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SPIRITUAL HEALING
THROUGH REIKI

The Path of the Mystic

Legal *Common Sense*

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May We Meet in Perfect Love & Perfect Trust

Reiki was a life-changing experience for me, a perfect reflection of trusting my path to lead me where I needed to go.

My healing journey through Reiki wasn't always easy. I had to confront deeply shadowed parts of myself, and I had to re-evaluate the ways I would be of service to others.

It was and still is a deep homecoming. As I took the path of the Master, my life changed yet again. Reiki was no longer something I did or channeled, it became who I am.

While I still choose to formally work with the energies twice a day, they are always radiating through me. It is not something I step away from. It is a constant reminder of my path and purpose, and my choice to align with the Light.

Always, with the Light.

Shine on,

Rev. Jennifer Cordes.



This paper was written as part of my metaphysics studies.

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My Path to *Reiki*



Human beings are so confusing. They think one thing and say another. They have strong impulses and desires that they suppress. They hurt themselves and others. There is such kindness and strength and there is such a sense of confusion and anger. They keep themselves unhappy by clinging to the familiar instead of doing what they really want to do.

Truth be told, I have always preferred the company of animals. Unlike most humans, animals feel how they feel. They express themselves. They are present. They let themselves and others just be. They are the closest expression of divinity I have felt on this plane.

As an empath, I've been experiencing this chaotic and contradictory range of emotions all of my life. As a psychic, I've been in contact beyond the veil, had precognitions and dreams that foretold the future, astral-traveled, channeled, heard other people's thoughts, and, generally, experienced life in vivid 5-D. Time has always felt like it was happening around me, that things were never as solid nor as straightforward as they appeared to be. I have often felt as if I were in a waking dream. Yet, with all of these supernatural experiences, I didn't feel connected and I didn't feel complete.

Even if humans would always be a contradiction, I understood the call of religious devotion—to have a sanctuary where the highest ideals could be discussed, where like meditation, we can come home to our divine nature. But, that's not what I found.

Brought up in fundamentalist Christian churches and schools, I was surrounded by religious ideals that I neither believed in nor could sanction. I saw hypocrisy and judgement all around me. How could someone who espoused a love of God take such pleasure in making someone else feel small and unworthy? How could someone nod in agreement during a rousing, passionate sermon about Christian values of Samaritan kindness and then turn a blind eye to the suffering of the homeless person begging on the street? How can we say that God is love, but not for the gays, the pagans, the "abominations?"

My Path to *Reiki*



There was so much in the Bible that I couldn't reconcile: an angry and vengeful God, patriarchal and misogynistic mores, and mistreatment of women and "non-desirable" races...just to name a few. My naturally inquisitive mind was discouraged when I pointed these things out. I was guided to punishment stories as a way to bring me in line. It was traumatizing. I lived with a continual fear—sometimes loud, anxious thoughts and sometimes a grating underneath my skin—that I wasn't worthy, that I was created wrong and would be punished for it. I was sure I was going to hell.

I spent a lot of time studying, trying to find the truth, trying to find a path to God that wasn't littered with self-hatred and fear and condemnation. I was so deep in the closet, I couldn't reconcile that I was gay because the fear of being rejected was overwhelming. I was an untrained, terrified empath in the middle of an existential crisis—it was an inordinate amount of tension to bear. Chronic headaches began at 10 years of age for me. Migraines at 13.

The rapture and end times were a prevalent and heavy belief in my upbringing. When we were instructed to write a paper about it (I was around 12 years of age), I created a story about a young girl who didn't fit in, who didn't believe in the Bible but was a good person. She was left behind in the rapture and was so despondent to be separated from her family that she committed suicide. I ended the paper with the line that she took the easy way out. My teacher never spoke to me personally about it, nor to my knowledge were my parents informed. I do remember him telling the class that it was wrong to take your own life and then moving on to the next student's story.

