



Illustration by Gaia Orion

Reiki Talking Stick

BY COLLEEN BENELLI
PHOTOS COURTESY OF COLLEEN BENELLI

A REIKI TALKING STICK is an amazing communication tool that can help focus your attention on your words, intentions and prayers. It can help you find your voice by centering you in your heart, so you can find the words that will allow you to speak your truth with honesty and clarity. A Reiki Talking Stick is used when talking to a group but can also be used when praying for guidance or meditating on an issue you need to resolve, thinking about how to speak to someone about something important or simply contemplating your life and making plans. It can also be used when giving Reiki sessions to yourself or others.

Talking Sticks are an old tradition used for communication by a variety of people and cultures. In Native traditions, a Talking Stick is imbued with the spirit of the tree the wood comes from as well as the spiritual qualities of the animals whose feathers and fur embellish the stick. Reiki is life force energy and it naturally compliments the existing spiritual elements of the tree and animals your stick is made of, bridging the old traditions with new ones. Reiki increases heightened perceptions and helps move the ego and mind out of the way, giving the power of the Talking Stick a greater ability to reach the heart of the person holding it. Reiki opens the throat chakra and connects it to the other chakras, giving the person holding the Talking Stick the ability to speak from the whole self.

History of the Talking Stick

Talking Sticks have been used in many diverse cultures around the world: from indigenous people such as the Masai, Maoist Chinese, Australian Aboriginal, the indigenous people of Britain and Native Americans to today's corporate board rooms. It also played a role in the founding of the United States, as illustrated in Stephen R. Covey's book *8th Habit of Highly Effective People*. Covey says, "The Talking Stick has played an integral part in Native American government for centuries. In fact, some of the Founding Fathers of the American Republic (particularly Benjamin Franklin) were educated in the ideas behind the Talking Stick by Indian chiefs of the Iroquois Federation." Covey describes how with a Talking Stick present, the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution as we know it today.

CT Labs, a Canadian collaborative solutions company, has been using Talking Sticks in their training events since 1998. Rabbi Sarah Etz Alon writes a blog called *Talking Sticks and the Hebrew Medicine Wheel* in which she writes about imbuing her

Talking Sticks with the energetic attributes of the Ten Sefirot of the Hebrew Kabbalah mystery tradition. Examples of ancient and modern uses for the Talking Stick are easy to find on books and on the Internet.

Intentions for a Reiki Talking Stick

I invite Reiki to guide and assist in finding truth with ease. I imbue the stick with the Reiki symbols and the intention of the session. I open with CHK, and HSZSN; then I ask in SHK and the Karuna Reiki® symbol Gnosha, the symbol of the intellect. I am also guided to use other Reiki symbols. When I close a session, I use the CHK symbol to seal the session with love and light. I then draw another CHK over the stick to clear the session from the stick and seal it with love and light so that in between the times I use it, it will stay pure and the wood will not pick up any other energy except Reiki. I also sage the Talking Stick in between uses.

Talking Sticks can be used individually or by a group. There are different intentions and reasons for using a Talking Stick. I use mine for personal meditations, and I often hold it while I do self-Reiki. Imbued with Reiki, it helps me still my mind to find answers and solutions.

I also use my Talking Stick for some of my Reiki clients before a session to help them identify and define their intention from a deeper place. The stick can help them focus and listen to their own words. I find that my clients receive tremendous healing when they are able to completely tell their story, and it is often a profound part of their Reiki session. While they are talking, I ask Reiki to heal the words of their story and to release them from any trapped words or unexpressed emotions or thoughts. After they are finished, we are able to identify their intention for Reiki, and we then begin the session.

Talking Circles

A Talking Circle is a gathering of people for the purpose of expressing themselves. A Talking Stick is used during the circle to enable each person to speak and be heard without interruption while he or she holds the stick. The circles are always a place of safety.

