

## **REIKI STORIES:**

### ***My Experiences with Reiki Personally and as a Practitioner***

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#### **An Introduction to Reiki & My Own Experience with Cancer**

Although I have been a Reiki practitioner for more than fifteen years, my initiation into holistic health began with meditation, which I discovered and made a daily practice during my teens. Through exploring various forms of meditation, I became acquainted with the possibility of channeling healing energy through the hands while in a prayerful, meditative state. In fact, I had my students experiment with this technique when I taught ongoing meditation classes.

Eventually I began teaching meditation at the OMNI Institute for Optimal Health (under a slightly different name back then, the OMNI Community Wellness Center), where I became good friends with the founder and director, Rita Roberts, a gifted healer, therapist, and clinical nutritionist. She knew about Reiki--in fact, Reiki classes were being offered at OMNI-- and she felt I would make a good healer. So it was through her intuition and encouragement that I took the First Degree class with a Reiki Master from Mrs. Takata's lineage. I have been using Reiki on myself and others ever since.

Within a very short time of my First Degree class, I had a healing crisis of my own. Perhaps it was even the Reiki energy itself, clearing my own energy field during those first 21 days after my initiation, that helped me to recognize the seriousness of symptoms I had actually experienced for many years. I have a benign but unusual hereditary problem with my bones, and my earlier attempts to address my symptoms had been dismissed by doctors as just another part of my lifelong illness. I was told I would have to learn to live with the pain, and I had done so. But at the time I learned Reiki, I noticed my belts were getting inexplicably tighter, even though I had lost a great deal of weight. Then I noticed a small, bony protuberance on my back a bit above my waist. Having just learned Reiki, I began to treat this area. Soon after, x-rays revealed a huge tumor made of bone--the size of a head of cauliflower, I was told. It was growing inside my rib cage like an iceberg, thrusting only a tip outside the back rib.

My doctors could not believe that someone could have a tumor so large and appear to be as healthy as I looked! During the weeks before I had surgery, I used Reiki on myself nightly. I believe it was Reiki along with other holistic therapies, love, and prayer that allowed me to fly through the surgery and recover in record time. Considering that my surgical incision went halfway around my body, that the tumor had grown into major organs, and that part of my liver and several ribs had to be removed, the nurses were amazed at how quickly I was able to be moved out of Intensive Care. I had no medical treatment other than surgical removal of the massive, stage-4 malignancy, and I have been cancer-free ever since.

## My Training with John Harvey Gray

About a year before this surgery, Rita had asked me to join her as Co-Director of OMNI. When a student raved to us about Reiki Master John Harvey Gray, it was both as a Reiki practitioner and as co-director of an education center that I took note. We made contact with Rev. Gray and were very impressed with his credentials and his delightful personality. John taught Reiki at our center for a number of years, first on his own and later with his lovely wife Lourdes, whom we were equally delighted to have as part of our faculty. I repeated my First Degree training with John and quickly followed it with Second Degree, almost 5 years to the day after my original First Degree class!

Although I had had many wonderful and remarkable experiences with my original First Degree training, I could see a tremendous difference in the way I learned Reiki from John. Having come from a meditative background, I was never fully comfortable with the chatty, casual approach my first Reiki Master had employed. She and her students frequently talked to each other or the recipient throughout a treatment. In addition, we had learned to work from the head down in giving a treatment, and although we learned a few basic hand positions, we were encouraged to use our intuition to place our hands wherever we chose. On my own, I always gave Reiki sessions in a quiet, meditative way, with just some soft, relaxing music in the background. As someone with chronically cold hands (only warm when I am doing Reiki!), I had also noticed that starting "cold" at the head often felt uncomfortable for me as well as the client. It was not just that my hands might be chilly for the first few moments; it was also that neither the client nor I were fully relaxed yet, and there was something too intimate and too invasive about touching the face right away, without establishing a rapport first.

