

# Reiki

## Defining a Healing Practice for Nursing



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### KEYWORDS

- Reiki • Self-care • Nursing • Reiki practice • Energy-based healing • Mikao Usui
- Complementary therapy • Reiki training

### KEY POINTS

- The practice of Reiki originated in Japan in the early 1920s and is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, philosophy, and spirituality.
- Reiki is a healing and wellness practice that promotes balance and well-being in body, mind, and spirit.
- Reiki is a complementary or integrative modality used in conjunction with, not in place of, conventional medicine.
- A review of studies has found that Reiki seems to be generally safe, shows no harmful effects for recipients, and has no known contraindications.
- Clinical studies support the efficacy of Reiki in stimulating the relaxation response; decreasing pain and discomfort; and alleviating feelings of stress, worry, and anxiety as well as symptoms of depression.

### INTRODUCTION

In the current fast-paced and high-tech health care environment, people are seeking a more holistic, caring, and person-centered approach to health care. With their high level of public trust, nurses play an important role in bridging the gap between conventional medicine and complementary or integrative therapies. To do so, it is important that nurses have a strong foundation and knowledge base of the modalities that they use with their patients or clients.

The Reiki natural system of healing, with its hands-on approach and whole-person orientation, is a natural extension of nursing practice. The study of Reiki offers nurses an opportunity to both care for themselves and create an optimal caring and healing environment for their patients and clients.

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When Reiki is taught from the perspective of the biomedical model, which focuses on treatment and outcome, what is often neglected is the focus on self-care and psychological well-being for the practitioner. The natural healing system of Reiki offers whole-person healing of body, mind, and spirit through regular self-Reiki practice and through the wisdom found in the Reiki Principles, which provide guidelines for present-moment living.

This article provides a thorough description and understanding of Reiki practice so that nurses can recognize the value of Reiki for self-care and the positive impact it can have in their professional work settings.

### ***The Art and Practice of Reiki***

To describe the hands-on healing system known as Reiki (pronounced RAY-kee), it is important to understand that the art and practice of Reiki has many layers and is deeply rooted in Japanese culture, philosophy, and spirituality. Hawayo Takata, a Japanese American woman living in Hawaii, brought Reiki to the Western world in the mid-1930s, and what were common beliefs and practices in Japan were difficult to explain and not easily understood by the Western mind. As Reiki expanded in the Western world, much of its spirituality, core teachings, and practices were “lost in translation,” making what many people currently practice as Reiki different from what the founder Mikao Usui intended. The healing system known as Reiki includes the vibration or energy that Reiki represents, and the methods used to practice it.

### ***Meaning of the Kanji (Japanese Characters)***

The word Reiki is derived from 2 Japanese kanji (written characters or pictograms) that, when drawn, represent a word or phrase. Kanji attempt to convey an idea, an understanding, or the concept of a thing.<sup>1</sup> They are not literal translations. How they are drawn, and their interpretation, can change over time and vary with cultural trends.

As seen in [Fig. 1](#), the kanji (or Japanese character):

Rei represents the concept of universal or all around us; spiritual; source or origin; creative intelligence; consciousness; cosmos.

Ki represents the concept of vital force or energy.

The combined kanji for the word Reiki can then represent the understanding or concept of a spiritual life force energy available to all.

From an Eastern perspective, it is thought that this universal field, creative intelligence, or vital force animates, surrounds, and permeates all living things. It supports all of life and, although external, is also within us and interconnects all of life. Life force energy, also known as chi, ki, or prana, flows throughout the body via energetic pathways. When the energy flows freely, the person is in a state of health. Disruption, depletion, or blockage in the flow of this energy may lead to physical disease or psychological or emotional symptoms.<sup>2-5</sup>

### **WHAT IS REIKI?**

Simply stated, Reiki is a healing and wellness practice that promotes balance and well-being in body, mind, and spirit. Within the practice are guidelines for psychological well-being, self-care, working with others, and tools for healing and personal development (discussed later in this article). Reiki is spiritual in that it connects people with their innermost selves and creates harmony between the body, mind, and spirit. It is not a religion and holds no religious creed or doctrine. Reiki is a complementary or integrative modality used in conjunction with, not in place of, conventional medicine.