The Sharing Circle – This is the most common circle. There may be a theme or not. It is a time of reflection and speaking from the heart about a topic or about whatever is on the person's mind that day. In one circle I participated in, I had no idea what I was

going to say until I held the stick. I was surprised at the wisdom of what I said. I had a similar experience in another circle. The Talking Stick gives me clarity and helps me find my voice.

Healing Circle – This is a very powerful circle and needs to be treated with the utmost respect. Sometimes a circle is convened to assist and support an individual. In one such group I was part of, each person held the stick and told the woman receiving the healing what the circle member saw in her heart and her true self. Beautiful words were spoken to her. Sometimes a healing circle benefits a whole group. For instance if there is a painful world event or a family event, the individuals within the group, with the help of a facilitator, can express themselves, often giving each member the ability to say what has been unsaid, however painful. In either case, everyone present benefits in a variety of ways.

Mediation Circle – These are circles convened to mediate between individuals or groups. In these circles, the Talking Stick may need to make more than one round.

Business Solutions Circle – This is a circle held in a business meeting to convey ideas and find solutions. We have used this in my husband's construction meetings with his partner, in rounds, to brainstorm, say what is left unsaid, define future goals, decide the actions needed to accomplish the goal, etc.

An End of Life Circle – A Reiki Talking Circle can be helpful when people are at the end of their life. Family and friends gather in a sacred circle for everyone's healing. Holding the Talking Stick (or you may think of it as a Prayer Stick) may help the person passing say the words he or she needs to say or ask questions—which can be powerfully healing. People can use the Talking Stick to talk to their God to, perhaps, state their fears and worries about their transition from this world to the next, find forgiveness for who they have been in this life or apologize to their loved ones for past behaviors. The Talking Stick can give them the courage to speak from their heart. It can also help them communicate with their family members waiting for them on the other side, and their spirit guides who are there to escort them to the light.

The Talking Stick may also give the person's family and loved ones the opportunity to speak their truth to their beloved one.

Storytelling Circle – A Reiki Talking Stick is also effective for storytellers—the words seem to flow more easily. Because the people attending have agreed to listen, the storyteller is empowered to create the story with passion and vision.

What is Left Unsaid Circle – In this type of circle, whoever holds the stick states what has been on her mind but hasn't been said. Then the stick is handed to the next person in a clockwise direction. This can be complete in one round, or through other rounds that voice concerns, joys and then personal stories. Passing the stick around four times can represent the four directions.

Protocols for Talking Circles and Talking Sticks

The Reiki Talking Stick is a practical tool that ensures a place of safety for groups of people by establishing certain protocols that are agreed to beforehand. The most fundamental protocol is that the person holding the Talking Stick is the only one speaking, ensuring that each person who wants to speak has his or her ideas heard. The other people remain silent as the stick is passed to the next person, who also speaks without interruption until he feels understood. There is no discussion or debate while the stick is being passed. Each person in the circle is valued equally with an equal right to speak. If a person decides not to say anything, he simply passes the talking stick to the next member of the circle.

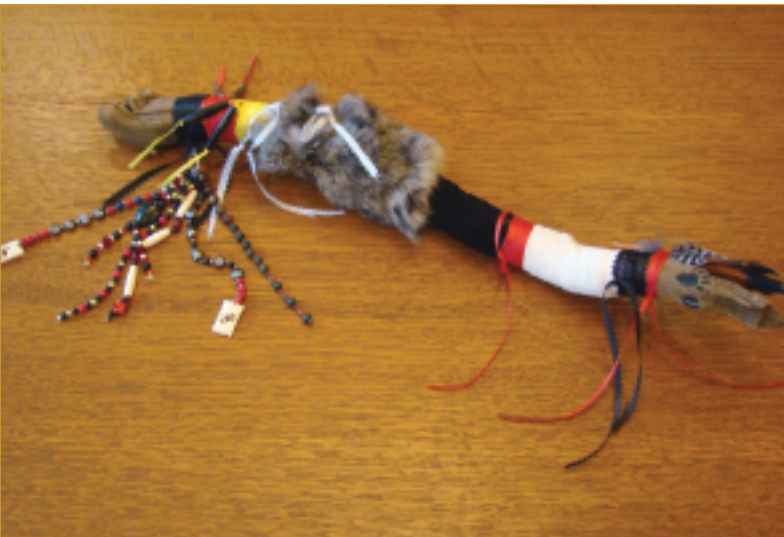
Another important protocol is that each person in the circle agrees to engage in active listening without prejudice or response, making sure that she understands what the person is saying. Each person also agrees to wait to decide what she is going to say until the Talking Stick is in her hands. This way everyone is completely available to listen to the person speaking so that no one repeats unneeded information or asks impertinent questions. All voices are respected as equal and kept as confidential.

