

Defining Your Reiki Practice

Part One

BY COLLEEN BENELLI

THE SIMPLEST DEFINITION OF REIKI is that it is a “Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing.”¹ Accurate and easy to understand, I find that it is usually a sufficient answer for most people. However, Reiki is a big subject, and the above definition is a humble description of the true nature of Reiki. Understanding Reiki and the ability to describe its depths is part of the journey. Reiki will listen to your questions and teach you intuitively. As you develop your relationship with Reiki, the answers you receive will affect your life, beliefs, needs and intentions, at the same time that they help you define your understanding and practice of Reiki making it into something that is uniquely your own.

One of the most common questions my students ask after their Reiki attunements is how to talk about Reiki to others. What people think they know about Reiki energy from having read about it or having received a Reiki treatment is very different than their experience after their attunements. They suddenly realize that there are few words to describe the very real energy coursing through their body. It is often outside what they believe, opening an unexpected field of possibilities. They find they have no words to explain it.

In this multi-part article, I offer suggestions about some commonly discussed Reiki topics so that you can organize your thoughts around how you define your own Reiki practice. In this article, I will offer insight into the spiritual nature of Reiki and the importance of defining your heart intention for your Reiki practice along with making suggestions on how to use Reiki to heal some of the challenges and limitations you may encounter around these topics. Subsequent articles will discuss ways to define Reiki for the medical community, how to define your needs for Reiki and how to define a professional Reiki business.

Historically, we know that Reiki evolved and was practiced according to the needs of the people using it. Usui Sensei, the founder, was a spiritual scholar. History tells us that he began his education in a Tendai Buddhist school at age four. He studied Buddhism, Christianity, Shinto, the magic of fairies, the science of divination and medical science, and he belonged to a group dedicated to developing psychic abilities. Usui Sensei was a spiritual man who relied on his intuition and inner sensitivities when giving Reiki sessions. He used his Three Pillars of Reiki in his healing sessions:

Gassho meditation, Reiji-Ho and Chiryō. Dr. Hayashi was a medical doctor and a captain in the navy who used Reiki as a common medical practice on board ships. Hayashi Sensei created a Reiki manual with standardized treatments for particular physical ailments. Hawaya Takata, a student of Hayashi Sensei, taught Reiki as a Japanese healing tradition in Hawaii right after World War II. To accommodate the western world, she made many changes to the practice of Reiki, and at one point even painted over the word Reiki on her business sign, changing it to “Short Wave Therapy.”²

Yet with all the additions and changes to Reiki after Usui Sensei’s practice, all still agree that it adapts its healing energy to the circumstance of the moment.



We see from Takata Sensei’s example that Reiki heals regardless of what it is called. It is likely that you will define Reiki in various ways depending on whom you are talking to. I teach Reiki with spiritual language in my Reiki classes; however, when I am in medical settings I choose much more neutral language to describe it. This is perfectly acceptable since Reiki is diverse and adaptable to all beliefs about it.

¹ William Lee Rand, *Reiki: The Healing Touch* (Southfield, MI: Vision Publications, 2011).

² The research for this history is compiled from the inscription on Usui Sensei’s memorial stone, which can be read in *Reiki, The Healing Touch* by William Lee Rand, and from *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press 2007) by Tadao Yamaguchi and *Reiki Fire: New Information about the Origins of the Reiki Power: A Complete Manual* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press 1998) by Frank Arjava Petter.

Define Your Heart Intention for Your Reiki Practice

It is helpful to first become aware of your heart intention for your Reiki practice. Although it may evolve and shift with your personal development, your foundational reasons for using Reiki will remain the same regardless of your external circumstances and needs. Reiki and your heart intention will guide you and your practice through the changes in your life, often in unexpected ways.

Invite Reiki and listen for your heart intention. What are the gifts you want to give and receive from your relationship with Reiki? In your deepest heart, what matters the most to you? Open your heart to receive the answers. You can listen for your inner guidance in quiet times and also during your busyness. Simply activate Reiki and let your daily life show you what your answers are.