In contrast, John was like a Zen master. He had a droll sense of humor, but he could also be stern and serious and as terse as a Zen *koan*! Treatments were given in near-silence, amid the atmosphere of a healing retreat. John taught us some crucial anatomy, prescribing a basic sequence of hand positions that could be supplemented by additional placements appropriate to each client's needs. Following John's protocol, I was thrilled to begin sessions over the solar plexus area and work on the trunk of the body *before* approaching the head. As John explained and I experienced, this starting point allowed the recipient to relax deeply before having a practitioner touch the sensitive face positions. I also appreciated learning the Opening and Closing Spirals John had adapted from another source, providing a nice ritual to begin and end a session as well as an effective way to enhance the recipient's absorption of the energy. The new, more thorough, more methodical way of administering Reiki I learned from John has worked very well for me as I have conscientiously employed it for more than ten years. Following are some of the experiences I have had since my trainings with Reiki Master John Harvey Gray.

## Cancer Support

Because of my own experience with cancer, in my private practice there has been a natural emphasis on supporting people with cancer. Most people with whom I have

worked have pursued conventional medical treatments for their cancers, with Reiki and private instruction in meditation as adjunct therapies. Reiki makes an excellent accompaniment to conventional therapies. For example, Reiki before and after surgery reduces fear and helps a person to heal more quickly. It also relieves pain, surgical or otherwise. Administered before and after chemotherapy or radiation, Reiki can lessen or even prevent uncomfortable side effects.

Such was the case with one man I treated who was bedridden with a form of bone cancer. I went to his home to work on him as he lay in the hospital-style bed his family had installed for him. Before we began, this man had been through several rounds of chemotherapy, each of which had made him quite ill. When we met, he was wasted and painfully thin. During our first sessions, he was barely able to speak to me. But when he did speak, his eyes were bright and full of life. In my meditation, I asked whether I should be helping this man prepare for death, because from all appearances death seemed imminent. Always I was told, "NO! He won't die of cancer," and in fact, he did not. Soon after we began our work together, it was time for him to receive more chemotherapy. This time, with Reiki, there were no side effects and the patient tolerated chemo surprisingly well, as his wife told me on more than one occasion. Both husband and wife were very grateful and wished they had started Reiki sooner.

A fascinating "side-effect" (I should really say "side BENEFIT") which both the wife and I observed was that whenever I gave Reiki to my patient, all living beings in the house settled down. The cats, which before I started Reiki had been quite frisky, jumping and meowing, settled somewhere and napped. So did the inquisitive, barking dog. If any of the grandchildren were present, they went from noisy and active to quiet and still. And the wife, though always amazingly serene, noticed how much more relaxed and even drowsy she felt while I was doing Reiki in another room.

Another client, a woman with breast cancer, contacted me just after her surgery. I administered Reiki as she endured chemotherapy and radiation, minimizing her side effects throughout. Having had her lymph glands as well as her breast removed, this woman suffered from the lymph edema often associated with this type of surgery. Her hand and arm were swollen with fluid. To her amazement, the painful swelling in her hand would go down by the end of a Reiki session, and she could finally slip her rings off. For this woman, however, the mental and emotional benefits of Reiki were particularly striking. Like many people in a similar situation, she was full of fear. And as someone who admitted to craving control, she found it especially difficult to cope with those elements of her life over which she was losing control. Reiki helped her to feel greater peace and optimism. It also helped her to anchor a new attitude of relinquishing control, of going with the flow and trusting in God. This was especially challenging as she adjusted to life after cancer, which coincided with stressful changes at her job and resulted in a complete change of lifestyle.

When clients are receptive, I like to combine instruction in meditative visualization with Reiki sessions, because the archetypal method I use allows people to look inward for the deeper meaning of their illness, while the Reiki not only enhances healing but also creates an energy field in which insight and inner transformation can more easily occur. When Ann came to me suffering from colon cancer, we alternated meditation practice with Reiki sessions. Chemotherapy was supposed to shrink her tumor, but it had not appeared to do so. She was expecting to have surgery to remove the tumor and most of her colon at some point in the near future. This procedure would involve a colostomy, the inserting of a tube into the abdomen in order to remove

fecal matter into a pouch worn against the body. Because her father had died not long after having similar surgery, she dreaded the colostomy even more than others might have. In her mind, the inevitable next step after such a procedure would be death. Through meditation and Reiki, Ann wanted to avoid such a drastic surgery.

