

# The Science of Reiki - Myth, Mythology or Amazing Fact?

Let's start with a definition: Energy healing is "healing without any apparent material source or substance", or looking at energy healing from a spiritual point of view, we might say "there is more within the universe than we can ever understand".

Reiki is energy healing which has been known in the west for only a few decades. It is practiced by over one million people which, when compared to the world population, is certainly little more than a smattering.

To explain Reiki from a scientific point of view we need to discuss some concepts of science. First a scientific validation arises in many ways. It is popular to give a rational understanding of the mechanics of some phenomena based on the logic of 'sound' scientific principles. Your typical example of this is the 'rational' explanation of Reiki using the terms *subatomic matter*, *unpolarized*, *vortex theory*, *mirror imaging*, etc. These sound good and are probably the best way of appeasing the need for a rational explanation which so many Reiki practitioners have. There is, however, a flaw - the mere use of physics terminology is not a scientific validation of Reiki! It is only a rational explanation based on common (but often contradictory) terms used in physics. (As discussed later, we can apply those labels to Reiki based upon our observations.)

The whole field of high energy physics is new and pioneering. When you are explaining it to a layperson, it is totally appropriate to generalize and use the scientific (unpolarized, subatomic etc.) terms we use because we are using them to establish a conceptual framework for the understanding of the clinical manifestations of Reiki - not to validate Reiki.

Reiki is 'nonpolarized' subatomic energy that is released as a harmonic into energy blueprints (e.g. the body) that are in a state of disharmony. Once it leaves the subatomic world, it must polarize because it is entering the physical, manifest world where it is acted upon by time. Because it is, by nature, a harmonic, it will polarize and form a 'mirror image' of any disharmonious frequency in that energy blueprint, thereby restoring normal harmony and well being. This, in turn, accelerates the natural healing processes of the body.

To validate and explain that definition we must use the scientific process of clinical observation and the logical rationalization of the results. Most of the things we utilize in our daily lives are there because they work consistently. If they didn't, they would be discarded. If a new drug is tried clinically and gets good consistent results (without

significant side effects) it is used because the observed results validate it! Once that drug stops working or proves to have bad side effects, it is discarded and considered no longer valid. This is very important to understand.

We cannot validate or prove Reiki with fancy charts or scientific terms. (These methods are great for explaining frameworks and actions.) Validation, at this early stage, comes from our own clinical hands-on experience and the experience of hundreds of thousands of Reiki practitioners using Reiki daily for the past few decades. When we list the observations made by Reiki practitioners and their patients, we start to build up a clinical picture which will tell us a great deal about Reiki.

### **1. Sensation in the hands.**

During a Reiki treatment, the practitioner and the patient usually observe a sensation in the hands of the practitioner. The most common sensations are warmth, tingling, pins and needles, cold, or electrical feelings. Often, in very sick people, the sensation in the hands of the Reiki practitioner can be one of heat so strong that the skin feels as though it's being burned. Sometimes no sensation is felt even though results are still obtained.

It is important to note that the sensation can vary from treatment to treatment, and the sensation in the hands felt by the patient can be very different to that felt by the practitioner. Cases have been observed where the practitioner experiences his hands as being cold and the person being treated feels them radiating intense heat.

One explanation is that Reiki, in and of itself, has no sensate characteristics. What is felt is the body's reaction to the Reiki flowing through it. As the Reiki emerges through the practitioner's hands, it reacts to the superficial tissues of the hands as it is passing through them. It then interacts with the superficial tissues of the person being treated. The Reiki energy, at this stage, is polarizing as it enters the manifest world of our body and it will act upon the sense receptors in the tissues giving rise to sensations. These sensations vary according to the state of health of the body and according to your sensitivity at that time. (This can change from day to day and person to person.) Some people are more in touch with their body and will feel the sensations more.

The practitioner and the person being treated have different imbalances in their body and the Reiki will polarize accordingly. Hence the different sensations (or lack of) observed by each person.

### **2. Switches on automatically.**

This is one of the more interesting observations of the Reiki phenomenon. When a Reiki practitioner's hands are placed on or near any living organism the Reiki 'turns on' automatically. There is no conscious effort needed on the part of the practitioner. If a Reiki practitioner is asleep and his or her hands are placed on another person's injury or wound the Reiki starts flowing even though the practitioner is asleep.

Clearly, from this observation alone, we see that the flow of Reiki is activated despite the practitioner and independent of the practitioner's belief system. You do not have to learn how to give Reiki. If you have been initiated to Reiki, you simply have to place your hands on or near another person's body.

