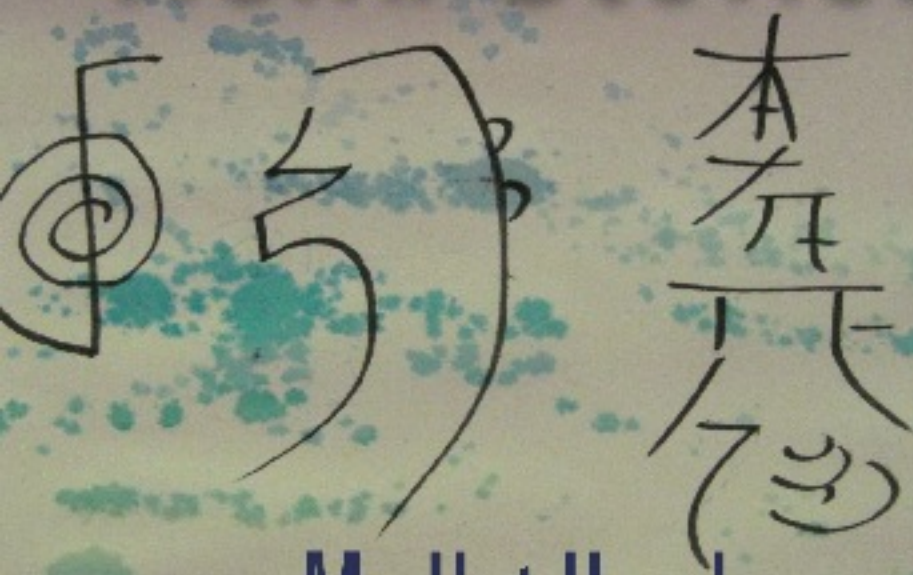


Reiki Stories



My Hot Hands

from the author of Reiki Nurse

Meredith Kendall, RN, MSN, Reiki Master



What's Reiki? What about the changes and shifts in our world? In this poppin' party of a book, Meredith Kendall explores the practice and philosophy of this popular modern modality. Author Mark LaFlamme says, "Maybe only a nurse can take you from hilarity to horror to humility... I read her stuff and find myself smiling, wincing, laughing aloud, and then clearing my throat because there seems to be something caught in it."

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Reiki Stories: My Hot Hands

Meredith Kendall

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Introduction

This book is about my experiences with Reiki and nursing. In this book I'll tell you how I teach Reiki. I'll tell you some nurse stories, and some Reiki stories. I hope to spread the message and meaning of Reiki, and I hope to inspire you to tell your own stories.

My first experience with Reiki was about fifteen years ago. I was working as a visiting nurse, driving 500 miles a week through the mountains of western Maine. One afternoon I was working at my desk, tired and sore. "Oh my back aches," I complained.

A nurse named Cee said, "I could give you some Reiki."

"Sure," I replied. "What's that?"

I leaned over my desk and she put her hands on my back. I jumped, spun around, and grabbed her hands, staring at them, examining them. "What makes them so hot?" I demanded to know.

"It's Reiki," Cee said.

A few years later my cousin, Susan Shaver, told me about Reiki as we sat on a beach. I was intrigued and had to know more. That's when I found and read Diane Stein's book. I enrolled in a class with Kaimora. I learned Reiki and started to practice. Remember Susan, I'll tell you a story about attuning her son at a family reunion in Sacramento.

When I worked as a night nurse on the med-surg floor they used to call me "The Reiki Nurse". They used to say, "Ooh, you have hot hands!" Now I teach nursing and Reiki and am privileged to share Reiki with people whose lives have been touched by cancer.