We worked together for several months. As time passed, her doctor and her family pressed her to schedule surgery, but Ann did not want to. I suggested she request further tests to get some sense of whether the tumor had shrunk before making a decision, but she did not care to do that, either. Ultimately she scheduled the surgery, sure she would awaken to find she had had a colostomy. I tried to console her; for some time I had tried to help her reframe her attitude that a colostomy spelled certain death. But secretly, I felt equally defeated when I saw her shortly before her surgery. And then, the night before the surgery, as I sat to send her Absent Reiki, I reminded myself that I could hardly expect her to have faith and a positive attitude if I did not! I myself had to think differently, without delay. I realized that to think the future was certain was to limit the kind of miracle God might have in store for her. As I sent the Reiki energy long-distance, the idea popped into my mind that no one knew the current condition of the tumor, so no one could know the outcome. As it happened, the surgeons discovered that Ann's tumor had shrunk enough for them to perform a reversible ileostomy rather than a permanent colostomy! So although Ann had to endure the dreaded pouch for a while, she had a second surgery a few months later to remove the tube and close the wound.

One of the most heartwarming miracles I have had the privilege to witness involved a young woman who was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a disease which affects the bones and bone marrow. Jenny had only been married a short time when she became ill. Doctors put her on Prednisone, a steroid drug that caused her to gain weight and to stop menstruating. Although Jenny longed to have children, her doctors had to tell her that the treatments she would need to undergo would most likely make her sterile. I administered Reiki and we practiced archetypal meditation together to help Jenny cope with her prognosis and the lengthy, difficult treatments that lay ahead.

One day a number of months into our work together, I had an unusual experience as I finished giving Jenny her Reiki session. Something prompted me to say, "Go home and rest. You are going to have a revelation." Within a few days, I had forgotten that strange message, but Jenny couldn't wait to tell me what had happened. She called me, her voice filled with excitement. She had gone home to rest, but while lying on her bed, she felt more and more upset about her weight gain. For some time, she had felt she was pregnant, but doctors had insisted she could not be. The lack of menstruation and the weight gain were predictable side effects of the drugs she was taking. Weeks before, she had tried to give herself a home pregnancy test but had spilled it. After her Reiki session, she became so agitated that she decided to try a home pregnancy test one more time. It came out positive, against all odds!

Still, there is more to this story. Normally, doctors would have strongly advised her to have a therapeutic abortion, because they believed that her life would be seriously endangered by the pregnancy. But upon examination, it appeared that Jenny was four months pregnant--the cut-off point at which they could not exert much pressure on her. It was strictly Jenny's decision, along with her husband, whether to continue the pregnancy, and for her it was an easy one, no matter what the risk. Had she not ruined the earlier pregnancy test--had anyone taken her seriously a moment sooner when she insisted she was pregnant--had a doctor, during a prior pelvic exam,

realized she was pregnant--Jenny would have been almost forced to have an abortion. As it was, the revelation came at exactly the right moment.

The night of Jenny's phone call, as I was still marveling at the wonderful gift Jenny and her husband had received, there was another stunning synchronicity. I was watching the news on television when I caught a brief story about multiple myeloma during the health update. Recent evidence suggested that there might be a link between pregnancy hormones and remission of the disease--but, as always, years of further research would be needed before this information could be put to use. However, it didn't take me years to get the message. That thirty-second news flash gave me the intuition that Jenny's disease would be stopped by her pregnancy, which is just what happened. Her cancer went into remission and she gave birth to a healthy baby.

### **Pain Relief, Enhanced Vitality, and Improved Mood**

People do not have to be facing life-threatening illness to get impressive results with Reiki. While attending an academic conference in which participants learned that I do Reiki, I was asked to give a short presentation and demonstration after conference hours for anyone who might be interested. After speaking for a time to the small group which had gathered, I asked for a volunteer from the audience. A middle-aged woman came forward. With no major complaints, this woman did think to mention that she had had chronic pain in one hip. I was not prepared to give a full Reiki as part of this informal lecture; moreover, I did not have a bodywork table available. My volunteer sat in a chair, allowing me to demonstrate for only a brief time with improvised positions: shoulders, neck, head, and upper chest. I also made it a point to work on the hips. The feedback came some months later. This woman and I became friends, and she told me that after that abbreviated session (maybe 15 to 20 minutes), her hip had not hurt her again for all these months! Even I was amazed that such a small amount of energy had done so much for her.