Fig. 1. Old-style Japanese kanji for Reiki. (Courtesy of Supriya Nair Mumbai, Maharashtra India.)

Reiki has also been described as “a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing,”<sup>6</sup> “a precise method for connecting universal energy with the body’s innate powers of healing,”<sup>7</sup> and “love from the universe, shared through the hands.”<sup>8</sup>

At present, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) defines Reiki as “a complementary health approach in which practitioners place their hands lightly on or just above a person, with the goal of directing energy to help facilitate the person’s own healing response. It’s based on an Eastern belief in an energy that supports the body’s innate or natural healing abilities.”<sup>9</sup>

Reiki has also been defined as a touch therapy, similar to Therapeutic Touch and Healing Touch, as well as a biofield therapy.<sup>4,10–12</sup>

The term biofield therapies was coined during the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) Conference in 1992<sup>13</sup> to describe noninvasive therapies during which a practitioner works with the subtle vibrational field that surrounds and permeates a person’s physical body to stimulate a healing response.<sup>11,13</sup>

The biofield model is based on the principle that all living things are animated with a vital life force that creates a field of energy (biofield) around them. This field is invisible<sup>14</sup> but can be felt and manipulated by a trained practitioner.<sup>10</sup> (see the video: Bio-field Science and Healing<sup>15</sup> at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vK3YcCn3qSo>).

Although almost all of these aspects of the biofield apply to Reiki, what makes Reiki different from other biofield therapies is that the Reiki practitioner simply allows Reiki to flow through their hands to the recipient; there is no manipulation or exchange of

energy. The flow of Reiki assists in the restoration of balance on the physical, mental, and emotional levels, so that the recipient's natural ability to heal can be supported and enhanced.<sup>6,7,11</sup>

Most people who offer Reiki quickly begin to recognize that, as the Reiki flows through them, they are connecting with their own loving, compassionate nature and then sharing that with the person receiving Reiki. It is likely that this connection in the practitioner encourages a positive effect on the recipient's experience with Reiki. Studies conducted by the HeartMath Institute on energy exchange between people found that, when humans experience positive emotions such as compassion, gratitude, and caring, the resulting response can be seen in the production of smooth, ordered, and coherent patterns in the heart's rhythmic activity.<sup>16</sup> Researchers also found that the electromagnetic field produced by the heart transmits energy and information between people, and the electrocardiogram signal (measured by the peak of the R wave) from one person's heart could synchronize and be detected in the other person's brain (registered by their electroencephalogram) during physical contact.<sup>16</sup> The researchers were also able to measure the exchange with the subjects placed up to 1.5 m (5 feet) apart.<sup>16</sup> The synchronization referenced in this study could explain what seems to happen during the flow of Reiki. Thus, when Reiki fills a person's bioenergetic field, it is easy to see how it can then spread to others as well as the person's environment (video: Scientific Foundation of the HeartMath System<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rstfC0X2ac>).

### ***How Does Reiki Work?***

Although the mechanism of action for Reiki is currently unknown, Reiki seems to influence the body's autonomic nervous system to move from sympathetic to parasympathetic mode.<sup>18–20</sup> Reiki encourages the relaxation response, and the recipient's natural ability to heal is supported and enhanced.<sup>7</sup> The recipient begins to release tension both physically and mentally. The impact of stress is lessened.