Invite Reiki to awaken your intellect and connect it with your heart. The Tibetan master symbol, DKM, is a powerful symbol to help you be aware of your heart intention for Reiki. It empowers manifestation through balanced giving and receiving. SHK awakens your pure mind, opens the field of possibilities and connects your divine intellect with your heart. Ask CKR to clear and strengthen your voice and connect it to your heart and mind. You will then hear yourself and your own definitions as you talk about Reiki. Invite Reiki to heal your limitations and any fears you may have. Ask it to reveal your heart intention for your Reiki practices.

My heart intention is “To spread Reiki into the world so that it will be available to the children.” My intention has manifested in my daily life in a variety of ways. Yesterday I taught my two-year-old grandson Calvin how to Reiki his toe when he stubbed it. My granddaughter Eva blew Reiki into her hands and helped me teach him. My son and his wife just asked me to clear and bless their new house and I give Reiki to my 81-year-old mother regularly. This is how Reiki for the children shows up in my personal life.

In my professional Reiki life, my heart intention shows up through my Reiki business. I believe that if I can help Reiki become a mainstream profession, then it will be available to more children for healing, making it feasible for them to become professional Reiki practitioners—enlarging the circle of Reiki even more. Through my work with the Northwest Reiki Association (NWRA), which is committed to bridging the medical community with the Reiki community, we have seen how Reiki is gaining amazing recognition for its powerful healing results at various clinics and other medical facilities here in Portland, Oregon.

I teach and practice a very spiritual approach to Reiki. I find that my students and clients are seeking spiritual body healing for psychological and physical injuries and illnesses. I am also a shamanic practitioner, and I combine the two techniques with my clients. My clientele primarily comes to see me for spiritual and emotional issues. I see the incredible results of their healing and believe that it makes a difference in the world.

Every heart intention is equal and all of them benefit the growth of Reiki. Let Reiki help you hear yours clearly. Then let your heart intention guide you. Sometimes it may not seem to be following your plans. Trust in yourself and continue to listen. Continue to invite Reiki to help.

Defining the Spirituality of your Reiki Practice

Although Reiki is spiritual in origin, it is not required that people practice Reiki with spirituality. Reiki is not a religion and it adheres to no specific spiritual belief system. It works with a purely technical viewpoint as well as a spiritual viewpoint. The healing attributes of Reiki flow whether Reiki is defined as a biofield energy or as a divine spiritual energy. The Reiki attunements guarantee that when people are attuned to Reiki, pure Reiki flows through them. The energy of Reiki is always pure consciousness and does not change its nature because of individual beliefs about it. Reiki sessions have positive results regardless of a person's perception of how and why it works.

There is now significant evidence that Usui Sensei founded Reiki through his spiritual practices and that he included spirituality in his Reiki sessions. Usui Sensei was studying Zen Buddhism during the time he received Reiki. Through his lifelong study of spirituality and religion, he had chosen to follow the path that would lead him to his life's purpose, which he came to understand meant attaining An-shin Ritus-mei, “a state of mind in which one is always at peace regardless of what is taking place in the outer world.” He believed he was to die to achieve this state and during the third week of fasting on the sacred Mt. Kurama, “Divine Reiki energy penetrated his body and soul. As the cosmic energy and his own energy resonated together he came to realize, ‘The Universe is me—I am the Universe.’ He had finally achieved the enlightenment he had so long pursued.”⁴

Dr. Usui recognized the healing energy he received on the mountain as “Reiki,” which means *spiritually guided life force energy*. He named his second pillar of Reiki Reiji-Ho, which means *indication of spirit*, and he practiced Reiki intuitively. “The kind of treatment Usui Sensei taught relies on one's inner guidance rather than on a predetermined set of hand positions.”⁵ Usui Sensei spoke of healing to be in the “divine state of Buddha,” and said, “It is generally thought to be very difficult for ordinary human beings to heal diseases. However the beauty of the spiritual healing method that I have created is that it makes this possible.”⁶

