

Reiki

The Healing Power of Touch

by Marsha R Drozdoff, ACSW, LCSW, CRMT

When good things, such as an unexpected gift, falling in love, or seeing something of exquisite beauty, come into your life, it can feel as if your breath is being taken away. A cancer diagnosis, new treatments, and times of uncertainty can also cause a change in rhythm of your breath, and this may be an unfamiliar and uncomfortable feeling.

The breath has the ability to nourish a sense of aliveness, vitality, and hope within ourselves. Without fullness of breath, we begin to hold on to unpleasant feelings, memories, and limiting belief systems. Although numerous approaches exist that can help you to connect the mind and body more fully, Reiki has become my favorite modality to share

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with survivors and caregivers as part of their treatment and recovery.

Reiki is an ancient form of natural healing utilized for stress reduction, relaxation, and wellness. Because it is a gentle and non-manipulative touch modality, it is a welcome addition to traditional oncology care. *Rei* means universal, and *ki* means life-force energy. Reiki is not a massage technique. You remain fully clothed while receiving a session, which can be given on a chair, a bed, or Reiki table. Depending upon the setting, the practitioner may dim the lighting and play soft music.



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When receiving a Reiki session, you may be asked to silently state your intention. This may include better tolerance of a treatment, experiencing greater peace of mind, decreasing discomfort, healing communication challenges, or simply being open to more calmness and joy. With traditional Usui Reiki, there will be set hand positions that support your whole system. The touch is

light and is occasionally directed not on the physical body but in the energy field. Individuals may experience temperature changes, a movement of energy, colors, a release of emotions, and, as many survivors have stated, “a sense of coming home.” Many become aware of their breathing becoming deeper and fuller, filling them with vital life-force energy while feeling as if they are falling into a comforting sleep state. In this state, much stress is released and insights may become apparent.

You can easily learn to do Reiki on yourself or a loved one. Couples have related feeling more connected and have benefited from having new tools to enhance communication and intimacy. For survivors, whether they use Reiki daily or only during those difficult moments in their lives, they feel as if they are navigating the challenges of a cancer diagnosis with more peace of mind, clarity, and physical well-being.

If you are interested in taking Reiki classes, you may want to ask a potential Reiki teacher the following questions:

- ◆ Are classes no larger than 10 participants?
- ◆ Will I receive a manual?
- ◆ What is your experience in working with cancer survivors and caregivers?
- ◆ Will you be available for follow-up questions, concerns, and learning opportunities?

Editor's Note: Marsha Drozdoff is an oncology social worker at University Medical Center and the Arizona Cancer Center in Tucson, AZ. She received her Reiki Master Teacher Certification in 2005. You can contact Marsha at mdrozdoff@umcaz.edu. ■

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