



Reiki Myths and Misconceptions

BY KATHIE LIPINSKI, R N , M S N , C H

REIKI IS AN EFFECTIVE METHOD for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. While most experienced teachers know that Reiki can be used to help any condition or situation, some insist that Reiki should not be used in certain situations. These “should not’s” are invariably based on inaccurate information. What seems to happen is that Reiki practitioners and teachers hear a Reiki “should not” and simply pass it on without checking to see if it is true. At times, these misconceptions have prevented people from receiving Reiki who really need it. To fully explore the myths and misconceptions about Reiki and its uses, it is important to first understand the body’s natural ability to heal.

The nature of healing

We know that repeated exposure to stress or stress sustained over a long period of time can have damaging results on one’s health and lead to dis-ease (a body not at ease).

When a person is stressed, whether mentally, emotionally or physically, the natural protective stress response releases various chemicals into the blood to activate the fight or flight response.

always the body that heals itself. We practitioners are simply the channel through which life force energy flows. We simply facilitate the process.

Reiki strengthens and enhances the body’s natural ability to heal, and it heals on priority. By guiding us in the placement of our hands, the energy goes where it is needed most. It moves out blocked energies, cleanses the body of toxins, and works to create a state of balance on all levels: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Health is the free and balanced flow of *ki* (*chi*). Disease or illness results when this flow is interrupted.

Where it hurts

When a person tells the practitioner that he or she has a problem in a specific body part or that this or that hurts, it is important to realize this may not be the area in need of balancing. The location of a pain, symptom, or difficulty is often the end result of an imbalance elsewhere. Focusing on that physical part of the body does not necessarily address the origin of the problem. Many healing modalities are based on the belief that dis-ease actually begins in the body’s energy field (spirit, mind

Reiki always works for good and will only balance what is needed. Any response is simply moving back towards wholeness or balance. If you are ever unsure whether you can give Reiki, simply get quiet and ask for guidance. The energy will always guide you!

These chemicals are designed for a short-term response to help a person “survive” a perceived threat. If stress continues over a long period of time, these same chemicals can create an unhealthy environment for the cells to live in and can influence their growth or repair in a negative manner, moving them towards disease.

Reiki induces the relaxation response and puts the body in the best condition so it can do what it is designed to do—heal itself. Relaxation through Reiki promotes the release of health-affirming chemicals, which bathe the cells in a sea of life force energy, promoting normal growth and development. It is interesting to note that the traditional Reiki hand positions are located over the major glands and organs of the body. These major glands secrete the hormones that regulate all of our bodily functions. By placing our hands in these positions, we automatically nourish and help to balance the glands and hormonal system.

The practitioner’s role

I often hear Reiki practitioners say that they healed this person or improved that person’s medical condition. In reality, it is

and emotions). If not balanced or healed, the imbalance manifests over time in our physical body as illness or discomfort of some kind.

The body often compensates for an area of injury by having the opposite or a nearby part (e.g., muscle, organ) take over for the impaired part, thus doing the work of both parts. The injured area is then protected while the other part attempts to compensate by working harder. The compensating part may be the area that is stressed and hurts the most, rather than the location of the initial injury. That is why it is important that the practitioner follow the energy and place the hands where Reiki is needed at that time. This can be done by the use of *Reiji-ho* (intuition) or *Byosen* scanning.

Diagnosis and Treatment

Reiki practitioners do not diagnose or treat symptoms or conditions of illness. It is important to know that a practitioner who claims to diagnose or treat disease or physical and mental conditions, may be in violation of state law, as many states require licensing in a profession authorized to diagnose and provide treat-

ment. That is why as Reiki practitioners, we focus on restoration, rebalancing, and harmonizing the energy flow. We follow the energy to find the area of imbalance and bring it back into balance. Thus, healing can occur and balance can be restored.

Too much Reiki

Some Reiki practitioners have reported that people on occasion have felt “bad” after a Reiki session. This often leads to the misconception that the person received too much Reiki. In reality, the body is like a sponge; once saturated, it cannot take more. Reiki flows according to the need of the person receiving it and will give them the amount that they need. The wisdom of the body knows how much it needs, and when it has had enough, it simply stops receiving and Reiki stops flowing.

Reiki induces the relaxation response and all its benefits. Because it balances one’s energy, some people may experience a temporary increase in their symptoms and feel worse before they feel better. When this happens, the person usually feels better within 24 hours. In fact, the person often reports that they feel more than 100 percent better than before the session. This “feeling bad” can be considered a release of toxins or rebalancing, not too much Reiki. This reaction is sometimes referred to as a “healing reaction,” a “healing catharsis,” or a “healing crisis.” It is simply the body working itself back to balance physically, mentally, or emotionally.

