

Chapter 1

Reiki: The Art of Channeling Life-Force Energy

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting a basic idea of what Reiki is — and isn't
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You are deeply relaxed while lying on the Reiki table, as the practitioner lays her hands on different parts of your body. Impressed that this gentle laying on of hands can bring you such peace and joy, you want to know more about it. You've come to the right place, because this book is a guide to the basic practice of Reiki.

In this book, I describe how to use Reiki to heal yourself and your family members, and even treat people who are far away. Reiki techniques can also be used for your pets, your food, and the earth. The more you use Reiki, the more uses you'll find for it. In this chapter, you'll find out how Reiki works, where Reiki comes from, and what help Reiki can give you. You can even discover how to channel the Reiki energy yourself so that you have a lifelong tool to use for yourself and others.

In this chapter you get a taste of what Reiki is all about!

Discovering What Reiki Is and Isn't

Reiki is popping up all over the place, but lots of folks are still confused about what Reiki is exactly. In the context used in this book, Reiki is both:

- ✓ **A healing system that channels universal life-force energy:** This system was originally developed by Mikao Usui in the early 1900s in Japan. For more on Reiki's beginning, see "Exploring the History of Reiki," later in this chapter, and also Chapter 3.
- ✓ **The name of the energy itself:** *Rei* means spiritual wisdom, and *ki* means energy, so *Reiki* means spiritual energy. See Figure 1-1, which illustrates the word Reiki in Japanese characters.



Some people use the word Reiki as a verb, as in "I will Reiki him." What they are saying is, "I will give Reiki to him."



Reiki is available to everyone. Anyone of any age or illness level can receive Reiki. Even newborn babies or people at the end of life can benefit from the relaxation that Reiki provides. See Chapter 6 to find out how every member of your family, including your pets, can use and benefit from Reiki.

What Reiki is

In short, Reiki gives you what you need, whether it's a release of tension or an energy boost, or both. To help you more fully understand what Reiki gives you, here are some terms used to describe Reiki:

- ✓ **Gentle:** Reiki's touch is soft and light.
- ✓ **Harmless:** Reiki can have only positive results.
- ✓ **Natural:** You don't need any equipment or tools.
- ✓ **Healing:** The highest level of healing is the goal of Reiki.
- ✓ **Balancing:** Reiki will balance your energy levels.
- ✓ **Relaxing:** The top reason to try Reiki is to feel the bliss of deep relaxation.
- ✓ **Energizing:** If you're drained of energy, Reiki will revive you.

A large, bold, black Japanese character '霊' (Rei) is centered in the upper half of the page. It is written in a traditional, slightly stylized font with thick strokes and a slight curve at the bottom.A large, bold, black Japanese character '気' (Ki) is centered in the lower half of the page. It is written in a traditional, slightly stylized font with thick strokes and a slight curve at the bottom.

Figure 1-1:
The
Japanese
characters
for Reiki.

What Reiki isn't

Knowing what Reiki isn't is as important as knowing what it is:

- ✓ **Reiki is not religious.** Reiki is totally nondenominational. You can practice any religion (or none) and still use and benefit from Reiki. Founder Mikao Usui was influenced by the religions of his country, Shintoism and

Buddhism. But Reiki isn't associated with any religion, and people of all faiths and beliefs are Reiki practitioners. Reiki isn't New Age either (see the section "Combining New Age and Reiki," later in this chapter).

- ✓ **Reiki is not massage or reflexology.** Reiki is an energy-healing system and not a manipulative system (hands moving the body). Reiki is distinct from reflexology and massage. But Reiki is sometimes confused with other hands-on healing arts, especially reflexology. I'm not sure why; maybe it's because they both begin with the letter *r*.

Understanding the Spiritual Foundation of Reiki

Okay, I know in the previous section I say that Reiki isn't a religion, but it *is* spiritual. The distinction between spirituality and religion has caused a lot of confusion with regard to Reiki. These concepts are overlapping but separate. Here's what I mean:

Spirituality is the belief in your connection with the divine, no matter whether you call it a higher power, God, spirit, soul, or even the stars. The purpose of spiritual development is to improve this connection and see the divinity within yourself and all around you.

Religion provides guidance on how to develop yourself spiritually. It tells you what the divine looks like and gives you frameworks of texts, places of worship, and guides to support you.

You can be part of a religion and not have a spiritual connection. You can have a spiritual connection and not belong to a religion.



