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### Reiki for Recovery: Incorporating Japanese Health Practices to Increase Contemporary Resiliency in American Health

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Reiki for Recovery: Incorporating Japanese Health Practices to Increase Contemporary  
Resiliency in American Health

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APS 650 Capstone Project

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## **Abstract**

The Japanese health practice of Reiki attempts to maximize the latent ability of the human system to heal itself. The Reiki system, established over a century ago, combines multiple Asian health traditions, experimenting with practices that maximize the natural processes of the body to perform its own repairs. Reiki encourages healthy behaviors that balance the mind and body, return the human system to a lowered stress level, and allow for an optimal recovery state for the patient. This paper illustrates how this Japanese health-affirming method can be integrated and utilized within existing health and medical practices. An area that is deserving of more research and attention, Reiki fills a void in medical care and can provide a better quality of life for the ill, injured, and disabled individuals along with decrease their social and psychological isolation. This method also amplifies resiliency—or the ability to recover from trauma, stress, and injury—greatly reducing the time necessary for healing.

Moreover, the Reiki lifestyle is simple to teach and practice, while also being an affordable complementary medical system. Such practices must be better utilized in order to increase the general resiliency of health care providers and patients. Formalizing a Reiki practice then becomes a method of psycho-social reintegration. With reduced recovery times, simplicity of use and implementation, and with little to no side effects, Reiki offers numerous benefits to individuals and the health care system that are easy to see. Through increased use by reputable medical professionals, Reiki can correct the issues that plague its contemporary practices, allowing for improved and more effective health care methods and systems.

## **Keywords**

Reiki, Japanese health, resiliency, American health system

## Introduction

In the movie *The Karate Kid* (1984) the wise US WWII Veteran from Okinawa, Mr. Miyagi, teaches his student, Daniel, the way every wise father does: through good old hard physical labor. “Paint the fence, sand the floor.” “Wax on and wax off,” he tells Daniel. This “action-specific” labor is intended to condition the muscles necessary for self-resiliency. Daniel is too sore and weak to perform simple movements. Cue the sound effects and music that are a prelude to Mr. Miyagi roughly massaging Daniel’s shoulder with mystical overtones. Amazingly, this treatment grants Daniel enough strength to push on. The old sorcerer Mr. Miyagi repeats his “magic” during the locker room “pre crane kick” pep talk. As Mr. Miyagi delivers his ritualistic “clap” and rubs his hands, the music builds in mystic tones, inspiring just enough of a spark to push Daniel through.<sup>1</sup>

Music and dramatic overtones aside, this is the medical practice of fishermen and carpenters around the world. As an audience we are left guessing, *Could Mr. Miyagi have been practicing a form of Reiki?* Absolutely. “Miyagi Karate,” even without formally naming his healing practice in the movie, is Reiki.

Reiki has been described in the West as a sort of energy-based healing which incorporates near touch or healing hands methods. The energy transference is difficult to prove or disprove with the current level of technology. However, as heat transference is an exchange of energy, it is not an area of study that can go ignored. Because of the fringe nature of this field, Reiki is sometimes labeled as a “sham” form of medicine in the contemporary Western practices of complimentary or alternative medicine (CAM). In 2011, *The Guardian* reported on the “Investigation of standard care versus sham Reiki placebo versus actual Reiki therapy to enhance comfort and well-being in

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<sup>1</sup> *The Karate Kid*. Directed by John G. Avildsen. Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 1984.

a chemotherapy infusion center.”<sup>2</sup> The report indicated this conclusion: “The results of this study were impressive: reiki did, in fact, make the patients feel better. Specifically, it increased the comfort and wellbeing of the patients in comparison with those who received no such intervention. Intriguingly, however, the sham reiki had the same effects, and there were no differences between real and sham reiki.”<sup>3</sup> Such reports can be problematic as they indicate Reiki’s positive effects are hard to tangibly prove. In light of “sham reiki,” the medical field tends to view Reiki as a somewhat arbitrary practice and avenue for “spiritual growth,” transferring a sort of mystical “specialness” to the practitioner.

While it is true that there may be some spiritual benefit to the practice, the Western medical system neglects the very intent of Reiki. It is not intended to make someone special, magical, or unique. Reiki is a system of practices—task-oriented exercise routines which help to reinvigorate the injured or ill. Reiki practices not only increase the speed of the recovery process for the injured but also improve psychological and social health of both practitioners and patients. These achievements ultimately reinvigorate the medical system at large. A short review and study of the foundation of Reiki should illuminate and restore some of its credibility. Once the foundations are set, we will have a better understanding of how the natural state of healing can be established through Reiki practices and how they can be incorporated into contemporary medical and health practices.

