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# Reiki, Life cycles, and the Four Directions

BY COLLEEN BENELLI

EVERYTHING IN THE NATURAL WORLD is subject to life cycles. The tides flow by the phases of the moon, plants go dormant in winter to reemerge in spring, some animals hibernate or migrate, and we humans also change with the seasons and longer days and nights. In fact, our lives are made up of cycles. Life cycles can last an hour, a day, month, or years. Life cycles can also be called a phase we are in (the “terrible twos”), a stage we are going through (puberty), or a period of time in our life (retirement). In all cycles, there is a beginning, middle and end.

Awareness and knowledge about phases in our lives can help us find the opportunities of a cycle and live within it positively and effectively. This understanding can help us manage our lives when we are in a difficult life cycle and help us maximize our potential when we are in a powerful, innovative cycle.

It sometimes feels easiest to recognize our life cycles in retrospect. We often wish we had known sooner that we were in a particular cycle so that we could have worked with it more creatively and fully appreciated its gifts. Particularly the ones we have decided are less desirable. Sometimes we try to control them and get out of them before they are completed, or we try to escape them by using drugs or alcohol or other addictions. Usually we are ineffective when we do not flow within the rhythm of a cycle. A cycle will complete itself regardless of our discomfort. It is good to remember that it is just a time frame and that as one cycle ends a new one begins.

Astrologer Robert Hand gives a good example of this when describing an astrological cycle called Saturn oppose the Sun. He says, “This period is best dealt with by understanding that it is part of a natural cycle in your life. Nothing is gained by fighting it; instead, you must learn to flow with it. This influence represents a period of endings, which will be followed by new beginnings. The problem is to avoid being discouraged and frustrated by the endings. Soon you will have the opportunity to begin new projects that will build up to new peaks of achievement in about fourteen years.”

Life cycles always have opportunity in them. In creative cycles opportunity is obvious; in challenging cycles it can be hidden and hard to see. Reiki can help us have the patience and wisdom to follow the path of opportunity in every cycle, even when we can't see the opportunity clearly. It can align our chakras with the rhythms and cycles of the earth so we feel the power of the earth and her cycles within us. Reiki connects us to our spiritually guided life force energy and our higher mind. It helps us navigate and create our path from an elevated perspective. It helps us understand and live harmoniously with whatever cycle we are experiencing.

## Life Cycles and The Four Directions

Understanding the medicine wheel is helpful for defining life cycles. There are many teachings about the medicine wheel from many traditions. I have an eclectic view, having explored its meaning from various sources, including Reiki and my spirit guides.

For understanding of life cycles I work with the four directions of the medicine wheel: East, South, West, and North. This knowledge gives me an overview of life cycles and then Reiki can help me understand the personal details. Each direction embodies the qualities of various life cycles. When we understand the cycle we are in, we can align with its attributes and flow with the cycle.

The following are short descriptions of the four directions of the medicine wheel as I experience them in regards to life cycles. Other traditions may have various colors, or spirit guides, or other details. However, the overall meaning of the direction is similar in most customs. Although the directions are associated with a season, life cycles do not necessarily correspond with seasons. Each cycle can occur at any time of year, and they are not always in order. For example you can be in a North cycle during summer, and the North can follow a cycle rooted in the East.

*East* is the time of beginnings. It represents spring, the color yellow, and the sunrise. It is a time of new life, rebirth, creativity, and inspiration. The power animals I associate with it are the eagle and hawk. They give us the ability to see from a higher perspective above the world. When we are in the East, life is often exciting, open to new possibilities and fresh ideas. We can feel called to adventure and the desire to create and manifest our ideas. We are innovative and thriving.

However, every cycle has its challenges and obstacles too. The East is no exception. Imagine a flower seed lying beneath the earth as it begins its journey through the soil until it reaches the light. It pushes its way through, sometimes through hard soil, around rocks, or it may have to grow despite lack of water or drought. It rises because it must. It is compelled to grow regardless of all obstacles to become the blossom it is meant to be.

*South* is the time of growth. The summer is its season, and it is the full light of the sun. When we are in the South, we are manifesting the ideas we had in the East. We expand and grow, are social and have energy. There is freedom of movement, travel, lots of work, and lots of play. My power animals in the South are the horse and mountain lion. The color is red.



The challenge of the South is that often everything we do, works. We can be so busy keeping up with everything we have set in motion that we get overwhelmed. “So much to do and so little time” is a typical response to this cycle. The hours can be long with little time for rest. It is also a time when we can expand too quickly and overcommit ourselves.

*West* is the cycle of harvest, of reaping what we have sown. It is autumn, the time we prepare and gather what we will need for the long winter. The power animal is the bear and the color is black. The West is the night sky, and the phase of going within, a cycle of inner reflection. The body slows down, it is time to rest and enjoy the harvest.

The challenge of the West is that it can be misunderstood. In many of our cultures, we do not honor the West or the North. We often think something is wrong when we slow down and take time to go inward or to rest. We often resist the stillness, thinking we “should” be busy, and we miss the opportunity to allow the quiet to prepare us for the busyness that inevitably returns.

*North* is the time of renewal. It can be a quiet cycle with a need for alone time. We usually stay close to home. If we are social at all, we often just want to be with family or close friends. It is a time we go to the deep well within. Our hearts are closer to the surface. The season is winter; its color is white, and the power animal is the white buffalo.

The North is a place of transformation in preparation for rebirth in the East. We become like the seed that lies dormant under the winter snow to grow in the East and become the rose in the long summer days of the South.