Reiki provides a means for spiritual growth. No matter what your religious background, you'll find that the principles are relevant and don't conflict with your religious practice. In fact, Reiki should enhance your personal religious connection. The spiritual aspects of Reiki enable you to do the following:

- ✓ **Connect to a higher source:** You use prayer and meditation to connect to God or the higher power of your own beliefs. Spiritual connection provides the never-ending supply of Reiki energy.
- ✓ **Channel the higher energy:** Reiki healing energy is not from the practitioner but comes *through* the practitioner from God or another higher power.

- ✓ **Keep spiritually healthy:** Just as you maintain your physical health with nutritious food, fresh air, and exercise, you also need to maintain your spiritual health. Prayer, meditation, quiet times, and spiritual exercise (doing kind acts) can help in this regard. Reiki uses the following spiritual tools: Reiki principles, meditation (see Chapter 9), and symbols and chanting (see Chapter 8).

Examining the Energy of Reiki

Reiki is a system of energy healing. You don't actually need to understand *how* the energy of the body works in order to use or benefit from Reiki, but it helps to know the basis for the way that Reiki works, which is examined in the following sections.

Defining universal energy

As a child, did you ever gaze at the stars with wonder and awe? The sun, the moon, the stars, and all the different life forms on our planet radiate an energy that is called a *universal energy*. Because this is the energy that animates humans and other living beings, it's called the *universal life-force energy*. This energy is known by different names. You can call it universal life-force energy, love, God, or spirit. For consistency throughout the book, I use the term *spirit*.



Reiki is a system that allows you to tap into and benefit from this universal energy.

Detecting subtle energy

When I talk about *subtle energy*, I am referring to the energy of Reiki and also the energy fields that are associated with your body. When something is subtle, it doesn't necessarily scream its presence, so you must get quiet to feel its presence. (In Chapter 2, I describe other types of subtle energy systems.)

Meditation is frequently used during Reiki training and before giving Reiki so you can get quiet enough to sense the presence of the Reiki energy (see Chapter 9).

Universal Reiki — with humor and humanity

One of my Reiki teachers wanted me to emphasize here that Reiki is practiced all the world over and that he thought there should be more humor with Reiki. On that note, he provided the following stories:

“My Italian barber wanted me to give him Reiki for his sore shoulder, which fortunately hadn’t led to lopsided haircuts but, on the other hand, wasn’t helping his singing any. Appreciative of Reiki help, he nevertheless wondered why we didn’t do it like his grandmother (a contemporary of Mikao Usui; see Chapter 3), who had learned it from her grandmother. On invited demonstration, he moved his hands faster than most Reiki practitioners usually do, but the same good feeling was there, with a flavor of Italian sunshine.”

“Charlie, a Native American Reiki student, gently advised me one day that in his tribe what we

called Reiki was a way of life and part of the culture he grew up with — no special training or certificates needed. Soon after, sorrowfully, we gave Charlie a farewell Reiki session, his courageous fight against terminal illness having run its course. Yet, he appeared two weeks later at Reiki circle, barely standing, and without prearrangement, we all bowed to him as he entered, much as we would have done to Mikao Usui. Charlie then showed us one final, powerful ‘Reiki’ treatment, Native American-style, hands moving above the body, accompanied by a high-voiced Indian chanting that made my hair stand on end and my heart leap. Charlie died two weeks later, but his special message will not be forgotten. With Reiki, we are all connected; the world is one.”

The energy field surrounding the human body is also called an *aura*, and it can be sensed with the hands, visualized with the eyes (with some practice), and photographed with special techniques (see Chapter 2).



Scientific instruments have been developed that can detect these subtle energies, which are also called biomagnetic forces. Some studies can even detect the subtle energy coming off an energy practitioner’s hands (see Chapter 2).

When you receive a Reiki session, the energy may not feel subtle at all as you feel the heat from the Reiki practitioner’s hands and perhaps waves rushing through your body. Each person senses the Reiki energy differently, and with time, your sensations will change. After you’re attuned (initiated) into Reiki energy yourself, you may feel Reiki more keenly. And the Reiki practitioner might sense the emanations of life-force energy from the Reiki recipient. Certain Reiki techniques utilize the ability to sense energy (see Chapter 10). But don’t worry; you can still practice Reiki with the standard hand positions even if you don’t sense anything.



Even if you don't feel Reiki energy, it still works.