Similarly, at a health expo held in a large shopping mall, I worked on a young man who had had a sports injury to his knee. His work as a salesman required him to be on his feet all day, and this had been painful during the weeks since his injury. He also let me know that he and his wife had a new baby, so he had not been getting much sleep. I gave him an abbreviated Reiki treatment as he sat in my demo chair for about fifteen minutes early that afternoon. Hours later, as the mall was closing and I was preparing to leave, the young man made it a point to stop by to thank me. He wanted me to know that for the first time in weeks, he had been "on the floor" (as they say in sales) and pain-free all afternoon. In fact, he had felt better all the way around, physically and emotionally, than he had in some time.

In another impressive instance, an older man with long-standing emphysema came for a session. Reiki was new to him; this would be his first experience. Saying the session had been extremely relaxing and pleasant, he left thinking he'd had a good experience. To his surprise, he felt even better as the day wore on. The following week he reported that he had felt so good--so energized, so emotionally uplifted, and so able to breathe--that he had gone dancing that night, something he had not been able to do for years.

Many people experience an increased sense of mental and emotional well-being after a Reiki session. I myself have experienced this uplift after receiving a Reiki treatment, similar to the improved mood I have felt after deep meditation, a mood which is at once deeply peaceful and full of joy. During a particularly stressful time in my life, I received a wonderful treatment from one of John Gray's Reiki students, Stewart Hogg. I complained of muscle tension and general stress--nothing too specific. Stewart gave me a complete treatment, including what we call a Mental Treatment. I felt very relaxed after my session, but tired. I couldn't wait to get to bed that night. The next morning, I awoke feeling completely refreshed and almost deliriously happy. The difficult situation in my life was exactly the same as it had been, yet I felt almost giddy with joy! This and many other experiences with Reiki and other spiritual practices have demonstrated to me the reality of the spiritual truth that our happiness does not depend on externals but rather on the condition of our inner being.

As a Second Degree practitioner, I always give a Mental Treatment when I do a session. I will either specifically tailor it to the recipient's expressed concerns, or, as Stewart did with me, I will give a generalized Mental Treatment. Either way, this procedure enhances Reiki's ability to improve mood and anchor new attitudes and behaviors.

Reiki will balance whatever needs to be balanced. For an anxious person, the result may be calmness and peace. For a depressed person, the effect may be stimulation and animation. I recall a young woman who suffered from clinical depression. She was on medication for the problem, yet she was still visibly depressed: lethargic, uncommunicative, and suppressed in her emotional response. She attended the Reiki Clinic at OMNI for a number of weeks. Over a period of time, we could see her become more and more lively. She began to smile a bit and talk a little more. Eventually, she was almost leaping off the bodywork table at the end of her sessions, bubbly, laughing, and full of joy. How wonderful to witness this transformation!

### Healing "Reactions"

As we learn early on with Reiki, intensifications of existing symptoms called "reactions" may occur as a natural part of the healing process. By way of contrast, a "side-effect" is something quite different. It is an undesirable *extra* effect of treatment; it is not a sign of healing but rather a reaction specific to a drug or other form of medical treatment. For example, loss of hair during chemotherapy is a side-effect. Conversely, John Gray teaches that a reaction signals that the recipient has allowed the Reiki energy to penetrate deeply. A deep, powerful healing is taking place. These reactions are not unique to Reiki but are common to all forms of natural healing. Just as a person's fever may naturally spike just before an illness starts to diminish in strength, so too other symptoms may intensify as the body-mind system detoxifies and attempts to throw off illness. We can ameliorate these symptoms by assisting the detoxification process in various ways; in Reiki, we assist the person by administering more Reiki, like adding more water to rinse away debris. So in Reiki, a reaction is a good thing, even if sometimes unpleasant, as I have experienced from time to time.

During my Second Degree training with John, we learned how to give a Mental Treatment and how to send an Absent Treatment to someone at a distance. Both of these techniques have proved to be invaluable and highly effective. As part of our education, John asked each of the participants to choose an emotional or mental issue to

work on when we received Mental Treatments from our classmates. I had been feeling frustrated and irritable about a chronic situation in my life, and that frustration had been turning into anger. I chose to work on this anger throughout the weekend workshop. Sunday night, after the training, I was speaking with someone who said something to trigger me, and my temper flared uncontrollably. As I was shouting and inwardly berating myself for once more failing to master the Reiki precept, "Just for today I will not anger," the thought flashed through my mind, "You're having a reaction to a whole weekend of Reiki energy!" That recognition allowed me to stop mid-sentence, apologize, and then start laughing. I'd *asked* to work on my temper, and I got exactly what I'd asked for! And I really understood first-hand what it means to have a reaction. Afterwards, I felt significantly better. This Reiki stuff really works, I thought!