In my teen years, I participated in youth groups and church events, and Sunday after Sunday, I went up to the front of the church for altar call. I was yearning for that click, that sense that I finally belonged. I thought if I begged and pleaded enough, God would hear me. I wondered why my family never questioned if I was all right, why such a sheltered child who never caused trouble felt the need to be cleansed so often.

My Path to *Reiki*



I took on a full-time job when I was 19 and began to make my own money. I gained more control over what I read and ate. I bought books on Eastern philosophy and hid them under my bed. I listened to classical music. I practiced yoga and became a vegetarian. Churches were beginning to lose their grip on me. But still, I knew that I didn't fit. I was keeping myself tightly bound. So tightly, in fact, that I was obsessed with my body weight.

Dieting and exercising became a conduit for my obsessive and fearful thoughts. If I could spend my day thinking about calories, I didn't have to think about going to hell for something I had no control over. I became anorexic and struggled with disordered eating and body dysmorphia for over 20 years.

My parents have always been quiet about their faith. However their reconciled the Bible and church with their daily life was private. They apparently didn't have the need to talk through things in the same way I do. I had a lot of pent-up frustration and agitation that was eating me from the inside out. University was a lifesaver for me. Surrounded by academics and a formal structure that encouraged free thought, I was finally where I belonged. My primary studies were in psychology and sociology, but I also took philosophy and a comparative religions class—I was testing if I could talk about God without re-traumatizing myself.

When I learned about other religions through the viewpoint of universal themes and a quest for meaning, I was able to look at it without fear. I realized how much of it I didn't believe and never had, and what's more, I didn't want to. I began to accept that religion was not my path and that I would rather wander until I found it than contort myself to fit someone else's rules. I still didn't feel like I belonged but I at least knew what I didn't want, who I wasn't. As Danielle Dulsky relates, *Who are you not?* can be a powerful question to unlock your inner truth (280). When we don't know how to define ourselves, beginning with the opposite, what we know for sure we are not, can be a helpful place to start.

My Path to *Reiki*



I met a woman who had been attuned to Reiki and she offered to do a session for me. I didn't understand it exactly, but I knew that it was where I needed to be. She lit a cone of incense, I sat quietly, and she worked on my aura. Afterward, she explained the symbol she used and I noticed that I felt more peaceful. She was often changing interests and Reiki never came up between us again, but that experience felt like a beacon to me. A little light had been planted to guide my way.

As I became clearer on who I was not, what I didn't want to be, I began to release some of the tension I had been carrying. I came out of the closet, I began to hate myself less and less. The headaches got better, but my eating habits culminated in a breaking point. It was as if I had reached a spiritual healing crisis. I couldn't continue further until my unhealthy paradigms were fully broken down and released.

I had what felt like a nervous breakdown with debilitating anxiety and panic attacks. If I had been in therapy at the time, I would have met the criteria for panic disorder. All of my independence was stripped away. I couldn't take care of myself without my parents' help. It was as if my body knew that the only way to reach me was to force me to be vulnerable. All of the knowledge I had accumulated was useless in the face of a body that had reached its breaking point.

Even in the midst of my fear and anger at my body for betraying me, I had the sense that I was at a crossroads. I could continue to ride the fence between eating "healthy" in an attempt to rigidly control my body, or I could let it all go and take the chance that I wouldn't end up unrecognizable. Who was I without the rules, the education, the strict rein I kept over my impulses? I didn't know what the future would bring, but I knew for sure that I didn't want to continue as I had been. I was ready to change.

My Path to *Reiki*



I finally let myself be loved. I accepted help and I began to heal—to really heal. I wasn't on the surface any longer. I had touched the depth of my pain. I didn't know what to do with all of it, but it was no longer a terrifying abyss. When I came through it, it felt as if I had passed through my chrysalis.

Nearly a decade after that first Reiki session, I learned that a friend's niece was a yoga studio owner and I joined her mailing list. When she began teaching Reiki, something lit up inside me. I felt an inexplicable pull that I did not question. I answered the call. I received my first Reiki attunement in October of 2018 and became a Reiki Master the following year. I have worked with Reiki daily (usually at least twice a day) since that first attunement and estimate that I've had over 1,200 sessions.