Florence Nightingale, founder of the modern nursing tradition, thought that nature alone cures and described the nurse's role as placing patients in the best condition for nature to act on them.<sup>21</sup> The human body has all the resources and infinitely adaptable systems of checks and balances to self-regulate, repair, regenerate, and thrive. Beginning with the relaxation response, Reiki gently supports the body, mind, and spirit to connect to these natural inner resources in order to heal and return to a state of balance.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Healing Versus Curing***

The practice of Reiki places emphasis on healing and not on curing. Western medicine has traditionally focused on disease and the efforts to cure, repair, or modify the course of the disease.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Reiki focuses on healing, which implies a restoration of balance on all levels of being: body, mind, and spirit. Unlike many Western medical practices, the practice of Reiki is not specific to any disease or illness. Reiki supports the potential for healing by focusing on the individual's innate capacity for renewal and growth on every level of being<sup>7</sup> (see video: What is healing?<sup>23</sup> at <https://youtu.be/Kk7kzUt3-Lc>).

## **USES OF REIKI**

The list of uses for the healing potential of Reiki is extensive, as shown in **Box 1**.

Reiki is available and accessible to practitioners wherever they go. Because of its simplicity and ease of use, Reiki can be given to oneself or others at home, at work, on a plane, in a car, at school, or just about anywhere. When a friend or loved one

**Box 1****Uses for the healing potential of Reiki**

- Relieves the physical and emotional effects of stress
- Reduces pain and discomfort
- Decreases tension and anxiety
- Improves sleeping patterns and alleviates fatigue
- Prepares and supports a person for surgery, other invasive procedures, and chemotherapy or radiation treatments
- Supports the recovery process from injuries, surgery, or trauma (ie, posttraumatic stress disorder)
- Minimizes or makes more tolerable the side effects of many kinds of treatment or procedures
- Facilitates wound healing
- Supports recovery from addictions
- Supports the resolution of psychological and emotional issues
- Promotes healthy pregnancy and childbirth
- Supports people who are acutely or chronically ill
- Supports caregivers caring for loved ones dealing with acute or chronic illness
- Brings comfort to people who are terminally ill, and can help ease transition
- Enhances personal spiritual development
- Promotes overall health and well-being, and prevention of illness

is sad or upset, practitioners can simply place hands on or over the person's back or the heart for emotional support. If someone is in physical pain, practitioners can gently place hands where it hurts. Connecting with Reiki can be done discretely, especially for self-care. For example, if feeling stressed or anxious, practitioners can simply place a hand over the heart or stomach for comfort. When included in family life, Reiki is helpful for childhood ailments, first aid, studying for school, managing the emotions of the teenage years, and so much more. Reiki practitioners who are Reiki master teachers may empower their loved ones to practice Reiki and learn to take care of themselves. Reiki shared in a family or with loved ones is a gift that keeps on giving.

***Safety of Reiki***

In their review of studies of Reiki, the NCCIH found that Reiki seems to be generally safe and has not shown any harmful effects for recipients.<sup>9,24</sup> There are no known contraindications for Reiki.<sup>24</sup> Because it is simply offered with only a light touch on or slightly above the body, Reiki can be considered noninvasive and nonmanipulative. It is also nonpharmaceutical. Reiki is not a substitute for conventional medical or psychological care. Reiki supports and complements any therapy or treatment a person may be receiving.<sup>24,25</sup> Occasionally, some people experience short-term discomfort after receiving Reiki; it is simply the body releasing stress or toxins as it moves back to a balanced state.

***Efficacy of Reiki***

Although the large number of reports that describe the many benefits of Reiki have primarily been anecdotal or based on clinical observation, there are clinical studies that



support the efficacy of Reiki, in particular with regard to its ability to generate the relaxation response and a decrease of pain and discomfort.<sup>19,26–30</sup> Other studies found that Reiki can alleviate feelings of stress, worry, and anxiety as well as symptoms of depression.<sup>28,31–33</sup>

McManus<sup>34</sup> conducted a review of the literature and concluded that there is reasonably strong evidence for Reiki being more effective than placebo. He also found that Reiki was more effective for decreasing pain, anxiety, and depression and enhancing self-esteem and quality of life for those with chronic health conditions.<sup>34</sup>

The concept of spirituality emerged as a theme in studies by Vitale<sup>35</sup> and Bra-thovde.<sup>36</sup> Both studies found that nurses who regularly practiced Reiki for self-care reported a deepening of their personal spiritual practices.

