



Reiki Until the Last Breath

MARSHA R. DROZDOFF, CRMT

MY MOTHER WAS GORGEOUS, even at 91; just four weeks prior to her passing, she had her hair dyed her usual pretty, blond shade. She loved lively colors in her clothing and wore them well. There was almost always lipstick on her lips, nearly perfectly placed even though she had been blind from macular degeneration since her eighties. In her prime, she was a great cook and enjoyed making dinner parties for friends and family. However, even then, not too far below the surface there were chronic issues with confidence and self-esteem. Frequently she saw the glass as half empty, filled with worries, discomforts, disappointments, and later, aging issues. She would often ask in a rhetorical manner during those moments alone with me, her only daughter: “Why do these things only happen to me?”

When my mother turned 82, my husband and I treated her to Reiki Level 1 training for her birthday. Although she never knew all the hand positions, she did use Reiki on herself to quiet the pain she experienced from arthritis and fibromyalgia, and the fears—especially fear related to dying and more precisely dying alone.

I have been a clinical social worker, working primarily in oncology, for the past 35 years. Since becoming a Reiki Master Teacher in 2005, I have had the privilege of teaching or working with Reiki with over a thousand individuals at University Medical Center in Tucson, Arizona, mostly on an outpatient basis. It always felt sad for me to say that my mother was one of my least favorite folks to work with during her final years. Often things were “never good enough”—even doing Reiki on Mom brought out that feeling: “move your hand here/there,” “rub my shoulders,” and more. As she approached the beginning of her tenth decade of life, it often felt better to just sit on the floor while she was talking about life and her concerns and do lots of Reiki on her knees, feet, and toes; it seemed to quiet the neuropathy and some other feet complications she experienced from a progressive kidney disorder. Since Reiki will go where it is most needed, Mom would become calmer and open-hearted and would reminisce about life, family, and times that were safer and more familiar than this changing and perilous end of life terrain.

Things deteriorated dramatically during her last year. There were more frequent calls of distress even during the night; despite increasing homecare for her, it became clear that it was time to move her to an assisted living community. Her situation did not stabilize, and her physical and emotion-

al anguish increased so much so that the management insisted that we hire additional twenty-four hour private care for her and kept encouraging us to use more and more medication to control her behaviors. This was unacceptable to me, and so within three months, we were facing the difficult decision of involving Hospice homecare. I had been out hiking trying to quiet my mind to better hear from spirit what would be of help to Mom when the answer came through clearly that it was time, and I called hospice that day. Then within days of that decision, spirit told me that we needed to move Mom out to an environment where she could receive the dignified and comfortable care that this classy lady deserved. Mom’s hospice provider was the only one in our community that had a residential hospice facility where she could hopefully live out her remaining few months of life.

Spirit, however, had another plan. Once Mom knew that she didn’t have to be in such denial about dying, she began to allow this natural process to occur more quickly than any of us could have predicted. She began to journey almost in a trance state, and the veil between here and not here became thinner. She began to see some dear relatives whom she had loved a lot. She occasionally would speak in seemingly metaphorical ways, repeating over and over again as if her life depended upon it: “button, button, button”...or “yellow, yellow, yellow...the color is yellow” or “11, 11, 11.”

Then, in what turned out to be three days before her passing, she took off her talking watch for the visually impaired, instinctively knowing that she wouldn’t need it where she was traveling to. She also asked me how she would know how to get there; I told her that there would always be someone to guide her. My wonderful daughter Rachael, who adored her Grandma, began staying at her side, remaining there for three days and nights. I joined this vigil two days before Mom’s passing. As I had promised, I was there to guide and support her with words, with Reiki, and with care for as long as I would be permitted to accompany her. I watched and sensed the miracles and gifts of Reiki during the 18 hours or so that I gave her Reiki; for an “old gal,” she amazed me by connecting strongly and pulling much energy to do the spiritual work and journeying that she needed to do. So much of what she had avoided in terms of emotional and spiritual issues, she was blessed to have the strength and opportunity to do before her passing.

Besides being an Usui Reiki Master, I am also a Karuna Reiki® Master so I incorporated the Karuna symbols, too. I

used Zonar to allow her as much physical comfort and anesthesia as possible so that even when there was fluid buildup, she would not be distressed. I used Halu to deal with shadow self issues so that along with Kriya, she could resolve old issues and avoid taking them into the next life; Iava was directed for her to heal codependency issues to feel the fullness of her own identity and personal power. There was lots of Harth for her to have more compassion and to release judgment of others even during her dying process. And from this there was a noticeable shift in her face, along with a brightness, a glow, and a smile as she spiritually talked to others. Instead of telling her to “go into the light” as some folks believe, I softly told Mom that I could sense that she was seeing the light in each person that she had met along the way this time on Earth and that she and each one of them were Buddhas in their own unique manner. I used a lot of Gnosa to augment her spiritual learning and connection with her higher self and act perhaps as a spiritual bridge to the next life. As a daughter I wanted Mom to experience Shanti on all levels for healing of residual fears while embracing deep and satisfying peace. Although I used Rama earlier on in her care, I chose not to use it at this point, to avoid grounding her when she was ambivalent about letting go; for that reason I also did not work on her feet during the final twenty-four hours.

The Kiss: I must share about the Kiss. While Mom was journeying during that final time on earth, her lips kept moving during her other world communications. Although she did not give any sign of communicating with us, I was directed to say to her: “Mom, it looks like you want a kiss.” I put my face next to her and she gave me the purest, sweetest kiss that she had ever given me in my life. This was repeated many times in the next few hours, and each time she came from an inner place of a lightness and love that I had never experienced from this woman before, who, although she truly loved her children, had not been able to share because of the effects of the deep wounds from her relationship with her own mother. Receiving such deep healing from Reiki through to the last moment of her life, these issues were transmuted and all that was left in the end was pure love.

One final point that I would like to share—if you find yourself giving Reiki to a loved one at the end of his or her life, you may want to bring extra food with you. Recognizing how hungry I felt while providing abundant Reiki made me laugh and cry at the same time; perhaps it was a tribute on some level to a woman who loved good food, good friends, and family!



—Marsha can be reached by e-mail at marshad2002@msn.com or by phone at 520.742.1019.