

REIKI~

Holistic Energy Healing





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*S*tress takes a toll on our bodies, internally and externally. And we are all living through some very stressful times with a global pandemic. While stress is a natural part of life, if it gets out of control it can be very damaging. Fear, finances, trauma, loss and conflict – how we react to these stressors can have an enormous impact on our health and well-being. Fortunately, there are well-known strategies to manage the response to challenging circumstances and assist in maintaining physical and emotional wellness, such as exercise. Tai Chi, Quantum Touch, yoga. Whether recuperating from illness, experiencing chronic pain, suffering from anxiety or just looking for a little lift, many are tuning in to a Japanese healing technique known as Reiki, which was developed by Mikao Usui in 1922.



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Positive Transformation

“It’s most definitely increasing in popularity. There are several different energy healing modalities. Reiki is one of them and my first love,” says holistic practitioner April Walker, who owns and operates Integrative Energy Balancing offices in Modesto and Sonora along with seeing clients remotely through Zoom, Skype, phone or email. “I came into Reiki because my son and I were brutally ill. I had undiagnosed celiac disease and was going into shock four or five times a month. I couldn’t function. I had two little kids, and one was failing to thrive.”

The college professor turned health coach says that one Reiki session in the early 2000s changed her life and put her on the path toward healing personally and professionally. “When you’re that sick and something comes along and makes that shift, it’s a pretty strong motivator,” she explains. In 2004, she opened her energy healing practice.

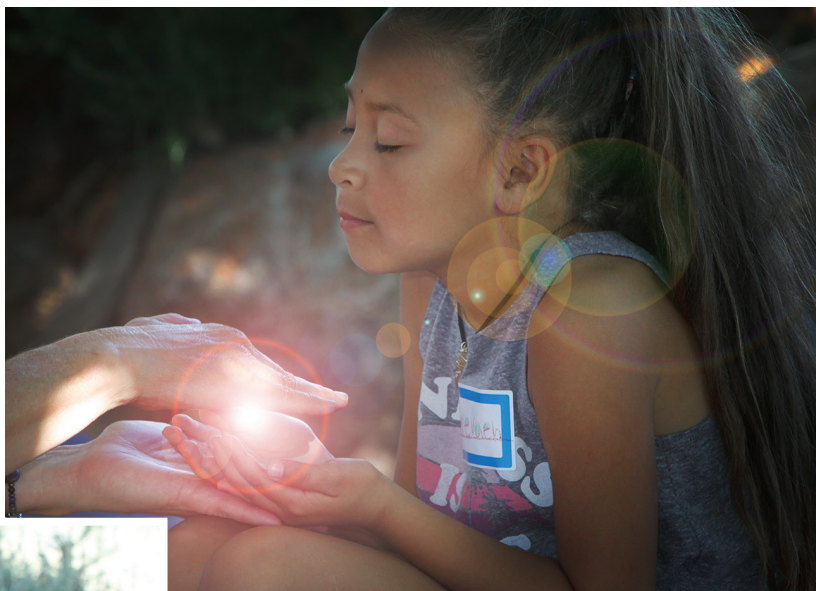
Reiki is pronounced ray-kee, like a ray of sunshine and a key to a house. “It’s one of the most gentle healing therapies. It lowers the stress level enough that people are better able to heal,” says Walker. “It’s not so ‘woo’ that it’s only for certain people.”

How does it work? Reiki is aimed at promoting overall wellness through the relief of anxiety and the balancing of energy. “We lay

you on the table. We do the work,” explains Walker. “Everyone experiences it differently. Sometimes they feel heat, sometimes cold. It uses some of the same energy systems as yoga. I’m a puzzle solver,” she continues. “I was super-skeptical and kind of scared of it in the beginning. I look back and I was living in fear all the time. I was always anxious.”

The therapy is based on the idea that an unseen “life force energy” flows through all of us but there can be “speedbumps” along the way. The areas that need extra attention sometimes heat up or turn red due to increased blood flow during treatment. Getting things back in balance is the goal. Minus the manipulation, the experience is a lot like a massage.

“It’s remarkable,” says a longtime client who asked to be identified as Leslie. Over 15 years ago, she was treated for the first time with very low expectations. In fact, her initial visit was as a “guinea pig” for Walker, who was still exploring alternative medicine. “Do I feel anything?” Leslie wondered, noticing perhaps a slight warming sensation. “What was striking was that I had been in an auto accident in the 1980s and had pain in my hip. When I got up, for the first time, I was out of pain. It resolved the pain.” Since then, she’s been treated once a month to enhance both mind and body well-being. “Now I



come for different issue. Allergies. Sleep. Stress reduction. I've even called when I had a friend in need and asked her to send healing to someone," she adds. "It's reduced the pain in my body, shifted my perspective and helped my stress level." All in all, she believes Reiki has helped her maintain her health. Plus, it's pleasant. "It just feels wonderful," says Leslie.

Relax, Re-center, Restore

During a typical Reiki treatment, the therapist channels energy into the client by slowly scanning the body from head to toe resting their palms at different places for a period of time and focusing the force on trouble spots.

"Think of two magnets on opposite sides," says Walker. "You can feel a force, but you can't see it." The treatment can be with hands on or off the body, but the touch is never harsh or severe.

"It's very relaxing. I had emotional stuff that it's helped me to let go. Some of it I didn't even know I had," says Reiki practitioner Denise Key who has incorporated self-Reiki into her daily life. "It's really opened me up to healing myself. I do it every day. It's a good way to start the day." The benefits, she says, include improved sleep, anxiety prevention and a boost in energy.

Numerous studies have shown that being in a constant state of stress can cause serious health problems such as asthma, ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Reiki "is a complimentary therapy," says Walker. "People will come when they've tried absolutely everything."

More research is needed; some small studies have shown that Reiki can reduce pain, stress and fatigue, but no studies have shown it is effective in treating any diseases. Walker says there is some evidence-based data to support claims that touch therapies including Reiki can reduce pain and anxiety and improve overall wellness. "The mind says, 'How is that possible?' But it is possible."

Reiki is gaining acceptance in the traditional medical establishment and is offered at several hospitals, including Johns Hopkins, UCLA Medical Center, New York-Presbyterian and Memorial Sloan Kettering. It's sometimes offered as part of workplace wellness programs to increase productivity and prevent burnout. It's being paired with traditional medicine as both a coping tool and to encourage the natural healing processes. Not sure Reiki is right for you? You won't know until you try it and see what happens. *S_M*