### ***Description of a Reiki Session***

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Reiki can be offered to oneself and others for any amount of time in various settings or situations. Whether in a private practice or a health care setting, it easily adapts to its surroundings and requires no equipment or a special environment. It can be offered as a stand-alone treatment or for support during other procedures. During a Reiki session, recipients are fully clothed and can be in a seated or lying position. Reiki is offered using light touch or hands just above the physical body. The Reiki practitioner can choose to use a more structured approach, going through a series of traditional hand positions that include the areas over the endocrine glands and the major organs that govern the overall body functions. The practitioner may also focus on certain areas of the body and the biofield in response to the recipient's reported physical symptoms and mental-emotional state. Skilled practitioners can also become aware of and treat other areas that seem out of balance as well. Reiki sessions can last from just a few minutes to more than an hour. It is important to be aware of cultural and societal considerations before touching someone. A discussion before the session can be helpful to determine preferences and obtain permission if necessary.

### ***Experience of a Reiki Session***

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A Reiki session is client focused and varies from session to session. From the practitioner's perspective, Reiki is a neutral, passive practice. During the session, the practitioner is present, supportive, and observant; there is no intent to achieve a certain outcome for the person or attempt to direct the Reiki energy. Recipients receive Reiki in response to their individual needs for healing and balance in the moment. Practitioners cannot give too much Reiki. The wisdom of the body knows how much it needs; when it is returned to balance, Reiki stops flowing.<sup>7</sup>

The response to Reiki varies and it can be a multisensory experience. Recipients may report heat from the practitioner's hands, tingling sensations, or a gentle pulse moving through the body. A sense of peace and slipping into deep sleep is commonly experienced. As the mind quiets, feelings of worry, stress, and anxiety begin to decrease. An emotional release may occur as Reiki gently helps the recipient relax. The effects of Reiki can be subtle and not immediately perceived. Individuals may later experience a night of restful sleep, improved digestion, mental clarity, or a personal insight. The effects of Reiki are cumulative and, with continued practice over time, the personal outcomes can become more meaningful.

### ***Reimbursement and Reiki***

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Many Reiki practitioners set up private practices in which clients pay for sessions out of pocket. Sessions are usually 30 to 90 minutes in length and rates are comparable with those charged by massage therapists in their area. At present, Reiki is not

commonly reimbursed by insurance plans in the United States. However, some insurance companies may cover Reiki when it is woven into a comprehensive treatment plan and delivered by a nurse or a licensed professional.<sup>37,38</sup> Clients can also seek coverage for Reiki services using flexible spending accounts and health savings accounts.

## LEARNING REIKI

Reiki is a holistic healing method that can be simply and easily learned by anyone. There are no prerequisites for taking a Reiki class. No particular knowledge or experience is needed to learn Reiki. People of all ages, genders, cultures, and religions practice Reiki. Children often find Reiki appealing and helpful and many are learning how to give Reiki to themselves, their families, and especially their pets.

There are many styles and schools for learning Reiki. Since the early 1930s, the practice of Reiki has continuously evolved and changed, especially with the influence of Western culture. Therefore, a Reiki curriculum is not standardized. Many master teachers vary in their approaches; some teach from a more traditional, Japanese-based perspective. Others teach from an eclectic point of view. Prospective students usually connect with the teacher and style of practice that works best for them. Reiki training is important because it provides people with a form and a structure to work with their own innate abilities to heal.<sup>7</sup>

Some students seek to learn Reiki simply by reading a book or receiving an attunement (a gentle process of empowerment guided by a Reiki master teacher) distantly using the Internet or other streaming services. Reiki is best learned through experience and practice in a live class with a qualified Reiki master teacher who offers guidance, live feedback, immediate answers to questions, and the opportunity to share experience with other students. It is the hands-on attunement from the Reiki master teacher that makes Reiki unique.