Understanding how Reiki works

As an energy-healing system, Reiki works to heal you at the level of your energy to the root of any disease, imbalance, or disharmony.

Though looking at the energy fields emitted by the body is becoming more popular now with the advent of alternative medicine and New Age philosophies, energy healing is actually quite ancient. Traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, and other cultures have identified and classified this energy that runs throughout the body (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of chakras and meridians).

As a healing energy, Reiki is considered to be positive (no harm can come from Reiki) and intelligent (the energy heals what is needed even if you don't consciously know what you need). The recipient draws the right amount of energy to just the place where it's needed. Frequently a practitioner will feel her hands "drawn" like a magnet to a certain place. In this way, the practitioner is the channel of the universal life-force energy.

Distinguishing Reiki from other forms of energy healing

Energy healing is part of many different cultures. Whether it be acupuncture or the laying on of hands, the use of energy to treat illness is part of human history. See the sidebar "Universal Reiki — with humor and humanity," in this chapter.

Reiki offers a way to achieve spiritual and personal growth and also to heal others. But Reiki is not the only system with these goals. Two systems that are commonly confused with Reiki are:

- ✓ **Johrei:** The founder of Johrei, Mokichi Okada, was a contemporary of Mikao Usui (founder of Reiki) in Japan. The Johrei spiritual movement encompasses more than hands-on spiritual healing and advocates individual spiritual development so that everyone can reach "paradise on earth." Visit the Web site www.johrei.com for more information.

- ✓ Therapeutic touch: In 1972, Dr. Dolores Krieger, RN, and Dora Kunz developed the healing system called therapeutic touch. This energy-healing system involves similar features to Reiki and is taught as a 12-hour workshop. Therapeutic touch requires compassion and desire to develop experience through practice and focus. Therapeutic touch is commonly practiced within the nursing profession. See www.therapeutic-touch.org/ for more information.

Here are other types of energy healing:

- ✓ Acupuncture
- ✓ Polarity therapy
- ✓ Pranic healing
- ✓ Prayer
- ✓ Qigong

Reiki is distinct from these other practices through its use of symbols (see Chapter 8) and the attunement process (see Chapter 7).

Exploring the History of Reiki

I want to clarify some misconceptions about the history of Reiki. Even though other hands-on, spiritual, and energy-healing methods have ancient origins, the practice of Reiki is from 20th century Japan. Mikao Usui was born in 1865, and he taught Reiki in the early 1900s onward. He claimed that his system was unique.

Beware of old or false information, which is still present in older books or Web sites. New information has come in the last few years from Reiki historians who have visited Japan and interviewed Japanese Reiki practitioners and found Mikao Usui's memorial stone (see Chapter 3 for details about Reiki history and Chapter 20, which deals with Reiki myths).

When Mikao Usui first developed his system for spiritual healing, he called it *Usui Reiki Ryoho*, which means the Usui method for spiritual healing. As this system was passed on and taught in the West, the name of the system was called simply Reiki. Reiki has exploded into different branches, with variations on Usui's original system. I cover the background of Reiki in Japan and

the evolution into Western forms in Chapter 3. I also describe different Reiki branches (Western and Japanese) and the concept of lineage in Reiki.



When you study Reiki, you can trace your lineage back to Mikao Usui through the listing of teachers. Lineage is discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

The common element of all schools or branches of Reiki is the ability to channel universal life-force energy.

Getting Connected with Reiki

Reiki allows you to feel deeply relaxed, calm, and peaceful. The gentle touch of the practitioner's hands serves to transmit the higher-level healing energy to you. Anyone of any age, religion, or health status can benefit from Reiki.

You can experience Reiki from the perspective of a recipient or receiver of Reiki by booking Reiki sessions with a qualified practitioner. Or you can decide to become initiated into Reiki and begin your Reiki studies. This section briefly discusses both experiences.

Where Reiki can take you

If you're really ready to grow, really ready to change, and really ready to heal, Reiki can aid your progress toward wholeness. Reiki opens you up to receive the blessings of the universal life-force energy.

You may find yourself growing in ways you never imagined. Or rather, you may find yourself returning to a place of peace, feeling of love, sense of calm, and purpose of being that you forgot you ever had.

You will make some changes in your life. They may be small subtle changes, like being nice to a co-worker or letting a car pass you on the highway. You may change how you eat or what you wear.