Emotional release

After receiving Reiki, emotions that have been buried or hidden may surface. A person may feel uncomfortable when emotions such as sadness, anger or fear arise. This may frighten them away from Reiki. It is important to understand that feelings are energy and need to be felt; they are trying to tell us something.

Feelings/emotions come from our beliefs and thoughts about someone or something. If we can change the way we think about a person or situation, then we can change the feeling. I always encourage my clients to feel their feelings. I explain that feelings have a cycle of their own and will often pass in time. If a client is having difficulty with their emotions, it is wise to recommend that they speak with a counselor or someone trained to help them work through their issues.

Broken bones

A common misconception is that one should not give Reiki to a broken bone before it is set. It is believed that Reiki will speed up the healing process and the bone will not set correctly. To dispel this myth it is important to understand that there are many different types of fractures or breaks. They range from a simple “greenstick” fracture where there is a crack in only one side of the bone to an open fracture where the bone breaks through the skin.

All bones have a natural healing mechanism built in. Depending on the nature of the break and the circumstances surrounding the event, a broken bone can be a physiological (vital processes of the body) as well as a psychological shock to

the body. In reality, there is so much going on when a bone is broken that the body perceives it as a “threat,” and the stress response is initiated. The body has to adjust to all the signals it is getting from the injury and can at times even over respond.

Reiki heals on priority. Reiki calms the person and facilitates the body’s own natural ability to respond appropriately. Reiki can reduce pain and trauma, help decrease bleeding, spasm, and /or swelling, and put the person in the best condition for healing. By enhancing the body’s natural ability to heal itself, one can see how the healing process may be “speeded up,” but in an appropriate manner.

Diabetes

Another common myth is that one should not give Reiki to a person with diabetes as it may cause their blood sugar to drop. As a former Diabetes Nurse Educator, this is one of my favorite myths to dispel (See “Living with Diabetes the Reiki Way,” *Reiki News Magazine*, Spring 2007.)

Most low blood sugar reactions are related to the balance between the amount of medication or insulin a person takes, the food they eat, and their activity levels **for that day**. When a person with diabetes takes too much insulin or medication, misses a meal, does not eat enough, or increases their activity, they put themselves at risk for a drop in blood sugar. People with diabetes usually know when their sugar is getting low or their medication is peaking and what to do if it does. **If there is a concern about how Reiki affects their blood sugar level, they can simply test their blood sugar before and after a Reiki session.**

Reiki for the person with diabetes is a way to decrease stress and its many side effects.

Stress increases the release of the stress hormones that increase blood sugar. The deep relaxation that comes from a Reiki session can minimize the effects of the stress response and have a beneficial effect on normalizing and balancing blood sugar levels.

Medication

Because Reiki promotes the relaxation response and serves to balance body, mind and spirit, it may help reduce the need for medication or help reduce side effects. If a person receives Reiki on a regular basis, whether from a practitioner or daily self-treatments, they may find their medication requirements decrease and a dose adjustment may be in order.¹ This can be true for individuals taking high blood pressure medication, anti-depressants or other medications for pain, as well as medication for other long term or chronic conditions.

Regular use of Reiki can also be a self-empowerment tool. When people believe they are more in control of their lives they

¹ Reiki is not a substitute for medical care, and it is important that a person consult with their physician to determine if an adjustment in medication is necessary. Only their physician is qualified to change their prescription.

tend to take better care of themselves, make lifestyle changes, and have a more positive outlook on life. Reiki often brings a sense of peace, increased self-awareness, and decreased stress, which may in turn reduce the need for medication.

Pacemakers and Defibrillators

Some Reiki practitioners will not give Reiki to a person with a pacemaker or internal defibrillator, fearing that Reiki may interfere with the device or act as an electrical current. This is not true. Many practitioners give Reiki frequently to clients with pacemakers or defibrillators who experience the positive results expected of Reiki. If you have a concern, simply place your hands further away from the area.

Pregnancy

Some Reiki practitioners believe that it is not safe to give a pregnant woman Reiki because it may be too much energy and/or affect the unborn child in a negative way.

A client of mine contacted me when she was embarking on IVF (in vitro fertilization) treatments. I gave her Reiki before she started the first treatment and did not hear from her for a while. She finally contacted me three months later, and we began bi-weekly Reiki sessions. I asked her why she waited so long and she told me that the doctor knew about Reiki, and he felt that if she received it after the IVF procedure, it might cause her to lose the baby! (The IVF treatments worked and that baby is now a beautiful, healthy six-year-old!)