### *Quality Reiki Training*

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In seeking a competent Reiki teacher, people can start by asking for referrals from friends and families or someone they know who already practices Reiki. People can search the Internet for Reiki teachers nearby. Local health care and community organizations that offer adult education programs often offer Reiki classes. The International Association for Reiki Practitioners (<https://iarp.org/>) and the International Center for Reiki Training (<https://www.reiki.org/>) both offer referral services for Reiki master teachers on their websites.

### *Questions to Ask a Reiki Teacher*

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When considering a teacher, there are several appropriate questions to ask:

- How many years have you been practicing Reiki?
- Do you practice daily self-treatment?
- What kind of a professional Reiki practice do you have?
- How many years have you been teaching Reiki?
- What style of Reiki do you teach?
- What material do you include in your curriculum and how long are your classes?
- What kind of ongoing support do you offer your students?
- What is the recommended wait time between classes?

## CORE COMPONENTS OF REIKI CLASSES

Reiki is an experiential practice and is traditionally taught in 3 or 4 sequential levels.

Dedicated time and practice are encouraged to assimilate the knowledge and master the skills learned at each level. It is generally recommended that students wait a period of time between each class to develop expertise through hands-on experience and practice.

The basic core components included in each class are listed in **Box 2**.

Box 2 Reiki Level I and Reiki Level II
<p>Reiki level I, or First Degree (Shoden)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended 8 to 10 hours of training</li> <li>• What Reiki is and how it is used</li> <li>• Benefits of Reiki</li> <li>• History of Reiki and the Reiki principles</li> <li>• Hand positions for offering Reiki to oneself and others</li> <li>• Reiki level I attunement</li> <li>• Hands-on practice time offering Reiki to self and others</li> <li>• Emphasis on self-care and personal practice</li> </ul> <p>Reiki level II, or Second Degree (Okuden)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended 8 to 10 hours of training</li> <li>• The Reiki symbols: what they are and how to use them</li> <li>• Reiki level II attunement</li> <li>• Hands-on practice time using symbols</li> <li>• Sending distant Reiki</li> </ul>

Auras (energy fields around a person) and chakras (energy centers of the body) are not part of traditional Reiki training but are often included in the curriculum depending on the teacher's training and preference.

A more traditional Japanese style of Reiki class may include elements listed in **Box 3**.

Box 3 Elements of a traditional Japanese style of Reiki class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditation</li> <li>• Breathing techniques</li> <li>• Japanese Reiki techniques</li> <li>• Working with the byosen, the vibration that is emitted from a tense, injured, or ill body part</li> <li>• Exercises to increase perception in the hands</li> </ul>

### ***Reiki Level III or Third Degree (Shinpiden)***

After Level II, or Second Degree, there is a wide variety of what the next level is, how students advance, and what is included in class. Reiki Level III, or Third Degree, may be taught as a single class for both master practitioner and teacher. It can also be separated and taught as a Level III class (Advanced or Master Practitioner) and Level IV class (Master Teacher). These classes are often taught in sessions of 3 to 4 days or over a longer period of time and includes various components (**Box 4**).



**Box 4****Reiki Level III, or Third Degree (Shinpiden)**

- Additional symbols and how to use them
- Advanced skills and techniques with practice time
- Ethics, values, and information for setting up private Reiki practice
- Learning how to perform Reiki attunements
- Extensive practice time for giving attunements
- Information and guidance related to organizing and teaching Reiki

Most Reiki Master teachers in the United States issue certificates of attendance or completion to students who attend their classes. Some Reiki programs have requirements that must be completed to receive certificates or move to the advanced practitioner or teacher level. These requirements could include a required number of practice hours or sessions; working with a mentor; coteaching classes; leading a Reiki share or circle where Reiki students, practitioners, and teachers come together to offer Reiki to each other; and offering community presentations. The completion of such requirements is not the equivalent of a formal certification program that has a governing body that provides ongoing assessment of the knowledge and skills required for competent performance in a specific professional role. At present, there are no formalized credentialing or certification programs for Reiki in the United States.