I've felt the magic of buzzing and tingling in my hands with the infamous heat. I've experienced the beautiful mystery of communing with my Reiki guides. I've connected in a profound way to the universe and learned to trust my part in its unfolding. My intuition has heightened, as have my empathy and sensitivity. I've recognized the crucial importance of meditation and going inward to still and connect. I've learned to rely on my instincts and to trust myself. I finally trust myself.

After that first attunement, my path opened up. I was guided to a Toltec coach training program, through which I learned of UMS. The synchronicities have been amazing. I feel as if I am finally where I am supposed to be, that I am in the flow. While it's often tempting to want to control things and to know the timeline and how things will unfold, I'm learning that the more I force, the less naturally things can operate. I'm learning to bring my personality in service to my higher soul.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



Reiki (pronounced 'ray kee') translates to universal energy. It was coined by Mikao Usui to describe the ancient healing system he sought through his Buddhist studies. In Buddhism, physical healing is incidental to the goal of spiritual enlightenment. However, physical healing did occur along that path. Usui's students questioned how the Buddha healed, how Jesus did. Were these miracles relegated to a few enlightened masters, or could everyone learn to do it?

After discovering the healing formula in ancient writings, Usui sequestered himself on a mountaintop favored for pilgrimages. He had learned as much as he could via study on the physical plane and required what would become part of the Usui method, the spiritual attunement. On the last day of his 21-day fast, he experienced a bolt of light in his third eye and saw bubbles of light all around him, each with symbols. When he came down from the mountain, he was a healer. He devoted his life to the path of the Master so that he could help others.

Through a series of attunements (or initiations, translated in Sanskrit as empowerment) the Master alters the student's aura and chakra system to open to this life force (Stein 111). As soon as an attuned student places her hands down with the intent to heal, the healing energy begins to flow. As Lisa Champion writes, "Almost everyone can feel the Reiki energy flowing through them. This feeling of warmth and tingling flow becomes proof that 'energy' is real. After that experience, we might then begin to wonder, What else is real, spiritually speaking?" (3).

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



For many, myself included, Reiki feels like a homecoming. Through channeled information, Diane Stein believes that Reiki is encoded in our DNA as a birthright of the human race:

"In 1991 I asked Laurel for channeling about the origins of Reiki. She described Reiki as having originated with the planet that also brought the many-armed gods and goddesses to Earth, the root culture of what became pre-patriarchal India. The Indian god we know today as Shiva, female at that time, was responsible for bringing Reiki here, and s/he wants to be remembered for the gift. When the human body for this planet was designed, Reiki was incorporated into the genetic coding as a birthright of all people" (8).

A Japanese word, ki is analogous to qi or chi or prana. It is our life force. Reiki is based on unconditional love and can do no harm—ever. It has a natural intelligence and flows where it needs to go. The practitioner is merely the conduit and is charged to keep her vessel pure for the cleanest transmission of the energy. There are many ways to access the Reiki energy; my training is in the traditional Usui method. The student knows when she has found the right path as she will feel complete. For some, multiple initiations with a combination of traditions feels right, and for others, the original system they learn will be a lifetime practice.

As my personal experience is with the traditional Usui method, I can only speak to that spiritual process. As I mentioned earlier, when I read the newsletter for the upcoming Reiki I class, I knew without a doubt that it was where I belonged. For someone who spent her life questioning her basic impulses, it was a relief and a revelation to feel that sense of homecoming.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



While books are widely available on Reiki discussing its process and symbols, this was not always the case. The methods used to be highly guarded and Reiki I students were not informed of what was happening to them. Reiki Masters weren't often created as the high cost and lengthy apprenticeship periods were prohibitive.

Now, we have the fortunate experience of easy access to information and many willing teachers. We also benefit from blended teachings that incorporate information on the chakras and how the microcosmic orbit affects our energy flow. Students are informed of what is happening at each stage, discussion and questions are encouraged, and the symbols are openly known.