The North can be a cycle of death and dying, both literally and metaphorically. It can be a cycle during which loved ones and pets we love die, a time of loss and grief. It can also be a cycle of letting go of that which does not serve our future. Any walls we have built incorrectly can tumble and take us all the way down to our foundations, giving us the opportunity to build a new structure without the walls of the past. When we are in the North, the winter wind blows and clears the way for new beginnings.

The North is also very misunderstood in our culture. It is often viewed as negative, and we think we are depressed or not functioning well. However, there are tremendous gifts and blessings from the North. At the end of this cycle, we experience our authentic self. We have died to everything that is not truly who we are.

To experience beginnings, it is necessary to complete our endings. Every cycle has a beginning, middle and end. When one cycle is ending, and we wait for the new beginning, it is important to listen to spiritual guidance and our higher self. Reiki can help us understand and navigate our path. It can highlight the way in front of us, so we can see where to step next. When in the East we can see from the Eagle’s perspective high above, able to see the obstacles ahead of us. When we are in the North we sometimes only see the next step. Reiki can

help us trust the place we are in and help us listen to the opportunity and blessings in every cycle. It can help us take action when needed and have patience when we are gestating and not ready for action.

### How to use Reiki to Understand Life Cycles

Coming to know the directions through my Reiki and shamanic practices has helped me to understand a broad view of life cycles as they relate to my own life, and it has helped my healing work with others. Life can be challenging to navigate. However, it makes life easier when we are conscious of where we are within the big picture of our life, as well as the close-up view.

In native cultures and in medicine wheel teachings, the directions create a sacred hoop of power. The circle of the wheel contains all four directions and all of creation is within the sacred hoop. When I invite Spirit into my Reiki sessions, I always include the directions in my invocation. When I prepare my room for a Reiki treatment or attunement, or when I am clearing a space, I draw the Power symbol on each wall, the ceiling, and the floor; I also call to the directions to fill the room. I face the direction, draw the Power symbol and I welcome the East, South, West, and North and the enlightened beings of each direction to bring the sacred hoop of power to the space.

Ask Reiki to help you recognize and feel the rhythms of life cycles around you and within you. Invite the wisdom of the directions. Ask Reiki to help you understand them. Use Reiki to align your chakras to the rhythm of the earth. Let Reiki help you release and heal any resistance to the cycle, and ask Reiki to empower you so you can receive the blessings and opportunities during every cycle. I have created an exercise with the Four Directions that I use for self-treatment and when working with clients.

### Reiki Four Direction Exercise

Activate your hands with the Reiki symbols. Activate the Tibetan Fire Serpent and ask it to connect you to the heartbeat of the Earth. Invoke the Distant Healing symbol, awaken your divine heart, and intend that there is a bridge of light between your heart and the enlightened realms of the East, South, West, and North. Invoke the Mental/Emotional symbol and ask it to empower your divine mind and awaken your higher self. Ask this symbol to translate the wisdom of the directions so you clearly understand their messages. Invoke the Power symbol and ask it to release any blockages you have regarding the cycle. Ask it to empower your life force so that your spirit is strong and vital in every circumstance during each cycle. Invite the Tibetan Master symbol and ask it to increase your creativity and your ability to manifest.

Give yourself Reiki and pay particular attention to your ears and then to your chakras.

Begin with your right hand on your crown chakra and the left hand on the solar plexus. (You may want reverse this if you are left-handed.) Change hand positions when guided to do so. Move


right hand from the crown to the third eye, then to the throat, then the heart. Invite the eighth Karuna Reiki® symbol to balance the chakras. Ask it to empower your priorities.

Move the left hand from the solar plexus to above the root chakra. Move the right hand from the heart to the solar plexus, then to the second chakra. Move your left hand from the root chakra to the knees, the right hand from the second chakra to above the root, then the left hand from the knees to the ankles and the hand from the root to the knees. Finish with a hand on each foot. Draw a Power symbol over each foot. Then draw the Fire Serpent over the crown chakra and direct the spiral into the earth. Finish the session by drawing a large Power symbol over your whole body and seal the Reiki treatment with love and light.

During the session, ask, and then listen for the messages from the directions. See if one of them highlights itself to you. This may come during the session or it may come later. Engage active listening. (See my article, "Listen with Reiki," *Reiki News Magazine*, Winter 2007.) Notice if any attributes of the directions come to mind. As that direction reveals itself, ask it to balance and align you to the highest purpose of the cycle it represents. Ask for specifics, such as what is your next step, what are you missing about the cycle, where do you need to release and heal resistance, or what do you need to empower to align with the opportunity of the cycle. Questions will often arise during the session, giving you more clarity. Ask for clarity and appropriate action.

### Staying Aligned with the Directions

There are many ways to stay aligned with your life cycles. One way I stay aligned is to have a Reiki Gratitude Ceremony on each solstice and equinox. With this beautiful ceremony, I offer my thanksgiving to the Earth and the cycles of life. I ask to be aligned in heart and mind with the rhythms of the earth and her natural cycles and seasons.

Myron Old Bear speaks of life cycle ceremonies in *The Sacred Journey of the Medicine Wheel*, "The first lifestyle ceremony is called The Ceremony of New Beginnings, and lasts from the Spring Equinox to the Summer Solstice. The second lifestyle ceremony is called The Ceremony of Growth, starts on the Summer Solstice, and continues to the Fall Equinox. The Ceremony of Reaping and Harvesting is the next lifestyle ceremony, and it begins on the Fall Equinox and continues to the Winter Solstice. The fourth lifestyle ceremony is called the Ceremony of Renewal and starts at the Winter Solstice and continues to the Spring Equinox." 

You can find the Reiki Gratitude ceremony on my website, [www.Reikilifestyle.com](http://www.Reikilifestyle.com). My article about the ceremony appeared in the *Reiki News Magazine* (Fall 2007).

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See  
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