One holiday season I gave the gift of a Reiki session to someone close to me who was curious about Reiki. I knew she suffered from panic attacks from time to time, and we discussed the possibility that Reiki might help. She thoroughly enjoyed her treatment, finding it deeply relaxing and luxurious. I asked her to call me in a day or so to let me know how she felt as the energy settled in and did its work. When I received no word, I called her, only to discover that the night she had received Reiki, she had had the worst anxiety attack of her life. It was hard to convince her that this was a *good* thing and that if she had called me right away, I would have helped her. As it was, I immediately sent her an Absent Treatment to smooth the healing process that had begun with such a bang.

### **Absent Treatments**

When someone is far away or, for some other reason, cannot be physically present to receive Reiki, an Absent Treatment provides an effective and powerful way to help. I know this both as a sender and a receiver. When the mother of a close friend was hospitalized in Florida, I offered to send Reiki. Suffering from chronic emphysema plus a serious infection, the mother was receiving oxygen and was seriously ill. After I sent Reiki, my friend called the hospital. A nurse reported that the mother had sat up, requested a drink of water, and begun to breathe more easily on her own. In addition, her vital signs were stronger. John teaches that family members or other people closely related to a situation can be sent Reiki all at once, so whenever I treated the mother, I also treated my friend and her father. After I sent Reiki, my friend felt better--not just because her mother had improved, but also because she herself had been calmed and strengthened by receiving the energy.

I once asked John Gray to send me a Reiki. He told me he would send it later that day, but he did not specify a time. Still, I knew exactly when the Reiki came, because I could feel it. I was sitting in my livingroom reading a book when I felt as if someone had flipped a Reiki switch, starting the flow of energy like a warm, thick stream of invisible liquid. I could feel my muscles relax, my thoughts slow and then stop, my eyelids grow heavy, my heartbeat and breathing grow increasingly quiet and slow. There could be no question that John was at work!

### **Spiritual Intimations**

I had another very powerful experience while receiving Reiki from John Gray during a class he was teaching at OMNI. Those of you who have attended one of John's

workshops will know what I mean when I say that I got to be "the beautiful professional model." Beauty had nothing to do with it; this was the humorous way John always requested a volunteer on whom to demonstrate Reiki to the class. Since I had sat in on John's workshops numerous times by then, I made an ideal model, because I didn't need to take notes or pay close attention. As a result, I had the privilege of spending quite a bit of time on the demo table that weekend. At one point I completely lost track of the surroundings. I was definitely not asleep, but I was not present in the classroom, either. I felt as if I were in Tibet in an earlier era. I was aware of John's hands on my torso, and I could feel the energy flowing upwards as John moved from my pelvic area up to my heart. I was feeling further and further removed from my physical surroundings as the thought came to me: "When he puts his hands on my head, I will die." Suddenly I *snapped* back into my body on the table, fully aware of the classroom, the students, and the sunlight streaming in through the window.

Needless to say, I did not die that day when John moved his hands onto my head! However, I had heard that Tibetan monks use a hands-on energy technique as well as guided meditation to assist souls in the process of transition, and I wondered if on that particular day the Reiki energy had triggered a past life (or should I say "past *death*"?) memory. I also wondered if John himself had helped me make just such a transition in a previous lifetime.

John too noticed that something unusual had happened. When we had a quiet moment during a break in the class, he asked me about my experience. He had observed that I was in an exceptionally deep state and then abruptly jerked back to consciousness.

From time to time, people have reported feeling invisible presences during Reiki sessions. Not uncommonly, clients will tell me that even though they knew there was no one else in the room with us, they felt a second set of hands on their bodies along with my own. Or they may say that even when they could feel my hands moving to a new position, they could still feel my hands working at the previous position as well. In one instance, a client at our Reiki Clinic shared with me that he had been struggling for a long time to feel connected to God. He considered himself an agnostic with only an intellectual idea of what God might be. At the end of our session, he let me know that for the first time in his life, he had felt the presence of God in the room while several of us were administering Reiki at our respective tables. What a beautiful confirmation that it is not our own energy we use when we give Reiki, but something great and mysterious that flows *through* us.

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