You'll notice coincidences popping up. People show up to help you, or situations change just when you need them. You're more in the flow of the universe (from receiving the universal life-force energy) or at least more aware of the flow. You trust that life will be okay, that you will be okay, and that Reiki can help you. As you continue your life's journey, you know that you can always use Reiki, on a daily basis, especially as life takes its twists and turns.

Reiki takes you to a safe place, Reiki takes you to your truth, and Reiki takes you home.

Trying a Reiki session

Experiencing a first Reiki session is the point of entry for most folks to either deciding to use Reiki regularly or to go farther and find out how to give a Reiki session.

I list the ways that Reiki can help your entire family in Chapter 6. To find out exactly what you can expect from a Reiki session, look at Chapter 5.

Becoming initiated into Reiki's uses

Utilizing Reiki is as simple to learn as 1-2-3 — the three different levels of Reiki training.

- ✔ **First-degree Reiki:** This 1st-level class starts your Reiki flow. You find out about Reiki history and how to use Reiki to heal yourself. I cover self-healing with Reiki in Chapter 11.
- ✔ **Second-degree Reiki:** One step up from the 1st degree you find out how to use three Reiki symbols and send Reiki long distance. After this degree, you can become a Reiki practitioner. Chapter 13 describes how to give a Reiki session, and Chapter 15 covers long-distance Reiki.
- ✔ **Third-degree Reiki:** This level is frequently divided into two parts, with the first focusing on the fourth Reiki symbol and learning Master's level techniques. The last level covers how to teach Reiki to others.

Chapter 7 gives you the lowdown on Reiki training: which classes you should take, what you will learn, and how to prepare for your attunements.

When you study Reiki, you find out the following:

- ✔ The history of Reiki
- ✔ The basics of energy healing
- ✔ How to use Reiki to heal yourself and others
- ✔ How to use a set of symbols that connect to the Reiki energy (see Chapter 8)
- ✔ How to teach Reiki to others

You also receive one or more attunements. An *attunement* is an initiation process whereby your ability to channel the Reiki energy is activated.

Choosing a Reiki Practitioner or Master

You may be looking for someone to give you a treatment or someone to teach you Reiki. Here are two ways Reiki professionals identify themselves:

- ✓ **A Reiki practitioner (RP) is someone who practices Reiki.** This means the person has studied at least the 2nd level of Reiki and has learned to give Reiki treatments to others.
- ✓ **A Reiki Master (RM) is a person who has completed the Master level of Reiki.** The Reiki Master may also be a Reiki Master Teacher (RMT), in which case the person can also teach Reiki.

Note that a Reiki Master is also a Reiki practitioner.



To receive a Reiki session, you may be treated by someone who is either a Reiki practitioner or a Reiki Master. If you want to find out how to use Reiki (see the section “Becoming initiated into Reiki’s uses,” earlier in this chapter), you need to find a Reiki Master Teacher.



To find a practitioner or teacher who is a good match for you, consider the questions I pose in Chapters 5 and 7. Because this person will be transmitting Reiki energy to you, which is a sacred process, you want to find someone you can trust. You can often find such a person through a friend’s recommendation or through following your own instincts about someone you have a good feeling about.

Experiencing the Benefits of Reiki

Each of you has different reasons for wanting to learn about Reiki right now. What you might need from Reiki today may change next week or next year. But whatever your reasons for needing Reiki, know that Reiki always provides help in a safe and natural way.

Healing a physical illness

If you or a family member is suffering with a physical illness, Reiki can help you by providing deep relaxation. Reiki helps you in the following ways when you're in pain or dealing with illness:

- ✔ Gives you a break from the pain
- ✔ Enhances the healing effects (and reduces the side effects) of any medications (conventional or alternative) you are taking
- ✔ Reduces the time you need to heal after surgery
- ✔ Promotes your body's own internal healing system

More and more doctors, nurses, and hospitals are providing Reiki services (and other energy-healing systems like therapeutic touch) for their patients. Read more about how Reiki combines with different healing therapies in Chapter 16.

Healing the emotions

Reiki has a special symbol just to heal the emotions and promote harmony (I cover the symbols in Chapter 8). The gentle healing that Reiki provides works well with psychotherapy, massage, medication, and any other treatments you use for emotional problems. Reiki specifically helps on the emotional level in the following ways:

- ✔ **Helps you release stuck or buried emotions:** You may cry or have memories come up during a Reiki session. The release helps you feel cleansed, and when memories come up, this may be an indication of something that needs further healing.
- ✔ **Gives you a pure sense of love:** Reiki energy is the energy of love. Love contains the power of the universe and brings forth a sense of wholeness and connection.