## A HISTORY OF REIKI

The history of Reiki is rich but has been cloaked in mystery and misinformation. A more in-depth and accurate accounting of Reiki's history can be found in *This is Reiki* by Frank Arjava Petter,<sup>1</sup> a noted Reiki historian, practitioner, and teacher. New information is being continuously uncovered and shared by others.<sup>6,39–42</sup>

Mikao Usui (1865–1926), founder of the system of Reiki, was born August 15, 1865 in the village of Taniai, in southern Japan. Over the course of his adult life, he was a journalist, a Shinto missionary, an assistant to a prominent Japanese politician, and several other careers that are not known. In his early 50s, he experienced bankruptcy, a situation that led to an identity crisis as he questioned the meaning of his life's work. Usui then began a quest to find his divine purpose and pursued Anjin Ryumei: inner peace or enlightenment.

Usui spent 3 years in retreat at a Kyoto Zen temple (1919–1922) but considered himself no closer to his goal. He then proceeded to the sacred Mount Kurama intending to fast until his death: the final way to attain the state of Anjin Ryumei. After the 20th day, he had a spiritual awakening that led to his enlightenment. He soon realized that he was also gifted with a healing ability when he put his hands on his injured toe and the bleeding stopped immediately.

Usui named his system Shin Shin Kaizen Usui Reiki Ryoho or the Usui Reiki treatment method for improvement of body and mind, to distinguish it from other forms of healing methods already practiced in Japan.<sup>43</sup> He formed the Usui Ryoho Gakkai, an association of Reiki practitioners, and he began to teach and give treatments, spreading Reiki rapidly throughout Japan.

After the death of his teacher Mikao Usui in 1926, Dr Chujiro Hayashi (1880–1940), a retired Naval officer and medical doctor, formed his own association, Hayashi Reiki

Kenkyu Kai (Institute). It was to this clinic that Hawayo Takata, a Japanese American living in Hawaii, came in 1935. After being successfully healed of her many illnesses, Mrs Takata learned Reiki and apprenticed as Dr Hayashi's student. When she returned home to Hawaii, she opened her own practice in Hilo, on the Big Island, and began to give treatments and teach Reiki. In 1938, she invited Dr Hayashi to visit her in Hawaii, where he held 14 seminars and trained 350 students. Thus Mrs Takata and Dr Hayashi began the initial movement of Reiki outside of Japan.<sup>42</sup>

After World War II and the Allied occupation, alternative therapies were banned in Japan and the practice of Reiki was forced to go underground for many years. Very little is known about Mrs Takata's activities after the war until the 1970s, when she began to travel and teach on the US mainland. From 1970 to the time of her death in 1980, she trained 22 or more students as Reiki masters<sup>44</sup> to succeed her and spread Reiki throughout the world.

When Reiki returned to Japan in the late 1980s, it returned as Westernized Reiki, looking much different than the original form. It was not until the late 1990s that information about the original teachings of Mikao Usui and Chujiro Hayashi became more widely known and shared.

Reiki has come full circle, with an increasing interest in learning traditional or Japanese-style Reiki and its historical and cultural roots, thus allowing people to go deeper into the practice with a truer understanding of its spiritual nature and holistic healing benefits.

## FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS OF REIKI

Throughout the history of Reiki and its ever-evolving styles, certain elements are considered the core of the Reiki system. Although there are variations of the form these elements take, the foundation on which they were built remains the same.<sup>5</sup> These topics are discussed at length in Reiki classes.