I got the idea for this book one sunny summer morning. I was sitting on my patio at the edge of the Maine woods: enjoying bird songs, pots of flowers, and the cool mystery of the forest. There was a blast from the blue. I got, "Write about teaching Reiki. Seven chapters." I've played around with the titles of the seven chapters and present to you: History, Practice, Intuition, Communication and Ethics, Balance, Reiki Stories, and Nurse Stories. This book came out of that moment. This is what I know about Reiki and nursing, and these are the stories I tell when I teach. There are also stories about

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cowboys and chocolate. Why? Perhaps they are metaphors. Or maybe I just like cowboys and chocolate.

If these stories speak to you, then perhaps you are also a Reiki nurse. Yes? Super! No? You say you'd like to learn Reiki? Look for a class nearby. There are lots of good teachers. Please jump in: be Reiki. Or maybe you have lots of stories to tell. Start writing; keep writing. Your stories inspire us all. Now, let's talk about Reiki.

History

Why history? If you want to understand Reiki then you must study its origins. Stories abound about the source of Reiki knowledge. Did it come from the stars? Is there a planet where everyone is Reiki? Or is it from our past here on Earth; was there a time when Reiki was taught in every school? Perhaps. What we know for sure is that our contemporary Reiki practice comes from Mikao Usui, a Japanese Buddhist monk.

One of the Reiki principles is, “Honor your parents, teachers, and elders.” I honor my teachers by studying the history of Reiki. I study their lives, their culture, and their relationship to the world. So I always teach history.

When I teach a Reiki class I usually start the class with a simple definition, correct pronunciation, and the history of Reiki. *Reiki* is pronounced like a ray of light: RAY kee. It's a Japanese word that means “Universal Life Force Energy.”

Next I talk about the practice of Reiki, communication, and intuition. I teach Reiki principles and symbols. I show them Reiki hand positions and we practice together. We talk about the ethics of touch, and the ethics of caring. We talk about how to communicate with recipients, the language of Reiki, and the special skills for practice in a medical setting.

I often assign work to be done before the class: students must read a book about Reiki. Any book. I recommend Diane Stein's *Essential Reiki: A complete guide*, it's my first and favorite. Another good one is Pamela Miles' *Reiki: A comprehensive guide*. It's well-researched, precise, and excellent for Reiki in a medical setting. I tell them to flip thorough and read whatever looks interesting. They write a report about Reiki and present what they learned to the class.

I do attunements when students are ready. I tell the students to take care of themselves afterward. They may feel spacey, tingly, or tired for several days. I encourage them to drink lots of water, rest, and eat local organic fruits and vegetables. I tell them to be aware of their bodies and spirits, and to be kind to themselves.

Then I tell the students to practice Reiki every day. They can do Reiki on themselves, their pets, or their friends and family. They just need to do it. Every day. I tell them to think of the symbols every day, and draw them; otherwise they might forget the intricate lines and loops.

Usui, Hayashi, and Takata

Mikao Usui was the founder of modern Reiki, and Hawayo Takata the woman who brought Reiki to the West. Chujiro Hayashi was Usui's student, Takata's teacher. Maybe Reiki would have come through to us another way, but this is how it came: Usui, Hayashi, Takata. This is the lineage for most people in the US.

If you research Usui, Hayashi, and Takata, you will find information that is at times confusing and contradictory. For many years, our information on the history of Reiki came from Takata, and she liked to teach with stories, a Hawaiian tradition known as talk-story. Some of her stories were metaphors: details were altered to fit the students and the circumstances. Look for the meaning in her stories, and if you're a fact-checker, then verify.

Takata's amazing accomplishment was introducing Reiki to the West. Reiki was a Japanese tradition, and Takata brought it home to Hawaii at a time when Westerners were distrustful of things Japanese; it was World War Two. But I'm skipping ahead. Let's go back to Usui Sensei.

Many people believe that Reiki is an ancient healing art. Some believe the practice came from another planet. Perhaps there's a planet where everyone does Reiki. Maybe they learn it at school. Maybe children are Reiki 1, young adults are Reiki 2, and some choose Reiki for their life's work, and become Reiki 3. Perhaps. But this story of Reiki begins with Mikao Usui and his discovery of Reiki around 1922. I'll call him Usui Sensei, which means Mr Usui, or Master/Teacher.