Relaxation is probably the primary reason that people try Reiki. I find that when I have a Reiki session, I sigh deeply as the tension that I have been carrying around is released. The more you relax, the more your body accepts the Reiki energy.



If you need to relax, Reiki is a healthier choice than using alcohol, drugs, sugar, or other substances.

Getting insights or inspiration

If you're feeling stuck or looking for resolution of a specific issue, Reiki can help. While you're having a Reiki session, you may experience an Aha! moment. You have a realization or insight that answers a question or solves a problem. Even if you don't get inspiration during the session, your practitioner may give you some feedback that she coincidentally picked up during the session. Or you may find that the solution comes to you in your dreams or unexpectedly in the next few days.

Going farther in spiritual development

When you know you need to evolve in your spiritual growth or you want to feel closer to spirit or act from the level of your soul, a Reiki session can definitely help. Reiki training will take you even farther and give you the tools to grow spiritually. The attunement or initiation process removes energy blocks that keep you stuck.



Reiki helps you evolve as a person and also helps you grow in consciousness. Some people say not to study Reiki unless you are ready to change. The way I see it, change is less painful than being stuck in old patterns that keep repeating and repeating and repeating. Reiki can be like the kick in the pants that moves you to the next level spiritually.

Looking at the Reiki Symbols

The symbols are a distinctive and empowering feature of the Reiki system of healing. Four symbols are taught in the 2nd and 3rd degree Reiki training classes. These symbols act as keys to connect the student with the Reiki energy for life. When you are initiated into the Reiki system, the symbols and Reiki energy are transmitted together during the attunement process. Forever after, if you think of, draw out, or say the name of the symbol, the associated aspect of the Reiki energy is called forth.

In past years, some Reiki teachers sought to keep the symbols secret as a way to protect their value and keep them "pure." However, an increasing number of authors of books and Web sites revealed the symbols to the public. I too have decided to provide clear information about the symbols in Chapter 8 so that you have all the information you need for a beginning practice of Reiki right at your fingertips.

Drawing the symbols correctly can be one of the more stressful aspects for a new Reiki student. Two of the Reiki symbols are actually Japanese characters, which for the Westerner can be a little tricky to memorize how to draw. Memorizing how to draw the symbols may be required during Reiki training. Use the illustrations in Chapter 8 to help you practice drawing the symbols. In Chapter 21, I show you some additional symbols that are not part of traditional Reiki but may be taught in nontraditional classes.



When you're using the symbols, your intention is more important than an exact replication of a symbol.

Combining New Age and Reiki

Reiki combines very well with New Age practices and beliefs. Reiki was used in Japan before the New Age began in the West. People who use Reiki today may or may not also embrace New Age ideology.

Manifesting with Reiki

A definition of manifesting is “to bring into form.” You may have an idea of what you want (lose weight, finish college, or run a marathon, for example), but you may feel it will never happen. Here are some tips on manifesting in general and how Reiki can be used along with manifesting:

- ✓ Think positively about the subject. That means letting go of your fear or belief it won't happen. Believe it will happen. Believe in miracles. A prayer I like on that note is “This or something better.”
- ✓ Picture or visualize the event happening.
- ✓ Put light, sparkles, or Reiki symbols around the picture of the event.

- ✓ Imagine that all parties involved experience happiness and joy. What this means is that you don't try to manifest something that will cause pain to anyone.

You can use any Reiki symbols or just imagine the Reiki energy penetrating and surrounding the situation. Do this manifestation work as part of your meditation, write it in your journal, write it out and post it on your wall, or carry it in your wallet. Send Reiki to the situation as often as possible.

The double Cho Ku Rei symbol (see Chapter 21) is frequently used for manifestation purposes.

Some branches of Reiki combine certain New Age practices with Reiki. If you investigate Reiki on the Internet or elsewhere, you might read about Reiki and aliens or Reiki and dolphins. I don't include that material in this book, but that doesn't mean it isn't true or valuable!

I do include information on Reiki and crystals (see Chapter 12) and other Western techniques that some people may consider New Age. As with all things, take what you like and leave the rest. You'll find that Reiki is compatible with all religions, practices, or beliefs.