Foundational elements of the system of Reiki include:

- The attunement/initiation/empowerment
- The Reiki Principles
- The Reiki symbols
- Treatment
- Personal development

### *Attunements*

The attunement is what sets Reiki apart from other healing modalities and is often clouded in mystique and confusion. Mikao Usui's spiritual awakening on Mt Kurama aligned him with the universal field, vibration, or source of Reiki. His goal then was to help others attain a similar experience and open to their natural healing ability. To help people learn how to use Reiki easily and quickly, Usui developed a process of empowerment that can be referred to as reiju or attunement.

An attunement, in the simplest of terms, is a gentle process of empowerment guided by a Reiki Master teacher. The attunement aligns the person with the vibration of the unlimited source of Reiki. This connection then allows the person to draw on this source. The attunement also balances a person's energy system, bringing the body, mind, and spirit back into harmony.

During an attunement, students sit in a chair with their eyes closed to minimize distractions. Gentle music may play softly in the background to promote a meditative state.

An attunement may sometimes be referred to as initiation: a conscious inner awakening process into a different level of awareness or being.<sup>5</sup> Human beings are all born with a natural ability to heal and bring healing energy to others. The attunement reawakens and reminds the person of this natural ability and alignment with source energy. Once attuned to Reiki, the connection is immediate and lasts a lifetime.

Each degree or level of Reiki includes an attunement. The style and number of attunements per level may vary between lineages/schools.

### ***The Reiki Principles (Also Known as the Reiki Ideals, Reiki Precepts, or Gokai)***

Reiki began as a spiritual practice and the Reiki Principles are its heart. Usui designed these principles as guidelines for psychological well-being; he thought that if you healed the mind you healed the body. Usui sensei (teacher) described the principles as “the secret art of inviting happiness... the miraculous cure for all diseases.”<sup>6</sup>

The Reiki Principles were originally spoken in Japanese and repeated 3 times because they are considered a kotodama, where the power and spirit of the word come alive when spoken out loud.<sup>1</sup>

The statue that is seen in the video Reiki Principles spoken in Japanese<sup>45</sup> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TlwTyubfXRY>) is of Kannon, also known as Kwan Yin, who represents the qualities of mercy and compassion (**Box 5**).

#### **Box 5**

##### **The Reiki Principles**

Just for today

Do not anger

Do not worry

Be grateful

Do your work

Be kind to others

Kyo dake wa

Ikaruna

Shin pai suna

Kan sha shite

Gyo o hageme

Hito ni shinsetsu ni

Many Reiki practitioners recite them in Japanese every day to honor the original roots of Reiki.

#### ***Just for today***

The Principles ask that one be mindful and fully present in the moment. When they stay in the moment, they keep their energy and spirit with them instead of sending them out into the future with worries or concerns, or to the past with resentment, blame, or guilt. When focused on the present, one is more aware of the blessings in the present.

#### ***Do not anger***

Anger keeps one stuck in the past and the past cannot be changed. Attachment to how one thinks people should act and how their lives should be causes pain and suffering. Surrender to what is, trust that everything is exactly as it is supposed to be, and that people and experiences are in one's life to help them grow.

#### ***Do not worry***

Worry keeps one focused on the future and drains their energy. Let go of worry about what cannot be controlled; attend to what can be. Most things people worry about never happen.

***Be grateful***

Embracing the “attitude of gratitude” expands and enhances all aspects of life. Being aware of the constant ebb and flow of life and how things can change in a moment reminds people to stay present and savor every moment. Being thankful for people and experiences reminds us how rich our lives really are.

***Do your work***

Usui Sensei asks one to do what they are meant to do and do it with their whole hearts. People need to live authentically and be true to themselves. Living the compassionate life means that people should live with integrity and follow their beliefs. When people work on themselves, they help heal the world.

***Be kind to others***

Being kind to others is the golden rule. It is having compassion for all beings, including oneself. It is walking the path of loving kindness, knowing that people are all connected and what affects one affects us all.