This research will focus on Reiki’s role in *recovery* and *healing* from traumas and injuries, a process which can take an extremely long time. Oftentimes these periods are also accompanied by chronic pain combined with neurological and physical disabilities. Hence, the chronic pain then

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<sup>2</sup> Edzard Ernst, “Giving Placebos Such as Reiki to Cancer Patients Does More Harm Than Good.” *The Guardian*. October 11, 2011, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>3</sup> Ernst, “Giving Placebos Such as Reiki to Cancer Patients Does More Harm Than Good.”

prohibits the injured person from functioning in their previous role. The recovery process must integrate a social element in order to ease the suffering individual into a different role.

The recovery phase is also a healing process which requires training, reinforcement, and task-oriented practice, where individuals can build their resiliency back up. Goal-oriented practice, however, does not allow enough flexibility to address the shortcomings such as inevitable regressions and uneven recovery speeds that are inevitable with a disability. With that said, this research will carry out the following:

- 1) Highlight the benefits of Reiki and its increasing usage throughout the world.
- 2) Suggest a closer study of psycho-social reintegration, with an aim to achieve resiliency through task-oriented activities.
- 3) Offer ways to enhance U.S. medical practices with the use of Reiki as an additional resource in modern health concepts.

Moreover, this research will utilize Japan's experience in Reiki, Zen-style meditation, and will fill the unacceptable gaps that plague long term care and the healing process of individuals in our modern society.

### **What is Reiki?**

In order to consider contemporary applications of Reiki, we must first examine its definition and evolution. The Japanese kanji for Reiki, 霊気, is broken up into two characters 霊 or rei and 気 or Ki. The *Rei* refers to the soul, or spirit, and *Ki* references the vital force or life energy that runs through humans and non-human entities. It is stated that the literature on modern

Reiki was rediscovered in the 1890s on the mountain top of Mt. Kurama in Western Japan.<sup>4</sup> Most authors in the field refer to this development as a re-discovery. They claim that the practice is sourced from health re-establishing practices that boast thousands of years of practice.<sup>5</sup> The story of the founder of Reiki, Mikao Usui is a well-known one, at least to those who know of Reiki.

The Founder of Reiki Usui reportedly reached a state of enlightenment after fasting for three weeks, enabling his miraculous hands-on healing of his toe.<sup>6</sup> Mikao Usui was fasting and meditating in a Japanese Zen Buddhist fashion, supposedly preparing for his own death. It is said that Usui reached a state of *satori* or enlightenment. Whatever enlightened thought moved him out of his meditation, he supposedly began to hurriedly run down the mountain to share his discovery. During his descent down the mountainside, he stubbed his foot hard on the exposed roots, causing himself a good deal of pain. In what was described as a natural response that many have understood and experienced, his hands shot to his injured foot where he grasped his injury. To his amazement, the act of placing his hands upon his injury was all that was needed to allow himself a miraculous and full recovery. His enlightenment, fasting, and purification enabled him to heal a toenail he accidentally had ripped off.<sup>7</sup> After the event he went on to develop further his healing practice. The refined techniques that arose from his discovery became the practice of Reiki. The most natural response to the pain of accidentally removing a toenail on a tree root was to quickly grasp the injured toe.

Indeed, for Usui, who is a legendary figure, Reiki started as an experiment in healing practices. His contribution to the field is tremendous and has been studied for one hundred years

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<sup>4</sup> Diane Steine, *Essential Reiki: A Complete Guide to an Ancient Healing Art*. (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2011), 32

<sup>5</sup> Steine, 33.

<sup>6</sup> Tadao Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*. (Detroit: Lotus press, 2008), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Yamaguchi, 63.

or more. Usui developed the system of healing in a trial-and-error approach, or rather an “experimental” system of healing.<sup>8</sup> With the goal of healing in mind, Usui attempted to compile the most effective systems of health and healing practices available at that point in history (late 1800s to -early 1900s). Like the fictional Mr. Miyagi character, the real life Usui’s practice drew from a multitude of sources that he encountered during his lifetime. Usui’s teachings are credited as being sourced from available Allopathic medical knowledge, Buddhist and Qigong with Shinto influences.<sup>9</sup> He was educated during the Meiji Restoration and is believed to have received a broad education, including knowledge of Western and Asian medical practices. His desire to combine his diverse education both abroad and in his home near Kyoto deeply influenced the establishment of Usui Reiki.

