speaking to does not know, ask to speak to the Nursing Department or the Volunteer Department. Some Recov-

ery Room, Oncology (cancer) or pain management departments may have staff who can provide Reiki. You can also ask your physician if there are complementary therapies available, and if he or she does not know, ask who might. As more and more patients ask, the interest in providing Reiki as a routine service will rise! And if no one is available, you have the option of asking a Reiki practitioner to visit you in the hospital before or after surgery. Many Reiki practitioners already visit their client/patients in the hospital setting, and their doing so has increased staff awareness of Reiki. It has also peaked the interest of staff to learn Reiki as they see the response of the patients.

For a summary of Reiki programs offered in hospitals, see: "Reiki: Review of a Biofield Therapy; History, Theory, Practice and Research," in *Alternative Therapies*, March/April 2003, by Pamela Miles, founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Complementary Therapies.

Preparing for Surgery Protocol and Guidelines

In my private practice of Reiki and hypnotherapy, I have found that the ideal time to prepare for surgery is four to six weeks prior to the event. If that is not possible, any time is a good time! I suggest weekly sessions and perhaps two sessions the week before surgery.

When I first meet with the client, I ask them to tell me about their upcoming surgery. From this conversation, I assist them in developing healing statements, which they can repeat in preparation for surgery and in anticipation of a positive experience. (See *Healing Images and Statements*). I then discuss Reiki and other healing modalities to let them know what is available. I explain that Reiki is a relaxation technique, which balances body, mind, and spirit, and that it can help them have a better

surgical experience. I then share my experiences with other clients who have done well with Reiki. I also tell them about books, CDs, and other relevant resources. (See Resources.) I then begin the Reiki session to let them experience the deep relaxation and peace that Reiki brings. I may start the session with a Healing Attunement (as taught by the International Center for Reiki Training) to help open their energy field and create a more receptive state, or an Aura Balancing technique (also taught by ICRT) to prepare their body for a deep healing, removing any blockages that may exist. This is followed by a complete Reiki session.

During the second session, I may have them imagine that they are in their favorite place or a place they imagine as healing and relaxing. As they relax more into the Reiki session, I begin repeating aloud their healing statements. If I can, I record the statements before they come or tape them (with their permission) as we are going through the session. Some clients want to repeat the statements after me. Hearing one's own voice is very powerful, and often very moving. If they have a relaxation CD or tape for preparing for surgery, I may play that or put headphones on them so they can listen to it as I give them Reiki. This includes relaxation tapes as well as self-hypnosis or guided imagery tapes. (See Resources.)

As part of the preparation for surgery, I encourage and assist my clients in talking to the body part that is going to be removed, cut, or explored. One of the things that is not often talked about in surgery is how unprepared the body is for what is going to happen to it. One doesn't often think about preparing a body part that is about to be removed, cut, or manipulated. We don't often think about thanking the body for what it is about to undergo during surgery. It is important to

help the person dialogue with their body – to thank it for its courage and its strength and stamina. This will help to make the surgical experience less traumatic.

I start the session by activating the first Karuna Reiki® symbol that acts as a spiritual anesthetic and prepares one for deep healing. Another choice would be to activate the distant healing symbol as a form of preparation. The DH symbol addresses the past, present and future, so it would send Reiki to all aspects of the upcoming surgery. When I reach the area of concern, I put my Reiki hands over the body part or let the client touch the area as they are talking to it. I often use the second Karuna symbol here to visualize a strong beaming light. Like a laser, it can help break up pockets of energy and fill the area with a focused beam of light or healing energy. The power symbol works well here also as it increases and focuses the Reiki energy. Sometimes I visualize the energy coming out of my hands, gently spreading like a spiral throughout the area underneath my hand. While the person is dialoguing with the body part, I let the energy flow, sending love and healing to the area, and reinforcing their healing statements. This works for a diseased area as well. I may then bring in the power symbol to increase and focus the flow of Reiki to the area. I may also bring in the mental emotional symbol to help release and heal thoughts or emotions related to this body part. (You may bring in any of the symbols in any order you are comfortable with or guided to use. There is no wrong way to use the symbols. They work by intention and intuition and often tell you when to bring them in.)