Another observation does contradict this slightly. Practitioners and patients have observed that the Reiki appears to flow more powerfully if the Practitioner deliberately places his/her hands with conscious loving intent. This is not a process that takes effort. It simply means that if you consciously desire to help the patient and place your hands with intent to help then the treatment will be more effective. (This is discussed in more detail later.)

### **3. Flows according to demand.**

Further observation shows that the flow of Reiki can seem to vary according to the degree of disharmony in the patient. For example, in patients who are seriously ill or very upset emotionally, the Reiki flows more strongly. It therefore flows on demand according to the degree of disharmony in the target system.

Energy, that is a natural harmonizer will be drawn in intensity according to the degree of disharmony. The flow is totally independent of the expectations of the Practitioner. It functions according to it's own innate laws.

Some Reiki practitioners have observed that the Reiki apparently switches off after a period of time on one position on the body. It then switches on again when the hands are moved to another position. The concept seems to be that, as one area is 'fixed', you move on to the next area. As the Reiki travels though the body to where it is needed, this appears to be a contradiction. A noted phenomenon is that Reiki practitioners trained by Reiki Masters who don't talk about this phenomena, don't experience it. Their hands just continue to flow. It appears that the expectations of the Reiki practitioner cause them to stop feeling the sensation of the Reiki. Experiments have shown that when such practitioners say they feel the Reiki 'switch off' the person being treated still feels the flow strongly.

### **4. The Reiki is the same in both hands.**

The flow and effectiveness of the Reiki are the same in both hands. There is no 'giving' or 'receiving' hand to worry about when using Reiki. Simply put, if you treat a person for one hour with one hand they will get as much as they would if they were treated with both hands. The quality would not be altered. You could also treat one person with one hand and another person with the other hand.

There are many 'polarized' systems which observe rules on polarity with regard to the hands. For example, keeping both hands on the patient; not crossing the hands; treating on the correct side of the body, etc. There is nothing wrong with those systems. They are, however, unnecessary when using Reiki on its own. If you are combining Reiki with other systems, then you may want to observe the rules of the other system. That will not influence the effectiveness of the Reiki. It will continue to flow and work despite those rules.

### **5. Reiki does not run out.**

One of the most dramatic observations of Reiki is that the Reiki doesn't appear to run out. Reiki practitioners can continue treating sick people all day and the Reiki will flow just as strongly as when they started the day. Furthermore, the practitioner appears to receive a 'spin off' from the Reiki, which means they will finish the day stronger and with more vitality than when they started.

This is an observation that differentiates Reiki from many other healing systems. Most systems involve the use of the physical energy (chi) of the body

as the energy source to use on the patient. This drains the physical energy of the practitioner. The overall effectiveness of the treatment is dependent upon the vitality of the practitioner. The number of patients that can be treated in a day depends upon the practitioner's ability to 'recharge' his physical energy.

There is a tendency to bundle many paramedical healing systems into that broad classification of 'energy' systems. Acupuncture, Tai Chi, polarity therapy, kinesiology, shiatsu, magnetic healing and forms of 'spiritual' healing can fit reasonably into this category, because they all seem to follow the predictable rules of physical energy (i.e. chi, ki, prana, etc.) flow in the body.

Reiki doesn't fit into this category. It simply cannot be physical 'polarized' energy in the conventional sense because of the peculiar characteristics it demonstrates clinically.

**6. The Reiki flow is not affected by the health of the practitioner.**

Someone who is sick usually has low physical energy and would therefore be less effective in treating others if he was harnessing his own energy. Clinical observation shows that even a very sick, weak person who is correctly initiated or attuned to Reiki, can give treatments that are just as strong and effective as a Reiki Practitioner who is in robust health. Again, from this we deduce that the Reiki energy is not coming from the physical energy of the practitioner's body.

**7. Reiki works on animals and plants.**

Animals tend to respond faster to Reiki than humans. They generally have a more dynamic energy system and their powers of recuperation tend to be superior. They also have less accumulated stress, emotional blockages and self-sabotage tendencies. It also appears that the more domesticated the animal, the slower its recovery time. Domestic animals tend to take on the stress and emotional traits of their owners. Those of us who have pets are all too aware of how much they can be a reflection of their owners. When you see a neurotic, tense dog you can usually assume that to obtain lasting results you will need to treat the owner with Reiki (or sedatives!!).

Plants also respond to Reiki because they are also living energy fields that can be out of balance and will respond to the harmonizing effects of Reiki.

By observing that Reiki works on animals and plants we are able to discount any suggestion that the effects of Reiki are psychosomatic.