Not surprisingly, students self-police as to their readiness to move through the three Reiki levels (in some practices, the third level is split into a fourth to designate a teacher vs. a Master). This happened to me between Reiki I and II. I had signed up for Reiki II, to begin a short period of time after my Reiki I attunements. I knew that I wanted it, that it was right for me, but as the time approached, I could tell that my body wasn't ready, that I had more releasing and healing to do. My teacher graciously agreed to let me postpone. I gave myself more time in-between Reiki II and III, and I handled the transition much better.

In studying Buddhist teachings, Diane Stein found that the five Reiki symbols (learned and used at varying levels of the student's journey) correlated to the five levels of mind, the five forms, the five elements, and the five colors (Stein 131-132). The Usui Reiki system is a construct of Buddhism, reflecting Usui's background and training, but is not a religion and is not specific to Buddhism. Anyone can become attuned and heal. Students move through the levels at their own pace.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



In Reiki I, the focus is self-healing—for if the student cannot help herself, she cannot help others. The student has the symbols placed in her aura during the attunement(s), but they are not worked with directly. The primary work of Reiki I is physical healing.

The student intends for the Reiki energy to flow, places her hands (on herself or someone else), and lets Reiki do its work. The student learns hand positions to optimize Reiki distribution (which also correspond with clearing chakra imbalances in the body), but is also guided to use intuition as to how long those positions should be maintained. Infants, children, and animals can be attuned.

The attunement itself is a heady process. For me, it was sacred and my teacher created a beautiful experience. I felt changed immediately and I saw patterns of energy for a while afterward. Group healing work helped to discharge the excess energy.

As my aura shifted to accommodate the increased energy flow, my physical body also went through changes. It felt as if I had a cold without being sick. I could not drink enough water, and I needed much more sleep. I felt like my body was rearranging itself. I diligently followed my teacher's instructions and worked with the energy every day (I still do). I was so excited to be able to help others, that I lost my inhibitions about looking strange in public. If I was with someone who needed help, I offered Reiki then and there. I was learning to get out of my own way and to be a vessel. It was liberating.

As the energy worked on my physical body, I was able to gain greater insight into patterns I had propagated with my resistance and fear. It wasn't an overnight-magical fix, but my eyes were opened so that I could start to make changes. As I began to make peace with my body as it was, I began to make peace with who I was.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



The physical crisis I experienced when I had the breakdown was finally cresting and releasing. Reiki had unlocked my fears and helped me release them. Christopher Penczak describes this clearing process: “The attunement process, and subsequent uses of the energy, initiates a healing cleanse that helps the recipient of the attunement release all unwanted forces on the physical, emotional, and mental levels” (35).

At Reiki II, the student learns symbols and how to use them in healing, and is attuned to the ability to conduct distance healings. At this stage, the emotional and mental bodies are the focus and the student is introduced to her Reiki guides. Again, I had a physical detox process, but this one was much shorter (only a day). I experienced greater healing at this level, likely because my physical body had been addressed. Now, I could go deeper into healing my emotions and my thought processes to shape the path I wanted to walk, as Diane Stein describes:

“After the Reiki II attunement, she goes through a profound process of change. If Reiki I changed her life—and it did—Reiki II changes who the healer is in relation to herself and her world. The changes are highly positive, but may be disconcerting. For about six months after the attunement, all of the healer’s outgrown emotional and mental patterns are challenged. What is no longer positive is cleared from her emotional and mental bodies; she becomes someone who feels differently than she did before. What these changes mean is wholly individual. They heal whatever needs healing at this level in the person’s life, and they come about by expanding her awareness of new realities” (66).

A couple of months after my Reiki II attunement, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I was so grateful that I had a way to help her (and myself). My spiritual practice was strong (thanks to my work with Reiki) and I was able to navigate a very difficult journey that I suspect would have broken me had I not possessed these tools and practices. She recovered beautifully.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



As I navigated my Reiki II path and worked further with healing the mental and emotional blocks, I asked a friend to conduct a Reiki session for me—my first and only formal healing session after I became attuned. Receiving Reiki from anyone other than myself has often felt uncomfortable for me—the heightened energy flow excites me rather than calms me, which is the opposite of how most experience Reiki.

