



# Reiki and Our Aging Parents and Loved Ones

BY COLLEEN BENELLI

I FEEL SO FORTUNATE to have Reiki as my mother ages. She is now almost 84. This is a new life cycle filled with blessings and challenges for both of us. I use Reiki for her and also for myself. Reiki enhances the quality of life for both of us. It nourishes us through the simple act of touch that we share through Reiki. Reiki activates love and helps me to keep love as my priority. It provides us both with tremendous support.

I am aware that many people reading this have their own stories and many of them are much more difficult than mine. At 84, my mother is still full of life, active and social. She has a great attitude about life, spirituality and death. She is fun to be with and very likeable. When she is well she is bright, capable and strong. She loves Reiki too, which is a huge benefit. She will always say yes when I offer to give her some. I am so grateful to

They want to help, and it is hard on them when I say no. This has been a tremendous growth experience for me. We receive Reiki as a gift and in turn Reiki teaches us how to receive the gifts available to us from outside resources.

After five years of intermittent caregiving for my mother, I have learned that I have very little control over daily events. She can be well one day and very ill the next. The only control I have is how I respond to it all. Reiki helps me respond in the way that is meaningful to me so that I can be the person I want to be during this time. Reiki gives me the internal peace I need to realize that when my mom is in a medical crisis, I need to set aside my ego and personality and take care of her needs first. Reiki gives me patience and the perspectives I need to understand that she faces limitations that frustrate her and that I can

*...the only control any of us really have is to be who we want to be in the situation and be the highest version of ourselves possible. Regardless of the situation, use Reiki as a powerful resource and life management tool. It is always available to help you.*

her for this. However, this life cycle still has its challenges for her and for me. She has chronic health issues and has been in and out of medical crises for the past five years. I write this article to offer insight to others who are in this cycle of life as a reminder to use Reiki to manage it all.

I find that Reiki aligns me with both the practical and spiritual resources I need to act with grace. It first connects my spirit to God so I can better receive divine guidance, which then leads me to the support I need according to the situation. Being able to receive is essential. Many of us who are drawn to Reiki are often over-givers. We are good at giving but not as good at receiving. Reiki has helped me to open to receive the support that is available. As a result, I have become aware of the importance of receiving and am more able to receive with grace. I have learned to say yes to my family and friends who offer to help me when my mother's care becomes more than I can handle. I also ask for help. The people who offer support are relieved when I rely on them.

respond with love, compassion, respect, encouragement and kindness. She is uncomfortable asking for my help so I have to notice what she needs and take care of it quietly. We both have to adjust to her new reality and capabilities.

My mother also needs me to be her advocate and help her navigate through the medical system. Like many of her generation, she is not used to questioning doctors and their authority. As many of you know all too well, navigating through the health care system and health insurance is like walking through a maze every day. There are specialists in every field of health. I never knew there were so many kinds of cardiologists. Each one does something different, and it takes all of them to provide my mother with cardiology care. Finding out which doctors do what, which hospitals are the best match, what kind of care rehabilitation centers provide, what Medicare and insurance allows and pays for and what resources there are for seniors takes persistence. I am my mother's advocate through every doctor's appointment and hospital stay.

At the same time, I see how important it is for my mother to be independent and have control over her decisions. However, her body and mind don't always cooperate. When she is well, she is very capable, but when illness strikes, her mental acuity is less than what we are both used to; she can become confused and her default response is to be uncooperative, a response to the anxiety she is experiencing about her limitations. I have to decide how to proceed and sometimes it has been very difficult. However, I have one friend who my mother will listen to when she won't listen to me. She can get my mom to cooperate when I can't. This friend is experienced with caregiving too, and I have learned to listen to her advice and ask for her help.

One thing that I can always depend on to help is Reiki. When I give my mother Reiki, it relaxes her and she becomes clearer, more cooperative and hopeful. Reiki definitely reduces her stress and alleviates some of the symptoms she is experiencing. She sleeps better, eats better and is intellectually more aware of her situation. My mother doesn't really like the altered state that Reiki can give her and so she usually talks during the sessions. I give her Reiki while she is in bed; she likes the TV on and her dog nearby, often making noise. I pull up a chair and just place my hands where I can reach. I give her Reiki in the way she is most comfortable. That way it is all on her terms in the way she needs it.

Other times when my mom has been in the hospital, I have given her Reiki before a procedure or while she is recovering. She has also had several month-long stays at medical rehabilitation centers. I go in and give her Reiki while everything is going on around us. She loves it and always tells the doctors and nurses that I am giving her Reiki and gets them to talk about it. Providence Hospital in Portland is her hospital, and they have a great Reiki program. So she loves to tell everyone what I am doing. Again, I just place my hands where I can reach. Sometimes I can't reach any spot on her body so I simply activate it in me and expand the field of Reiki flowing around me to fill the room. I send Reiki to the room with my thoughts and activate blessings all around us. I invite Reiki to assist her medical team and caregivers.

Our Reiki sessions also create the time to talk about what she needs. It helps me decide what course of action to take, and this has often been the most difficult part of caregiving with my mom. As I have said, when she is well, she is sharp and capable, but when she is not, her ability to assess her circumstance is impaired, and she will automatically refuse to go to the doctor or the hospital. I often have to override her wishes and call the doctor or the ambulance. It took me quite a few episodes of medical crises brought on by delaying her medical treatment in response to her decisions to realize that I had to take control and

make the decisions that are in her best interest. Neither of us is used to me overruling her authority. Reiki helps me align my authentic authority and discernment with divine guidance, which gives me the confidence to make the right decisions. My mother's thought process improves as her health improves so then she is able to understand my choices on her behalf. Reiki gives me peace while I wait for this shift in her thinking. She is not always happy about it all!