**8. One can treat oneself with Reiki.**

There are many gifted 'healers' who are able to help others but cannot help themselves because their system does not work effectively when they try to treat themselves. Because Reiki operates independently of the practitioner's body, practitioners can lay their hands on their own bodies and enjoy all the benefits of Reiki. This is particularly important from the perspective of preventative medicine. One of the great luxuries in the life of a Reiki practitioner is the time spent self-treating.

**9. Anybody can be initiated to Reiki.**

Provided the initiation is correctly performed, anybody can have the Reiki activated in his or her energy system. It is even possible to initiate people in comas. Provided you receive all four of the initiations at (what is described as) Level 1, you will have the Reiki through and in your hands for life.

Nobody appears to have Reiki in his or her hands naturally. No Reiki Master that we are aware of has ever found anyone who has. So who was the first person to have Reiki and how did he/she get it? We will never know, because the answer is lost in time. We are therefore open to the possibility that someone may have developed themselves to a point where Reiki could manifest in their hands, or that they received the attunement with a divine intervention. This where the Reiki story raises the most controversy.

#### **10. Reiki is not a belief system, religion or cult.**

Reiki is practiced by people of all persuasions. Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists and agnostics are all able to receive the benefits of Reiki because it is not tied to any particular religion or philosophy. Once you have it, you have it for life, and can use it in any way you see fit. You do not need to belong to any group or association. You can choose to join an association if you wish in order to receive information and meet people with similar interests.

There are no gurus in Reiki although a few people have set themselves up as such. Reiki Masters are normal human beings who are trained to initiate people. They have normal human traits, strengths and weaknesses. But this does not suggest that everybody has the knowledge to perform an attunement correctly, there are tests that can be used to examine that connection.

#### **11. There are no harmful side effects from Reiki.**

In the decades since Reiki Masters have been actively initiating (attuning) practitioners in the west, there are many cases where people have observed what at first appear to be negative effects. When the body is undergoing a healing process, there can be short term effects which cause some form of discomfort. This can be misinterpreted by people with no understanding of the physiological healing processes of the body.

For example, a person with an arthritic joint can have an increase of pain after the first few Reiki treatments. The Reiki will be increasing the circulation of blood to a joint that has had poor circulation for a number of years. The sudden increase in circulation can be painful at first. The end results will be great!

People with a great deal of accumulated stress or emotional blocks can find everything stirred up at first as their body starts to process the effects of the Reiki. Cancer patients often experience an increase in pain in the area of the tumour for the first few treatments.

#### **12. Reiki is complementary to all other systems.**

There are no contraindications to the use of Reiki. It can be used on its own or in conjunction with any other therapy - sometimes your health problems are so serious that you need to take advantage of everything that is available.

For example, Reiki is brilliant at promoting the rapid healing of cuts, even large ones. However, if you amputate a limb, you should be seeing a surgeon. You would still give the body as much Reiki as possible because it will help dramatically in the recovery process from the surgery and reduce the amount of scarring and pain.

Serious illnesses such as cancer still need to be treated and monitored by the medical experts. In every case however, Reiki will increase the overall vitality of the body and the ability of the body to recover. Reiki will also reduce the side effects of treatment such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy and

maximize your potential to get well. In the meantime, each Reiki treatment you have will work on harmonizing the underlying cause of the illness.

### **13. Reiki always treats at the root cause level.**

One common observation of Reiki has very important ramifications. People being treated with Reiki and Reiki practitioners, have repeatedly noticed that if a practitioner has their hands on a patient in a particular position (such as on the head), the person being treated sometimes feels the Reiki having effect in a completely different part of the body. The part they feel it working on strongest is a part with greater disharmony. For example, the patient may have diseased kidneys and will feel the Reiki strongest there even though the hands are on another part of the body.

This important observation helps to confirm the theory that Reiki is a harmonic that will, by its nature, always tend to go to the area of greatest disharmony. There is still a local effect because the Reiki passes through the area of the body under the hands.

This helps to explain the apparent variation in results with Reiki. Some practitioners may have established that when the arthritic knee of an ex-footballer is treated, they can usually experience significant improvement in three to five treatments. In another case they treat an arthritic knee which seems to take much longer. The knee still gets better but needs many more treatments. A possible explanation is that the person has another more serious condition that he may not have known about such as a weak heart, and the Reiki is going to that area as a priority. Neither the practitioner or the patient know it, but by the time the knee is better, so is the heart!