My friend is an intuitive and was attuned via Holy Fire, which is an initiation process conducted via guided journeys. As an empath herself, our energies are compatible and I trusted her to be able to work with my sensitive energy. As someone who channels and is guided, I also trusted her to be sensitive to my needs and what my guides would communicate.

The Reiki guides are an integral part of the practice. They are at the attunement and with the practitioner whenever she heals. I sensed mine at Reiki I and began working with them formally at Reiki II. The night before my session, I spoke with my guides. I told them of my concerns that the energy would feel too strong, that I was worried about driving home afterward, and that I didn't want to feel sick from too much of a detox process. I asked them to communicate with my friend whatever would be helpful. I did not tell my friend that I had done any of this.

When I came to my session, I noticed that she had a different type of music playing (she is normally drawn to an angelic frequency) and that she had removed her jewelry, another thing that was not common for her. Also unusual for Reiki sessions, she only touched me once. She worked on the outer edge of my aura, about 2 feet from me, and focused on smoothing the high levels of energy at my crown down throughout my body. The only time she touched me was at the end of the session when she placed her hands on my feet. I felt as if I dropped into my body and I began to fully relax. The moment it felt like it was enough, she withdrew her hands.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



After a Reiki session, the healer helps the participant transition. Moving to an upright position is done slowly so that the participant can regain her balance from being in an altered state. It is common for the healer to smooth the energy down the participant, such as brushing energy down the arms or the back, to help that flow. Without my having to say anything, my friend didn't touch me and simply waited as I did some tapping work to re-ground my body on my own.

When she and I talked about the session, I learned that my guides came to her—she saw three as I do—and told her: to play grounding music, to not wear jewelry, to work off my aura instead of on my body, to let me rebalance myself at the end, and that they gave her very strict timing on how long she could touch my feet for the sole contact we had.

It was incredible to have such a confirmation and validation of what I already knew to be true—that Reiki is a mystical, divine experience that seeks only to heal and support everyone involved. I was able to get myself safely home, but once I was there, it was as if I was under Sleeping Beauty's curse in that I felt an inexorable need for sleep. I felt restored when I awoke.

At Reiki III/Master level, the focus is spiritual healing. For months after my attunement, I doubted that I would be able to heal others consistently again. Christopher Penczak echoes my experience and further illustrates this opening to trust as part of the Reiki journey: "I have found that working through doubt is a big part of the Reiki practice, as well as trusting my experience, my previous experiences, and the universe" (229).

I could only manage work on myself and my dog, and that wattage felt very low. I knew that I was accessing a greater energy flow, but I felt so drained that I couldn't fathom doing it for others on a regular basis. I was exhausted. The few healings I did for others during that time were more intense and powerful, but I was depleted afterward.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



I learned that energetic hygiene was no longer a luxury—it was now a necessity. Without a morning ritual of grounding, shielding, and connecting, that strong energy flow knocks me out. Meditation is also an imperative for me.

At Reiki III, the spiritual body is addressed, summarized by Lisa Campion: “At the Reiki Master Level, we learn the Master Symbols, which allow us to do the attunements and bring in the power of spiritual healing. Spiritual healing is addressing wounds that occur at the spiritual level, such as past-life issues, the spiritual foundations of our mental and physical health, and our soul-level contracts with people” (209).

Work at this level feels as if your electrical wiring is radically altered. If Reiki I takes you from 110 to 220, and Reiki II takes you from AC to DC, Reiki III is like becoming a power plant. I suspect this level was the most difficult for me because I had built up resistance for so long to allowing my divine nature to shine. My final blocks to trusting Source had to be released and Reiki III is designed to do just that: “The purpose of the Master symbols is to open the physical and spiritual bodies to the energy of Reiki, and to open the recipient’s consciousness to divine will, the divine higher guidance that directs the Reiki energy” (Penczak 83).