For many years, the story was that Usui Sensei was a Christian minister who was on a quest to learn how Jesus Christ healed with His hands. The story was that he studied in Chicago, Nepal, and India. Turns out that was one of Takata's metaphorical stories.

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According to contemporary sources, Usui Sensei was a Buddhist monk, a family man, and a lifelong spiritual seeker.

Pamela Miles, in *Reiki: A comprehensive guide*, wrote that Usui Sensei discovered or developed the practice of reiki around 1922, while on a spiritual retreat at a Buddhist temple on Mt Kurama, near Kyoto, Japan. You can look at pictures of Mt Kurama online. There are many beautiful pictures of the mountain and the temple.

Usui Sensei called his practice, “The Secret of Happiness.” It was a spiritual practice based on meditation, a quest for enlightenment, ethics, and hands-on healing. His clients sat in chairs. Usui Sensei sensed the places on the body where Reiki was needed, and placed his hands there.

Hayashi was a retired naval officer and Usui’s student. Hayashi opened a Reiki clinic in Tokyo. His practice differed from Usui’s slightly. Hayashi’s clients lay on tables and were tended to by two practitioners. Hayashi developed the hand placements; his practitioners set their hands in specific locations on the recipients’ bodies.

One day Hawayo Takata walked into Hayashi’s clinic. She had a painful abdominal tumor and asthma. She started Reiki treatments and experienced improvement within weeks. After her complete recovery she asked to learn Reiki.

Hayashi agreed to teach her and she began an apprenticeship. Eventually Takata returned to her home in Hawaii where she taught and practiced for many years. Hayashi visited her in Hawaii to help her establish her practice.

Takata was a brilliant saleswoman. Many cultures have a tradition of hands-on healing. Takata made Reiki special and desirable. She figured out how to make Reiki acceptable and appealing to Americans. Takata presented Reiki as something mysterious, secret, exclusive, and expensive. Students in her classes could not take notes, or write down the symbols. They had to study and remember.

At times she told her students that she was the only living Reiki master. She said she was the Grand Master of Reiki, and the only

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person who could attune another Master/Teacher. She charged \$10,000 for the master attunement.

Takata's practice and teaching spread. Now we have Takata's Reiki all over the world. Many teachers continue to offer expensive, exclusive classes. They take students to exotic locales like the Great Pyramids or Stonehenge. That must be a memorable experience, to be attuned at a sacred site. I apologize to my students, who are usually attuned in an ordinary classroom. I wish I could take us all to Mt Kurama, Mt Shasta, a crop circle, or Giza.

Back to Hawayo Takata. Her practice came from her experience of illness, pain, and cure: from the perspective of hands-on healing. Remember, Usui's practice was based on his spiritual quest. So there are many paths leading to Reiki today, and many things to learn.

Once at the Cancer Center Usui and Takata appeared to me as I gave Reiki. They were incredibly benevolent and loving glowing presences. They beamed absolute love and kindness. I felt so honored, so blessed. They communicated approval, acceptance, and happiness that Reiki is continuing.

Since that time they sometimes appear to help me channel Reiki. I see them above me and feel their energy coursing through me. Hayashi has appeared too. It's amazing and wonderful.

If you want to learn more about the history of reiki, read all you can. I've been reading Pamela Miles' book and blog, Fran Brown's book of Takata's stories, and all I can about Reiki in contemporary Japan. Or perhaps you could study Reiki with some of today's Master Teachers from the various lineages in Japan and the US.

Be well

What does it mean to be well? It's a popular benediction; my friend, Kris Kamys, says it often. What is wellness? Is "being well" a conscious choice? There are many perceptions about health, wellness, and disease; there are many definitions.