The circle is not a place to vent anger, jealousy or hate, and there is no debate or dialogue between participants. These feelings must be left outside of the circle. Respect, tolerance and calm must be present in the proceedings.

However, if it has been agreed on by the group prior to the beginning of the meeting, it is possible for the person with the Talking Stick to ask another person in the circle a question. This



Using a talking stick in a Talking Circle.



I was given the one with the leather, fur and beads (Top), the other was made by and belongs to Reiki Master and Sound Healer Lauri Shainsky, Ph.D.

is done with the Answering Feather which is held by the person with the Talking Stick and passed to the person who has been asked the question. This is the only time another person in the circle can speak out of turn. Again, this is not an opportunity to debate, but to answer a question so the person speaking is understood.

How to Hold a Reiki Talking Circle

- Set the space with Reiki Symbols. Smudge the room and the participants with sage, if appropriate.
- Have people sit comfortably in a circle.
- Explain the protocols.
- Say an opening prayer, invite Reiki and spiritual guides, and set the intention for the Talking Circle. Say this out loud so all can hear.

Reiki Lifestyle®
Living the Light of Joy

Reiki Treatments

Soul Retrieval
Past Life Healing
Stress Reduction
Ancestral Healing

Treatments in Person or by Phone
Contact Colleen for an appointment at:
phone: (503) 912.0664
email: colleen@reikilifestyle.com

See Colleen's article
"Reiki Talking Stick"
in this magazine.



Colleen Benelli

ICRT Licensed
Reiki Master Teacher

Associate Teacher
LightSong School of
Shamanic Studies

Upcoming Reiki Workshops

Reiki I & II			Reiki ART/Master		
April	21-22	Portland	March	23-35	Portland
May	05-06	Seattle	June	08-10	Portland
May	19-20	Boise	September	21-23	Portland
June	06-07	Portland	October	12-14	San Diego
June	22-23	Sacramento	Karuna Reiki Master®		
August	04-05	Portland	March/April	30-01	Portland
September	15-16	Portland	September	28-30	Portland
October	10-11	San Diego			

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 Craft Project™

Reiki Talking Stick

Free instructions to create your own Reiki Talking Stick can be found at www.ReikiLifestyle.com



For complete information visit, call or email
w: www.reikilifestyle.com / blog.reikilifestyle.com
e: colleen@reikilifestyle.com | p: (503) 912.0664



The above stick is Manzanita from my brothers' home in the Sierras near Yosemite. I activated Reiki when I began working with my stick, and all the times I worked with it. Reiki filled my intentions and focus on the stick so that I could listen to it as I was making it. I stripped the bark and sanded it until it was soft to the touch and I could see the grain in the wood. I have found many faces in the wood and they speak to me as I am sanding and deciding what to put on the stick. I keep hearing that the faces in the wood want to be able to help when a person is holding it. That it is also a divination tool. Which means that people can look into the stick for the answers to the questions they ask.