Prior to his enlightenment experience in 1923, it was reported that he was quite frustrated at his attempts to develop a system of healing.<sup>10</sup> These overwhelming frustrations and struggles helped him to discover an essential practice that he wouldn’t have found otherwise. His colleagues within the Japanese Zen community even suggested “maybe he should experience death.”<sup>11</sup> At their behest, Usui began the ritual preparation for death. This included a three-week fast that was broken by his spontaneous episode of enlightenment. Thankfully, he did not die and was henceforth compelled to share his experiences and continued to experiment with and develop Reiki. Observing Usui’s experience, we see that Usui was pursuing his goal to develop his concepts of life goals and health by utilizing the general practices of Japanese Zen Buddhism. But this is not the end of the story. Usui later found the power of Reiki by using his hands. In Reiki-based

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<sup>8</sup> The term “experimental” is borrowed from Dr. John K Nelson, *Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Frank A. Petter, *Reiki Fire*: Lotus Press. 1997, p.18.

<sup>10</sup> Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> Yamaguchi, 60.



practices, hands are often the tool for healing, “in which hands are placed just off the body or lightly touching the body, as in ‘laying on of hands.’”<sup>12</sup>



*Figure 1*

This image is of the tree roots on the slopes of Mt. Kurama. These roots Usui reportedly stubbed his toe upon while rushing down the mountain. The picture makes it is easy for us to see how Usui could have tripped while excitedly running downhill to share his discovery.<sup>13</sup>

Usui’s experience and techniques became a foundation for many students and followers to learn, gain, and spread the practice of Reiki. It is rumored that eventually Usui had up to 2,000 students. Further development of specific hand holding and Reiki implementation for more specific illnesses and injuries were developed by one of his students, Chujiro Hayashi.<sup>14</sup> Hayashi, like Usui, originally intended to use Reiki in order to cure illness.<sup>15</sup> Reiki’s introduction to the

<sup>12</sup> “Reiki” John Hopkins Medicine, accessed August 2, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>13</sup> Kinone Michi, Mount Kurama, Google Image. Accessed April 25, 2019. [Web](#).

<sup>14</sup> Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*, 10.

West is credited to Mrs. Hawayo Takata. Her teachings branched out from her treatments and instruction became the origins and introduction of what then became Western Reiki.<sup>16</sup> The New Age movement of the 1970s seems to be the ‘spark’ that caused the rapid spread of Reiki in the Western world, and potentially what caused the shift in focus from physical healing to spiritual growth and development. Beyond this point of development, the growth of Reiki and adaptations grew more diverse.

### **Contemporary Reiki**

As a healing practice, Reiki is known by a niche group of people in the health industry. Reiki is an example of a combination of worldly health concepts that have traveled from Japan to the rest of the world. As a “. . . complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) Reiki has increased significantly in Western societies during the last decades. Studies from countries like the United States, Australia, and England, indicate that large proportions of the Anglophone populations (perhaps 20 to 50 percent) have used methods like acupuncture, chiropractic, healing, homeopathy, or herbal remedies in last year.”<sup>17</sup> In our globalized world, where cultural activities constantly intermingle, it is crucial to maintain the potent efficacy of practices like Reiki. However, these attempts are constantly being challenged by excessive amounts of anecdotal data without clear and refined information to increase legitimate general knowledge and practice. The main issue with anecdotal data is that it cannot be scientifically tracked. Often the data is nothing more than someone’s experience or story instead of an actual measure of their heart rate, blood pressure, and empirical data post-Reiki. Hence there is a need for better understanding and delivery of Reiki through drawing from its historical roots—Usui’s philosophies and the precepts.

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<sup>16</sup> Yamaguchi, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Jenny-Ann Bordin Danell, “On the Boundaries of Medicine and Spirituality: Professionalization and Self-Regulation of Reiki in Sweden,” *Journal for the Study of New Religions*. 4.1 (2013): 1.

“Contemporary Reiki” demonstrates the continued attempt to experiment with and explore practices that improve the natural ability of the human body to heal itself. Reiki has become an amalgamation of practices that are constantly being tinkered and experimented with around the world. The ultimate goal of Reiki is to return the human body to its optimal recovery state by utilizing Zen Buddhist style meditation, Shinto-like ritual purification, positive life affirmations, and (depending on what branch of Reiki is utilized) a combination of therapist-assisted healing. While many of these practices are applicable and effective, due to a lack of any true regulating authority, great inconsistencies between practices occur. The adaptability and simplicity of Reiki permits the inclusion of more fringe or unorthodox practices, leaving the reputation of well-meaning practitioners at the mercy of sham artists who are taking advantage of individuals in a weakened state.