Tadao Yamaguchi speaks of the spirituality of Usui Sensei, “So it is quite natural that Usui Sensei would have used a lot of ideas based in *Shinto*. Shinto was developed from our primitive animistic worship of natural phenomena—the sun, mountains, trees, water, rocks, our harvest and so on. Animism embraces the idea

that spirits inhabit all of creation and look after human beings. Shinto sees everything, including human beings, as linked to the source or the divine world.”⁷

Today, people of all religious and spiritual backgrounds practice Reiki. I have had Reiki students from a wide variety of religions. In one Reiki class, I had a Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, fundamentalist Christian and Agnostic. I taught the class including my spirituality, which is very nature based. I believe that God is in everything and everyone, and is called by a lot of different names. I invited my students to let Reiki guide them to their own view of it according to their beliefs, religion and spirituality. “Members of any faith can learn Reiki without leaving their own spiritual tradition. Reiki offers us a personal encounter with the divine— independent of any church, sect or holy writing. *Reiki is!*”⁸

If a person desires it, Reiki will expand his or her innate spirituality. It awakens an awareness of the inner spirit and gives it presence and voice in our daily life. Reiki helps us to listen within for our connection to God in our own unique way.

My Reiki students often have spiritual experiences during and after their Reiki attunements. They talk of spiritual beings giving them messages, seeing angels, and brilliant colors, they often have visions, psychic awakenings, increased intuition, and sometimes they see their loved ones who have passed. The Reiki attunement opens a whole new field of possibilities for connection and communication with our own spirit and the spiritual world we live in.

Clients receive profound spiritual healing that affects their physical healing and well-being. Feelings of happiness, clarity and joy relieve the stress of their conditions and awaken their life force, sometimes allowing for a physical healing that seems like a divine miracle.

Yet, these very natural spiritual healings of a Reiki attunement or session are often difficult to explain to someone who has not experienced them. One way to express this is that Reiki awakens a joy inside that is more than a match for the challenging circumstances we are in. I believe this occurs because Reiki introduces us to our own spirit so that we finally know that there is more to this life and that we are not alone. Spirit and the

³ Rand, *Healing Touch*, 18; for further discussion, see Hiroshi Doi, “Reiki History” in *Iyashino Gendai Reikiho: A Modern Reiki Method for Healing*, rev. ed. (Vision Publications, forthcoming).

⁴ Yamaguchi, *Origins of Reiki*, 63.

⁵ Rand, *Healing Touch*, 55.

⁶ Usui’s own words from the “Reiki Ryoho no Shirori” published by the Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai. The questions and answers can be found in *Light on the Origins of Reiki*, 64–65.

⁷ Yamaguchi, *Origins of Reiki*, 99–100.

⁸ Walter Lubec, Frank Arjava Petter, & William Lee Rand, *The Spirit of Reiki* (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2006)135.

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See Colleen’s article
“Define Your Reiki Practice”
in this magazine.



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Colleen’s Reiki classes qualify you to become a Professional Member of the ICRT Reiki Membership Association. See her five day Portland and San Diego dates (must have had RII six months prior to attending Reiki ART/Master). See “Directory of Reiki Teachers Licensed by ICRT” at the back of this magazine, or go to www.reikilifestyle.com for complete information.

Featured Reiki Meditation



Remember your Spirit: A Meditation

Awaken to your spirit and remember your divine presence here on earth. Use this meditation in your Reiki classes, Reiki circles or for yourself! Receive Colleen’s written meditation for free on www.ReikiLifestyle.com

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divine presence are in us, and all around us. The Earth and our lives are filled with spirit. We are loved.

Heal the Fear of Spiritual Exposure

In my Reiki classes, my students often comment that it is difficult for them to define the spirituality of their Reiki practices because they fear a negative reaction from their family, friends and others who they consider the “mainstream.” I have also had this same fear and have given it a lot of thought and spent a lot of time healing myself and others over it.

When I work on this issue with my Reiki clients and in my own practices, I find that the fear is often generated by a fear of persecution, mostly from others with an opposing religious or scientific viewpoint.