When we start experiencing the symptoms of an illness, we often fall into the trap of thinking that it is something that just happened to us. This is very far from the truth in most illnesses. The condition will often have existed for years before it finally manifests in the material body as a symptom. A heart condition is there for many years gradually developing until it finally starts to give symptoms. Physics tells us that energy exists and moves first and matter follows. There is usually a disturbance in the energy systems or aura of the body first. This eventually starts to bring about the physical changes that eventually become the 'dis-ease'.

Our body is composed entirely of energy at different levels of vibration. The slowest vibrations make up the bones. The higher vibrations go through the spectrum of the muscles, organs and blood until we arrive at even higher vibrations that make up our energy system (chi/qi, prana, ki, aura etc).

Many things can cause disharmony in the energy system. Emotional disturbances and traumas, mental aberrations, environmental influences, trauma, diet, injuries etc. can all contribute. Once this energy system is thrown into disharmony, it starts to manifest changes in the body/mind. These changes eventually lead to disease as we recognize it. It appears that cancer in its many forms may be the manifested result of these disturbances.

The average disease process develops through an accumulation of predisposing factors. There is rarely just one cause for the disease. It is usually a heterogeneous mixture of many different factors.

When we visit the doctor for a diagnosis we should remember that the diagnosis is usually only a label. The labels - stomach ulcer, hepatitis, nephritis, fibrositis, and so on, are not explanations of the cause of the disease. They are descriptions of the end result of the various causes. How we are treated is going to depend upon the training (indoctrination) of the doctor

treating you. They will decide on a "cause" to focus on according to their area of expertise.

One metaphor used is that of an iceberg. We know that the greatest part of an iceberg floats under the water. The tip that protrudes out of the water is not a good indication of how much lies below. The symptom is similar to the tip of the iceberg; the causes of the disease are the main body of the iceberg which is hidden. Two people can have the same 'tip' (symptom) and yet have a vastly different array and number of causes. That is why two people with the same symptom can have vastly different healing times.

Two people can be suffering from stomach ulcers. One person may have the ulcer simply because of a change of cultural environment. He may move to Thailand with his job and eat an excess of hot, spicy Thai food that his stomach is not used to. The treatment would be simple and the results quick, especially if he reduced his intake of spicy food until his stomach got used to them.

The other patient with a stomach ulcer may have gone through a divorce a few years ago and spent two years living as a bachelor, cooking for himself, worrying about money, and divorce proceedings, and may also have injured his upper back. Here we have a variety of factors that can contribute to the stomach ulcer. Worry is known to stimulate the vagus nerve, which supplies the stomach, and thus causes excess acid secretions in the stomach.

A back problem can affect the sympathetic nerve supply to the stomach and contribute to an imbalance in the nerve supply to the stomach, again resulting in excess acid secretions. In addition to these factors the diet is a problem. All this means his 'iceberg' is much bigger and the stomach ulcer will probably take much longer to heal because of the accumulation of causes.

In each of these cases, the patient could receive very good treatment from different specialists; a chiropractor, a dietitian or psychologist for stress management. Probably each could attain a result because when anything reasonably constructive is done to the body, symptomatic relief often results. The problem is that very often the whole body of the 'iceberg' has not been addressed and the symptom will eventually return or manifest as another similar symptom because not all the causes have been dealt with.

The great thing about Reiki is that it doesn't specifically treat the symptom. Because Reiki is a harmonizing energy, it treats the whole complex of the body. As it pours into the body and interacts with it, the Reiki will systematically start harmonizing the whole body of the iceberg. When the stomach has finally cleared up with Reiki treatments, it means that the condition has gone because the underlying causes have been harmonized, and not just because the symptom has been relieved or masked (such as with antibiotics).

Even with apparently simple things like sports injuries, we often find that there are underlying predisposing factors such as high stress levels or being run down. It has been established that if the body is over stressed or run down it is more easily injured. When a Reiki treatment is applied to the injury the associated stress is also treated and thus enhances vitality.

Each disease can be seen as a particular combination of disharmonious frequencies. It appears that Reiki polarizes in the body as the mirror image or harmonic of the diseased frequencies. This would effectively tend to neutralize the disharmony in the same way that frequency therapies like homeopathy work. The difference is that in homeopathy the practitioner has to diagnose the disharmony and choose the appropriate frequency (medicine) with which

to harmonize it.

Reiki doesn't need diagnosis because it follows its own laws of harmonics and gravitates to the frequencies of predominant disharmony. Simply put - one does not need diagnosis because the Reiki does its' own.