Depending on how much time we have before the surgery, I may teach them about healing energy. I explain how everyone is born with the ability to bring in healing energy. It starts with desire and intention. Healing comes from the inten-

tion to help someone, or decrease the suffering of another, including oneself. I explain how to open the heart for healing by focusing on love and compassion, then allow energy to come out of the heart, travel the length of the arm down the heart line or meridian (energy track) and into the hands. I then have them place their hands on the area that will be operated on with the intention of sending healing energy there.

When people do not understand this concept, I just tell them to “love on it” by focusing on that area and sending love, and/or white light or any healing color there. Tears often fall, and I support that release with the mental emotional symbol. Releasing the energy of the emotion in that area is often in itself a powerful heal-

ing. I have them talk to the area, thank it for what it is about to undergo and release it with love and gratitude.

If a person is interested, I may give them the Reiki I attunement with the sole intention of their using it to treat themselves. I give them basic information about Reiki, and explain how they can use it every day for self-healing. Many have come back after their surgery to take a Reiki class and share it with their friends and families.

I encourage my clients to have a Reiki session as close to the day of surgery as possible.

On the day of surgery, I send Reiki using the distant healing symbol. I imagine the operating room filled with a beautiful white light or mist, which represents the Reiki energy. I imagine that the surgeon, all the nurses, anesthesiologists, and assistants are strong and skillful. I imagine a pair of Reiki energy gloves on the surgeon’s hands, so that they are skilled and masterful. I imagine all equipment in the room being bathed and blessed by the energy. (You don’t have to imagine this in detail; you can simply fill the room with Reiki energy, blessing and guiding all those in it!). If possible, I visit the person in the hospital after surgery or when they get home. I continue to send them Reiki and encourage them to receive Reiki for the next few weeks afterwards. This “protocol” has brought about many successful and less upsetting surgical experiences.

The surgical experience need not be filled with fear and anxiety. The use of Reiki and other complementary therapies has been shown to be a positive factor in a successful post surgical outcome. Empower yourself and your clients to harness the power of mind and spirit. Reiki is an excellent way to strengthen and balance the body, mind, and spirit in the preparation for, and healing after, surgery.

Preparing for Surgery Resources

Books

Prepare for Surgery, Heal Faster
By Peggy Huddleston

CDs

Words that Heal—Hypnosis for Pre and Post Surgery
By Julie Griffin
1-800-497-1807 (TWT Publishers)
Email: Julie@hypnosistoday.com

Getting Ready: Preparing for Surgery, Chemotherapy and other treatments
(Information and meditations)
By Bernie Siegel M.D.

Preparing for Surgery: Guided Imagery Exercises for Relaxation and Accelerated Healing
By Martin Rossman, M.D.

Belleruth Naparstek
Guided Imagery Series
www.HealthJourneys.com

Summary

1st Session: Reiki session to introduce them to mind/body work & deep relaxation; can start Reiki session with Healing Attunement or Aura Balancing to deepen experience. Give information about books, relaxation tapes, and other available resources. Develop healing statements, affirmations, and healing images. (See Healing Images.)

2nd Session: Healing Attunement followed by Reiki session for deep relaxation and strengthening the body and the immune system. Give Reiki for 15-20

minutes then begin repeating healing statements while continuing the session, or put head phones on client and play CD/tape.

3rd and Subsequent Sessions: Same as above; can also teach client how to give themselves healing energy by placing their hands on area to be operated upon and focusing energy there.

Optional: Initiate them into 1st degree Reiki so they can treat themselves. (Can also do at second session if time is limited.)

Day of Surgery: Send Reiki before and during the surgery.

Optional Hospital Visit: Visit them the day of surgery or day after to give Reiki.

Home Visit: Day of or after surgery or when discharged.

Post-op: Once a week for several weeks after surgery to support the healing process. 

—Kathie can be reached by email at Kathiekaruna95@aol.com