It is possible the fear is reasonable. For the past 500 years or so, people who used energy healing practices, such as midwives, herbalists and others were persecuted, thought to be crazy or simply weird. It was prudent for people to shy away from any unconventional spiritual communication and connection.

Reiki became illegal in Japan after WWII. The General Headquarters of the United States banned Reiki and other Eastern healing practices to force the Japanese to use modern Western medicine only and in the case of Reiki because of its connection to the navy.⁹

So it is understandable that there is an almost instinctive caution when talking about Reiki and spirituality. However, we have reached a time in human history where spiritual and energy healing protocols like Reiki are again recognized for the powerful results they achieve in healing people, and they are now safe to practice. Western Reiki was introduced in Japan in the 1990s, and several forms of Reiki are now very popular there as they are in many other parts of the world. So why do we still have this fear? I found that my real concern over speaking about my spiritual version of Reiki was the fear of persecution and acceptance by that same “mainstream.” However, I believe that one of my life’s purposes is to have the courage to bring spiritual healing practices forward into our current mainstream practices. Reiki gives me that ability. Trust me, it can be uncomfortable to expose my true spiritual beliefs in my Reiki classes and in the articles I write for *Reiki News Magazine*. I have worried about what others will think. I have not completely healed my persecution fear so I continue to work hard on that. I sometimes have to spend a lot of time with self-Reiki in order to have the courage to write what Reiki has asked me to write. But, like all Reiki practitioners, I feel that Reiki guides me, and I have to follow that guidance or else allow my ego and personality to get in the way.


Conclusion

The Reiki people I meet come from every belief system, religion and profession. My students are teachers, psychologists, health care professionals, nurses, doctors, veterinarians, massage therapists, horse and dog trainers, yoga teachers, engineers, biologists, firefighters, EMTs, soldiers, corporate executives, moms, dads, kids, you name it. They are all different nationalities and religions, sexual orientations and educational levels, with a high percentage of people with advanced degrees.

What I have learned from my Reiki classes, clients and readers is that we are the mainstream. The people who are involved with Reiki are everyday people trying to find a way to heal and contribute to the well-being of life on the earth. We consciously create community with a common goal. Many of us are seeking spirituality, and Reiki provides a pathway for us to find it inside ourselves instead of following the rules of an outside authority. Even the fields of science and medicine are acknowledging the value and positive results Reiki and other energy medicines achieve. There are over 800 hospitals in the United States that offer Reiki. The idea that human beings have a spirit that can be injured and cause illness in the body is gaining greater recognition. When the energy body is full of a vital life force, the physical body responds.

It is possible to heal the fear of expressing the spirituality of your Reiki practice. Some of the fears don’t even belong to you; by necessity, your ancestors may have passed them down to you. Activate Reiki and begin to listen inside for your own spirituality. Activate the symbols you are attuned to and let Reiki connect you to your spirit, and the divine presence around you. Listen for how that shows up for you. What are your beliefs? Who is your spirit? How do your Reiki practices help you find your words to describe it all? What needs to heal? What needs to be empowered? Simply invite Reiki and then listen. Keep listening over the years. These are questions that you will continue to ask and to study.

You will redefine the spirituality of your Reiki practice as you experience it. How you define it will be according to you. You may flow more deeply into your religion and the spiritual beings who belong to those beliefs, you may find yourself investigating the geometry of the universe, you may find your beliefs in the science of the human mind, or in your daily activities and work, just to name a few.

There is great peace and freedom in healing the fear of expressing spirituality in Reiki. Spirituality is a fun subject to think and talk about—especially when you find others who talk about the same subjects! I feel fortunate to be able to talk about it all the time. People are looking for spiritual healing and the time is here. Discover Reiki and the words you use to describe it will follow. 

—Contact Colleen at colleen@reikilifestyle.com, www.Reikilifestyle.com, 503.912.0664 or on Facebook/Reiki Lifestyle.

⁹ Yamaguchi, *Origins of Reiki*, 66.