My mother's determination is part of her personality and it has been an especially admirable quality through her older years. She is living every minute of life. However, sometimes her determination overrules her ability to assess her skills and physical capabilities and she thinks she can do more than is realistic. This is another place that Reiki empowers my discernment. It is important that I respect her ability to do everything she can do and at the same time be ready when her determination over-estimates what she *can* physically do.

Reiki strengthens our spiritual connections too. Each of us has our own path to walk as an individual and with others. My mother and I are able to have deep and meaningful conversations about God and what happens after this life. My mother says that she is at peace with dying; she just wants to feel good and have fun until then. We talk a lot about it while I give her Reiki. It gives us time for those philosophical conversations. She has always been a deeply independent, spiritual person. I still learn a lot from her. She listens to my contemplations about my spiritual path with Reiki and contributes her views and ideas about it. She shares her life stories and memories. I listen, and I learn so much more about her life and our family history. It gives her the time for reflection and life review. She has lived a full life and has loved and been well loved. I appreciate these times with her and feel very fortunate that I have this opportunity to get to know her even more. And I think she gets to know herself more too.

Reiki also helps me support myself when I get frustrated or have the normal emotions that can accompany everything I have talked about. Most of the time I am pretty peaceful about it all, but I don't make it to that peaceful place every day. My massage therapist was massaging the tension out of my face the other day and started to chuckle about the stress I was holding on to. She said that I put too many expectations on myself to "be spiritual" about it all. She was laughing because she does that too. I think it is a common enough thought for those of us walking a spiritual path—as if being spiritual means that I am not allowed to have rough times and feel overwhelmed and anxious.

However, getting upset doesn't help. So I use Reiki to return to emotional balance. Self-Reiki is my best friend when my emotions get away from me. Because I use so much self-Reiki, it can

quickly make a difference in my perceptions. When I feel calm and peaceful inside I am more able to think about solutions and appropriate actions. I have found that sometimes I need to simply rely on my actions and not worry about my feelings because I know that it is possible to have multiple feelings at the same time. I can feel upset and still act with respect and kindness. I can feel distressed and have compassion and joy in my heart at the same time. And self-Reiki helps me have compassion for myself too. My friend who can communicate so well with my mother has often reminded me that “none of it is about you” and “you will be so glad that you have done everything you have done,” when I get overwhelmed by the responsibilities. And I can listen to her and feel that it is okay to be feeling all of this.

Time management with Reiki helping out is miraculous. Caregiving is time consuming and unpredictable. However, in the past five years I have not had to cancel clients or Reiki classes; my Reiki schedule has always worked out. The medical crises seem to always happen at a time when I can stop what I am doing and focus on what my mom needs. I am not quite sure how Reiki knows what I need, but my schedule has worked out far too often for me to believe it is a coincidence. Reiki continually shows me that everything really is already all right. I am being taken care of too. I have divine support in more ways than I can comprehend.

Self-Reiki has become one of my greatest resources now. I use it wherever I am in whatever way is appropriate. I invite Reiki when I am busy, still, watching TV, going from here to there, waiting in the hospital, working, etc. Reiki is effective in helping me in every circumstance. If I can't place my hands on myself, such as when I am driving, then I simply think about the Reiki symbols and let them show up to help me connect to God and divine guidance.

Distant Reiki is also extremely useful with my mom. Even though she lives with my husband and me, I send her Reiki con-

tinuously. She is part of my Reiki Crystal Grid. I also send Reiki to myself, her doctors and our friends—our support system. I use distant Reiki to send to my other family members who are affected by the ups and downs of my mother's health. It is difficult for the people who care about my mother, but live too far away from her to be here with her.

The aging process of our parents is a different journey for each of us. Some of the medical and emotional circumstances are far more challenging than what I describe. Sometimes parents aren't open to Reiki and are difficult to care for. Their illness may be worse than what I describe. A parent may not be himself or herself anymore. Sometimes past wounds between the parent and child can cause resentment and anger. Not all families cooperate, and there can be conflict.

Through the entire process the only control any of us really have is to be who we want to be in the situation and be the highest version of ourselves possible. Regardless of the situation, use Reiki as a powerful resource and life management tool. It is always available to help you. Love is the easiest way to walk this path with your aging parents. Reiki will activate the love and blessings needed for all situations. 🌿



*Colleen is the founder of Reiki Lifestyle and a Senior Licensed Reiki Master Teacher for the ICRT. She teaches all levels of Usui/Holy Fire Reiki including Holy Fire Karuna Reiki®. She is also an Associate Teacher for the LightSong School of Shamanic Studies. Colleen lives in Portland, Oregon. Join her on ReikiChat™, a free, monthly Q & A teleconference call, by going to [www.ReikiChat.com](http://www.ReikiChat.com). For all other information, Colleen can be reached by email at [colleen@reikilifestyle.com](mailto:colleen@reikilifestyle.com), through her website at [www.reikilifestyle.com](http://www.reikilifestyle.com) or by phone at (503) 912-0664.*