The most important thing to remember when working with a pregnant woman is that Reiki is LIFE AFFIRMING! Anything that affirms life cannot hurt it. Reiki is safe for all stages of pregnancy, from conception to birth. Reiki has many benefits for the unborn child as well as the mother. Taking care of the mother takes care of the child. Reiki bathes the pregnant woman and her unborn child in a sea of peace, love, and deep relaxation. It can help with the discomforts of pregnancy. Reiki can minimize the effects of stress and provide a supportive environment for the unborn child to grow and flourish.

I have attuned many pregnant women in my Reiki classes. It is always special to attune a mother and her child, knowing this child will be born into a loving and healing environment. A pregnant Reiki practitioner can give herself Reiki every day, connecting with her unborn child at a soul level, and providing life-affirming and enhancing surroundings for the child to grow in.

Reiki is also wonderful for the mother and newborn child as they both adjust to this new life. Reiki helps a new mother relax, especially when breast feeding, enhancing the experience for both mother and child.

Surgery and Anesthesia

Another misconception is that you cannot give Reiki during surgery because it might lessen the effects of the anesthesia and the person may wake up!

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*Teaching is my passion. Let me share
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use Reiki for every day living as well as
in your professional life.*

For most people, surgery is a stressful event. The anticipation can trigger a tremendous amount of anxiety and accompanying stress. Reiki is very beneficial in preparing a person for surgery and can be given or sent during surgery (See “Reiki and Surgery,” *Reiki News Magazine*, Summer 2006).

I know and have trained nurse anesthetists and anesthesiologists (MDs) who give Reiki as they give anesthesia. They have told me it is easier for the person to “go under,” and they often require less anesthetic. Having received less anesthetic, they wake up easier and have a better postoperative experience—less pain, less nausea and vomiting. Some nurses who work in the Recovery Room have also told me people who receive Reiki before and/or during surgery have an easier time releasing the anesthetic, and less postoperative pain.

This can be easily explained because Reiki induces the relaxation response. As a person relaxes, their muscles relax and their breathing improves. This makes it easier for them to receive the anesthetic, and they require less.

Burns

Some people believe that because Reiki often feels like heat, giving Reiki to a burn may hurt a person. Reiki does not always feel hot or warm. Because of the balancing nature of Reiki, it may at times even feel cool. If a person is uncomfortable receiving Reiki, the practitioner can simply place their hands further away in the energy field or alternate placing ice or cold water on the burn and then giving Reiki.

Cancer

Some practitioners believe that one should never give Reiki to a person with cancer because the energy will feed the tumor and make it grow! This belief goes against everything that Reiki is. Reiki is about balance and it supports the normal system of checks and balances in the body. It enhances the body’s natural ability to heal. It does not support the abnormal and uncontrolled growth of cells that are cancerous.

Reiki for people with cancer provides calm, relaxation, restoration and support. Reiki can help reduce anxiety, decrease pain, and minimize the side effects of cancer treatments. It can help manage stress which in turns helps keep the immune system healthy; something all people need going through cancer therapy!

Chronic pain and chronic illness

When people live with chronic pain, and/or chronic illness, they are often in “survival” mode; most of their energy goes to just getting through the day. Day-to-day living can be a challenge, and a person’s mental, emotional and physical resources are often drained. Reiki can help maintain balance. It can calm anxieties. It can help manage the daily stressors of their lives. Learning Reiki and doing daily self-treatments can empower a person to take charge of their lives and their health.

I once worked with a man who had M.S. (Multiple Sclerosis). He was hoping for a “cure” but what he found after months of treatments was an increased sense of well-being and personal empowerment. He then began the study of Reiki and daily self-treatments. The last I heard was that he was in remission and doing well!

There is only one way to do Reiki

Reiki is the way of the compassionate heart. The basic principles of Reiki are the same no matter what school you studied with or form you practice: compassion, mindfulness, respect and life force energy. Reiki is life force energy being expressed through each individual and their personal vibration. Each person is a channel for the energy to flow through. Each individual’s expression of Reiki can feel different and be expressed differently.

Final Thoughts

Reiki can be used for any health issue or condition. There are no contraindications.

Reiki always works for good and will only balance what is needed. Any response is simply moving back towards wholeness or balance. If you are ever unsure whether you can give Reiki, simply get quiet and ask for guidance. The energy will always guide you!



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