I experienced past life regressions to aid me in releasing blocks and unhealthy patterns. I did an intensive amount of work on my chakras to heal root imbalances. And, I learned to surrender, to let myself trust. I couldn’t force or rush the process. It took as long as it took, and I had to trust that I would be all right at the end of the journey.

Reiki as a Spiritual Path to

Healing



Now as a Reiki Master, my intuition is heightened, and I no longer worry about how my healings may differ from what I was taught. My method is similar to how children heal with Reiki in that I put my hands where they are needed and I do not worry about the timing and moving through every hand position.

I trust that it flows where it needs to and I follow my intuition and the sensations in my hands to know where they are needed. My work with the symbols is more natural and intuitive as well. It feels as if the energy is fully integrated and my job is to respect it and remain clear to channel it.

I always loved having houseplants, but I noticed as I progressed through the Reiki levels that I had more of them in my home. I also noticed that I feel stuck and depleted if the feng shui of my home isn't attended to. Sleep is a non-negotiable, as is plenty of water and meditation. The feeling of rightness, of being exactly where I am supposed to be, is not worth the temporary pleasure of indulging or being lazy in regards to caring for my body and my home. I learned to treat my body as a temple. The beautiful thing is that I do this not so I can be a certain size but because I finally see it as worthy of devotion.

Why Reiki?



Obviously, Christianity is not the path for me, but why Reiki? Why was this the answer when so many other things around me weren't? I think that Reiki is my answer in the same way that Buddhism and paganism are—all three seek to help the participant have an internal experience of the divine. It isn't about rules or dogma or condemnation, it's about getting in touch with the inner spark and bringing it to light.

Any time we say that we have the answer, that we know the only path, we are cutting off an individual's right to choose, their right to feel and experience Source in their own way.

For me, Reiki is one of those paths that guide spirituality without trying to control behavior. Christopher Penczak echoes this sentiment: "Though technically not a religion or even a formal spiritual practice, Reiki has become precisely that for many people. It acts as a foundation for spiritual and magickal awareness. Reiki opens a door for many people, in a world of great spiritual possibility" (227-228).

At its core, Reiki is about universal love. No matter what state you are in when you come to your practice, once you experience and channel that flow, you are changed by it. Regardless of race, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs, you let love flow through you in service to others. How can that do anything but aid in your soul's journey? As Diane Stein writes, "Every contact with Reiki becomes a ritual of great beauty. However often I repeat it, it remains miraculous and new" (108).

As Christopher Penczak writes, "[...] Reiki as a system of healing from Japan was born out of concepts of Buddhism, a spiritual path. Although a lot of non-Buddhist philosophies have been grafted to it, the concepts behind it are essentially spiritual healing, not medical healing. For many, Reiki is not a religion, it is their spiritual path. Reiki is a path of the mystic" (4). In fact, the Reiki principles, meditated upon daily, reflect the Buddhist path:

Why Reiki?



Just for today I will not anger.

Just for today I will not worry.

Just for today I will do my work honestly.

Just for today I will be compassionate

toward all living beings.

Just for today I will be grateful.

While I believe that everyone would benefit from Reiki, I recognize that it is a profound, life-altering experience that not everyone is ready to undertake. The beauty of Reiki is that it meets you where you are. You are not given more than you can handle. Through all of my classes, I heard students say they didn't know exactly why there were there, they just knew it was right. That's how it was for me. If anything in this paper resonates, seek out a practitioner so that you can experience a session for yourself. Follow your intuition, you'll know when you've found what is right for you, and you'll know if it's right for you to go through the attunement process.

Mine has been the path of the mystic and the healer and the teacher. For others, Reiki I and self-healing may be sufficient. Regardless, it starts with loving yourself. It starts with believing that you deserve to be happy. And, it starts with wanting to trust your place in the Universe and how you can be of service: "Reiki is a tool and a virtue of Bodhi, the urge to wisdom, compassion and Enlightenment that are central to the healed soul" (Stein, 138).

Namaste.

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