What is wellness in Reiki? Maybe you have to want to be well, for Reiki to work. Maybe you have to believe in Reiki. If so, does that mean it's faith healing? If not, does that somehow validate the power of Reiki? Is Reiki a religion or a spiritual practice? Do Reiki

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practitioners claim to be God, or consort with the Devil? How do you decide if a Reiki session has been successful? Can you measure it? As you can see, there are many questions around health, disease, and Reiki. Let's look at these issues. I'll tell you some stories.

Here's one. This is my best experience with God. One day I did a meditation with my teacher, Angela, the medical intuitive. Angela instructed me to imagine a beam of light coming into the top of my head. Then she told me to follow the beam upwards. I did. I ascended into the light until I was up among the stars. I saw my beam of light joining with all the other beams of light: all the other souls. The beams merged into a giant ball of pure light. I felt connected to all the other souls, joined by our pursuit of light and connection. I was transformed. This light, this merging, this energy: this was God.

Some people refer to this energy as the Source, Prime Creator, or as Divine Consciousness. Some people recognize many Gods and Goddesses. Reiki isn't a religion, and doesn't dictate what religion you must follow. Practitioners follow a code of ethics, but are not instructed on how or who to worship. Reiki practitioners hold diverse religious and spiritual beliefs. You can follow any or no religious practice and still do Reiki.

Some religious leaders believe that Reiki confers a state of grace. They say that a state of grace can be offered only by God, and accessed only through certified, licensed religious leaders, like priests or bishops. If you are not a priest or bishop, and you try to access God directly, then you risk contacting the Devil instead. They object to Reiki because of these beliefs.

Here's a story about the Devil. One day I was featured in a newspaper story about Reiki. It was a basic piece about providing Reiki sessions to inpatients in the hospital where I was employed. The reporter briefly described our program, and the experience of one patient. My next-door neighbor responded to the piece. He emailed the newspaper and his rant was featured online, below the story. He said that I had "the Devil's hands."

Another nurse put it to me this way. "The Bible says that channeling is wrong because how do you know what you are inviting

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in? You could be opening the door to the Devil. I would never have Reiki. No Christian like me would. The Bible says it's wrong.”

All I know is that I work with love and light. I'm not trying to confer a state of grace, convert anyone, or dance with the Devil. I'm just trying to help people feel better. I'm trying to help them be well.

I think that wellness is insight. Insight is the opposite of disease. It is the merging of spirit with mind and emotion. Insight starts in the spirit, mind, and emotions and spreads to the body.

Health, as Margaret Newman said, is the expansion of consciousness. Health is the process of gaining understanding. I believe that someone with cancer can be a healthy person. Maybe health is the merging of the soul with the mind, body, and emotions.

What about disease? Disease starts in the mind or the emotions, in the energy field, and is manifested in the body. Disease is sometimes a disconnect from spirit, and sometimes an intentional plan. Sometimes we use disease to gain insight. Who knows better than the person with cancer what is truly important in this world? In my experience, people with cancer have distilled discernment, values, and perceptions. They value love, family, and connection more deeply. They laugh and hug more often. They perceive pain and stress on a scale different from the one used by many others. People with cancer frequently rate their pain and stress lower than the average office worker does. They rate their happiness higher. Interesting. It's interesting how chronic illness seems to alter one's perceptions.

Do Reiki practitioners manipulate energy? What is this energy and how does one manipulate it? I'm not sure. Some days I believe I can sense and direct energy. Partly it's through intention: I set my intention to achieve the greatest good. The energy? I think of energy as anything emitted from one entity that provokes a response in another entity. For example, the thing emitted could be a statement, a touch, thought, a gesture, or a facial expression. The response could be insight, emotion, conversation, ideas, memories, visions, physiological changes, or increased awareness. Other days I feel like I should just place my hands and get my mind out of the way. I go into a meditative state, focusing on love and light. I hope that I am a good

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enough vessel, a clear channel for the Reiki to come through. Where does Reiki come from? It comes from within and without.