The crystal on the stick is one that I had under my big tree for a long time. It fit the end of the stick perfectly. I wanted to make this stick for a long time, but then I packed the crystal in my move and couldn't find it right away. I couldn't continue making the stick, even though I tried making it with other things. When I finally found it, I was able to continue making my Reiki Talking Stick and write this article. I found the crystal on the other end, which I thought was to be covered in leather, in a gem store, and I knew it belonged on my Talking Stick as soon as I saw it. The fur is Coyote. The horse hair is from my horse, Dakota. He isn't with me anymore, but his spiritual presence is always available when I call him. The feather is a Painted Owl, which represents "seeing in the dark with your heart" and the freedom that comes from speaking total truth to the best of one's ability. I found these feathers in Canada, they aren't real Owl feathers, but painted and dyed Turkey feathers made to look like Owl. These were made by a woman who really took her time to bring the spirit of Owl into the feathers as she painted them. There are websites offering painted raptor feathers that look and feel very real.

Talking Feathers.

- Hold the Reiki Talking Stick while you pray and place the Reiki Symbols you are attuned to into it. State the intention that the stick empowers truth, the power of voice, clarity, honesty and ease of speaking.
- Ask each person to introduce himself when the Talking Stick comes to him.
- The Talking Stick can be passed around the circle clockwise or the person holding the stick can hold it out in front of herself when she is finished, allowing anyone in the circle to take the stick and speak.
- If an Answering Feather is part of the circle, the person with the Talking Stick also holds the feather. She may pass it to another person if there is a question.
- If possible the circle should have no time limit. It is complete when all people feel understood.
- When everyone has spoken and feels complete, close the circle, giving thanks to the enlightened beings who have come and to all the participants, and ask that the highest good for all occurs. Seal the circle with love and light using the Reiki Symbols.

Listening During a Talking Circle

An important role of each participant in a Talking Circle is to actively listen to the person holding the Talking Stick until that person feels they have been heard and understood. This means waiting to think about one's own reply until the Talking Stick is passed to you. In the *8th Habit*, author Covey talks about the reason we often fail to listen and wait to understand. In Habit 5, he says, "Seek first to understand, and then be understood." He goes on to say that "most people listen with the intent to reply, not to understand." Forming this reply in your mind means that "you decide prematurely what the other person means before he/she finishes communicating."

Fully listening does not necessarily mean full agreement—just understanding. Thus, each can trust that he will also be listened to until he feels understood. This is a tremendous



healing gift in and of itself, making a person feel validated and valuable. Many people have very limited experiences of others listening to them completely and a Reiki Talking Circle can provide them with a group of people committed to understanding them.

Covey also says, “It transforms the energy of the group from negative to positive, from defensive to creative, and it produces third alternative solutions that are better than what anyone initially proposed.”

How to Make a Reiki Talking Stick

By inviting Reiki to help you find the pieces that want to come together as your Reiki Talking Stick, and then listening for the answer, you will find just the right pieces to create a unique ceremonial tool. Listening is an important part of creating any kind of Reiki ceremonial tool. Allow Reiki to guide you to the pieces appropriate for you to use. The stick and the embellishments will carry the spiritual qualities the tree and animals they are made of, and if you listen you will find just the right pieces to create your Reiki Talking Stick.

And if you already have a Talking Stick, or if you buy your Talking Stick, you can still imbue it with Reiki. Reiki can align the stick with you and empower it with your intentions.

I have some examples of Reiki Talking Sticks in this article in the photos, and complete instructions on how to make one on my website, www.reikilifestyle.com.

When I completed the Talking Stick, I held it and filled it with Reiki, asking it to hold the power of voice with truth, honesty and clarity. I asked that it assist a person to easily speak whatever is to be said.

My Reiki Talking stick is for me, for others, for Talking Circles and for ceremonies. I have been using it to help me write this article. So the important information is here. I have been surprised at how much there is to say.

A Reiki Talking Stick is a wonderful tool to have for your Reiki practices. It can help you personally to help you answer questions while you meditate or do self-Reiki, and it can help with your clients or other groups of people. Consider holding Reiki Talking Circles—they are very powerful.



The Talking Stick is the tool that teaches each of us to honor the Sacred Point of View of every living creature.

—FIRST PEOPLE, WWW.FIRSTPEOPLE.US.

—Colleen Benelli can be contacted by email at colleen@reikilifestyle.com, by phone at 503.912.0664 or at her website, www.reikilifestyle.com.