#### **14. No need for diagnosis with Reiki.**

If you needed to diagnose in order to treat with Reiki, you could not become a practitioner in a weekend seminar. You would need to do at least a four-year course. The majority of Reiki practitioners are lay people who are not trained in diagnosis. Reiki knows where to go to effectively treat the person. (The act of apparent knowing implied here relates to the harmonizing principle discussed earlier. It could also relate to the 'manifesting consciousness' principle.) As you do not have to know where to direct the Reiki, you do not need to know what is wrong.

If the person being treated wants a diagnosis for their symptoms, they should go to a doctor - A Reiki practitioner cannot and does not need to diagnose a condition in order to treat it. In the meantime, the Reiki practitioner can still effectively help the person regain health and vitality holistically.

Essentially, except for *crisis treatment*, a Reiki practitioner provides the same holistic Reiki treatment for any condition. Because of this the Reiki practitioner does not need a diagnosis to know where to put his or her hands.

Some Reiki practitioners have noticed that, with continued use, Reiki develops their intuition. This intuition strengthens the rapport with a patient during treatment, and means that the practitioner often becomes 'aware' of what is wrong with that person they are treating.

If, during a treatment, a Reiki practitioner intuits an apparent serious condition, it is appropriate to suggest to the person that he have a good checkup with his doctor because there may be an energy disturbance in the lungs for example. It would be totally unethical, irresponsible and, in some countries, illegal, to tell the patient they have lung cancer!

#### **15. Reiki reduces stress.**

When people receiving Reiki are connected to biofeedback equipment, they are shown to go into a state of alpha brain waves. This is a form of light meditation known to reduce the accumulated stress levels of the body. Clinically, people report a significant relaxing of the body and a rapid increase in feelings of well-being (associated with stress release).

It is well documented that stress is a major contributing factor to the etiology of a disease. Any system that can actively reduce stress is therefore going to have short and long-term effects on total physical and mental well-being. This is another compelling reason for using Reiki regularly. We live in a stress-ridden society. By keeping our stress levels down, Reiki can contribute dramatically to our enjoyment of life.

### **Reiki - A Scientific Hypothesis**

Within the subatomic world scientists are aware of energy forces that are unlimited, 'unpolarised' (they don't have a frequency because there is no time factor acting upon them), and act as general 'harmonizers' of the subatomic world by interconnecting everything and maintaining the balance and harmony of this little known world. This 'universal life energy' (as the layman calls it) is probably the best description of the

phenomenon known as Reiki. Advanced knowledge of the workings of the Reiki initiation process tends to reinforce this hypothesis. Reiki Masters when performing an attunement use energy sequences and patterns to bring about the changes necessary to release this energy into the energy centers of the client.

This subatomic energy fits all the above criteria that characterise Reiki. One of the main functions of 'Universal Life Energy' in the subatomic world is to harmonize. If this 'unpolarized' subatomic energy is released into the manifested world (acted upon by time), it will immediately polarize (and be felt as heat, tingling etc). This polarization will result in the harmonization of the energy field it targets - human, animal, or plant. To do this it will form a mirror image of the disharmony (disease) in the energy field. The harmonization of the energy field will automatically accelerate the natural healing process.

The lay term 'universal life energy' can be misleading because many 'new age' therapies attribute this name to any energy force that cannot be readily perceived. In the majority of such cases, the clinical manifestations indicate that they are dealing with high frequency levels of normal polarized energy.

### **Conclusion**

Based on numerous clinical observations, we can hypothesize that taken collectively the above properties, are the distinct properties of the phenomenon known as Reiki. Probably any system that shares all these properties can legitimately, by definition, call itself Reiki but, in fact can they? Again clinical observations have shown that anyone who has 'Reiki' (meeting all the above defining properties) will obtain consistent tangible results in clinical practice if applied in the way instructed by Reiki Masters. These clinical results are then the primary claim to the validation of Reiki.

Anyone who is using a system of 'energy' healing that does not obtain all the above characteristic phenomena, can readily assume that they are not using Reiki. That does not mean their system is not good or effective. It just means it is not Reiki, it is more defined as "energy healing".

Reiki has very definite properties which can be clinically observed and tabulated. Behind the clinical results and observations however, lie many mysteries. There are some aspects that defy logical explanation. Maybe we have to keep in mind the definition of *energy healing* as "*healing without any apparent material source or substance!*"

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Keywords

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Len Thomas is a Reiki Master who traces his lineage through Dawn Bruggen, Maralyn Miller, Dr. Arthur Robinson & Iris Ishukara. He steps outside of the conventional approach to Reiki and has developed a unique approach to the modality.