Must one believe in Reiki for it to be effective? No. I've seen many clients, nonbelievers, who were impressed and amazed by one session. They reported reductions or complete relief of pain and stress. Not all. Some, a few, have said they felt nothing. Most report sensations of relaxation and well-being after a short Reiki session. They feel less stress and more happiness.

Takata and the Wisdom Tooth

In August of 2009 I had two teeth extracted by an oral surgeon. A wisdom tooth had grown sideways into a molar, causing a cavity. It didn't hurt, but I could smell and taste the rot. Both teeth had to be removed.

My friends Betsy and Marilyn took care of me. Betsy drove me to the oral surgeon's office and back home. Betsy is a nurse; she's worked in the ICU, and as a hospital supervisor. I felt so much better knowing she was there. I thought if the workers had difficulty getting in an IV or waking me up, she could help. If I tried to die she could resuscitate me. Also she is warm and kind; I knew she would comfort me if I needed that. Also she's a Reiki Master/Teacher.

Marilyn was there too. She's smart and tough. I knew she could handle any situation. I knew her pragmatic manner and her respect for me would make me feel strong. Plus she always makes me laugh; that's always a good thing.

Marilyn got to the oral surgeon's office first, and greeted me at the door. She looked lovely and elegant, as always. Sotto voce, she complained about the unruly children milling around the waiting room. The contrast between Marilyn's well-groomed exterior and her subversive remarks amused me.

The procedure itself went well. I had a Valium to take that morning, but didn't use it. I meditated instead. My sister Catherine called me, and we talked until Betsy turned into my driveway.

I waited with Betsy and Marilyn until a worker, Cindy, called my name. I don't know Cindy's title: dental hygienist? Nurse? She guided me to the procedure room where I sat in a soft dental chair and

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did Reiki on myself. The surgeon came in and placed the IV. He got it right away: no fishing for a vein. I barely felt it. I told him, “Good job.”

That’s all I remember until I woke up and Cindy walked me to the recovery room across the hall. There was a video about post-op care. Betsy and Marilyn appeared and sat down to watch the video. I was very sleepy and closed my eyes. Hawayo Takata was with me, her beautiful beneficent face smiling down at me. She was giving me Reiki. Then Betsy and Marilyn were urging me to leave and I thought, “What’s the hurry? I want to stay here with Hawayo Takata.” I mumbled “Hawayo...Takata”, waved my hand, and closed my eyes again.

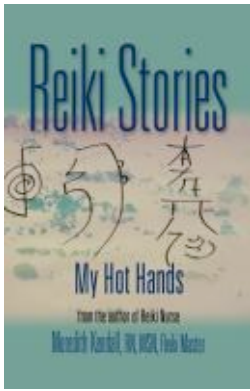
Betsy told me later that when she and Marilyn walked into the recovery room I was already there, sitting cross-legged in a chair. My hands were on my knees, palms up, thumbs and index fingers making an “O”. My face was turned to the ceiling, eyes closed, and I was smiling.

“You were SO funny!” Betsy said. “Sitting there meditating. I asked you if you were OK, and you gave me a thumbs up. You were just sitting there grinning!”

Well Betsy and Marilyn got me out of there as soon as they could. I stumbled into Betsy’s car and saw that not even an hour had passed since I’d left the waiting room. Fast work. I kept thinking of Hawayo Takata; I wanted to hold on to the vision.

We stopped at a drugstore and Betsy bought sterile gauze pads for my bloody mouth. She got me home, tucked me into my recliner, and wrapped a kitchen towel around an ice pack. Marilyn stopped at the same drugstore to buy me pain medication. She brought the pain pills and chocolate yogurt and wouldn’t let me reimburse her. Great, wonderful, loving friends. Thank you! I took a Percocet and sat in my recliner all afternoon: clutching the ice pack to my cheek, sleeping, and dreaming of Hawayo Takata.

So you can see how history is alive. Study the history of Reiki. Learn all you can about the practice and principles as perceived by Usui, Hayashi, and Takata.



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