***The Reiki Symbols***

Reiki symbols are an integral part of Reiki practice. Traditionally they have been kept secret and only revealed to students who have reached Second Degree (Level II) and received the corresponding attunement. Part of the secrecy was to respect the tradition and to ensure that students were given all the information and instruction before they began to use them. Nowadays, they are easily found on the Internet.

The Reiki symbols are derived from ancient Sanskrit and Japanese Kanji. They have a form and a mantra (word or phrase) that need to be drawn and/or verbalized to be activated. Usui designed them as tools used as supplements during a Reiki treatment.<sup>42</sup> There are 3 symbols in traditional Usui Reiki: one to work with the physical body, one to work with mental-emotional issues, and one for distant healing. Others have been added over the years as different Reiki systems and styles have been developed. In-depth instructions for how to draw the symbols and what they are used for are given to students in class.

***Treatment***

Treatment is the foundation of the hands-on practice of Reiki (discussed earlier). Reiki treatment, whether for self or others, touches the physical body and energetically touches the spirit, the mind, and emotions; all levels of a person's being. That is why just a few moments of Reiki can have such a profound effect. Once attuned, people can begin to practice Reiki immediately. Placement of the hands begins Reiki. Removal of the hands stops the flow. It is that simple.<sup>5</sup> No intention is needed. The focus of Reiki is healing for the person's highest good.

As a practitioners give Reiki, it also flows through them and they receive its benefits as well.<sup>7</sup>

Treating oneself is an integral part of the Reiki practice that replenishes the spirit, builds inner resilience, and enhances personal coping skills. A self-care practice can easily be woven into daily life with 5 or 10 minutes throughout the day, in the morning on awakening, or at bedtime (see the video: Self-Reiki: Why you Need this in your Life and how to Do it Effectively<sup>46</sup> at <https://youtu.be/niSoR5jFrXg>).

***Personal Development***

Reiki is an invitation for people to open their hearts and live more consciously, bringing more awareness to their everyday lives. People may come to Reiki to learn a relaxation technique to manage stress, but, as they continue to practice, they may begin to move

deeper into the spiritual practice. Working with the Reiki Principles on a regular basis teaches people the way of the compassionate heart.

Like a meditation, mindfulness, or yoga practice, Reiki brings people to that quiet place within where they can feel peaceful, calm, grounded, and centered. Accessing that quiet place on a regular basis can bring mental clarity, help develop resiliency,<sup>47</sup> and strengthen the ability to remain calm regardless of the surrounding chaos. With the regular practice of self-Reiki, it becomes easier for people to draw that meditative state into their daily lives. In addition, as they go deeper into their practice, they can better connect to their own inner wisdom to make healthier life choices leading to feelings of personal empowerment.

As people feel more empowered, they grow in self-confidence and self-awareness, feeling more connected to their own personal processes of unfolding and becoming more of who they truly are. A deeper sense of spiritual connectedness, fulfillment, and purpose in life evolves.

## SUMMARY

Reiki is a comprehensive holistic healing modality that can be easily learned and incorporated into nurses' personal lives for self-care as well as into their professional lives in caring for their patients or clients. Reiki offers whole-person healing for themselves and others by moving them toward balance and harmony of body, mind, and spirit.

The study of Reiki is often a personal journey and begins as a person searches for a teacher and school or style of practice. Reiki reconnects people to their innate ability to heal; Reiki classes provide the foundation for learning how. As people go deeper into the practice, the Reiki Principles offer guidelines for psychological well-being by reminding people to be mindful: to be fully present in the moment. Reiki self-care practice brings people to a place where they can feel calm, grounded, and centered.

As the profession of nursing continues to grow and evolve, the practice of Reiki can gently return nurses to the foundation of their traditions and knowledge of whole-person healing, and to the art of their practice as providers of compassionate and caring touch-based patient care.

## DISCLOSURE

The authors have nothing to disclose.

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