The effective practice of Reiki can expedite the healing process and boost resiliency in individuals and their communities. Additive therapies that ease the suffering of individuals constantly need to be explored, researched, and implemented. The ability to transcend the mundane and bring relief to suffering in more than a physical manner is critical to restoring health and returning individuals to functional parts of society. Therefore, Reiki practices can be utilized and offered as an additional support system for healthcare providers to treat beyond the physical symptoms, also targeting the psychological and social recovery. Reiki, then, turns into a tool for psycho-social reintegration. This process supports individuals through three dynamics that measure a holistic standard of recovery: *biological, psychological, and social*.

Sweden offers a good model of how Reiki can be effectively integrated into culture and society. In Sweden, there are three major Reiki-based organizations. Although they differ in goal and intent, the knowledge and practice of Reiki is constantly growing. For example,

Reikiterapeuternas Riksförbund provides “first-level Reiki training and commitment to statutes and ethical guidelines” written by Usui.<sup>18</sup> The organization is active in promoting Reiki as part of a Swedish health care. The chairman of the organization stated: “We know that it [Reiki] is going to be integrated [in public health care]. In the future, it should be possible to be referred to a Reiki therapist by a doctor within the public health care system.”<sup>19</sup> Organizations such as Reikiterapeuternas Riksförbund support the use of Reiki in modern medical system. Moreover, in order to effectively adopt Reiki as a tool for psycho-social reintegration in our contemporary medical system, we must view and accept Reiki as a multifaceted practice in which spirituality crosses over into the realm of health.

### **Health and Spiritual Crossover**

To better clarify what legitimate Reiki is, it is better to focus on what works and what effective practitioners are doing, versus speculative, abstract thinking that looks at energetic fields and magical symbols. Reiki energy treatments that rely on a means of transmission that currently escape a way to be scientifically measured keep the practice of Reiki in a “fringe” category. It is difficult to find historical evidence of when the practice of Reiki began to focus on spiritual growth, yet historically it has been utilized to help ease the suffering of the sick and injured.<sup>20</sup> Due to this strange spiritual crossover associated with sham Reiki, the majority of evidence and success stories are anecdotal and word-of-mouth, which is not a trackable or retraceable form of data. For example, more measurable data like a person’s heart rate and blood pressure would strengthen the study of this practice. The abundance of anecdotal data and word-of-mouth stories adds to perceived lack

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<sup>18</sup> Jenny-Ann Bordin Danell. “On the Boundaries of Medicine and Spirituality: Professionalization and Self-Regulation of Reiki in Sweden.” *Journal for the Study of New Religions* 4.1 (2013) 113-138. doi:10.1558/ijnsr.v4i1.113. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Danell, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*, 12.



of credibility of these sham practices.

*Figure*

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The image is of a Reiki treatment in process, with the patient lying on his back while being treated.<sup>21</sup> Typically reiki treatments are done in a relaxed, simple, and clean environment.

Moreover, the reason people confuse health practices with spiritual development could also be due to the crossover and occasional indistinguishable differences between the two. Some concepts of both spiritual and health practices are the same, showing further evidence that health has very psychosocial dynamics. Like spiritual religions, health practices are constantly changing. Dr. Catherine Bell, a specialist in religious practices, recognized the existing qualities of religion that make it look “static or monolithic.”<sup>22</sup> Far from static and unchanging, the religious and spiritual dimensions of health practices are constantly in flux. Thus, Reiki, too, is often misunderstood and mis-utilized. While individual health comes from the rituals of food, hygiene,

<sup>21</sup> Man Receiving Reiki Treatment, Google Image. Accessed December 18, 2020. [Web](#).

<sup>22</sup> Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*, 11.

and physical activity, it is difficult to discuss health and ritual without addressing the frequent connection and association with religion. Bell explains it the best, “It is possible that in our theorizing we have taken some religions too much at their word—what they say—without paying as much attention to what they do.”<sup>23</sup>

When discussing the health and spiritual crossover, there is another aspect in Reiki to consider. When a physician develops a routine to treat people, they need to utilize the tools that they have, including psychosomatic healing.

The importance of psychosomatic healing and placebo-based healing practices in legitimate Reiki cannot be stressed enough as effective tools for all health practitioners. The mechanisms involved with these sorts of healing are not completely understood by modern health, but the effectiveness of placebo medicine and psychosomatic healing is unquestionable. Paul A. Offit, the author of *Do You Believe in Magic?* suggests that any physician who does not employ psychosomatic medicine should relegate themselves to pathology, removing themselves from contact with patients.<sup>24</sup> Considering the difficulties in understanding and differentiating the health and spiritual crossover of Reiki-based practices, one can get the most reliable results by sticking to the original teachings of Usui and task-oriented healing process.

The utilization of effective and legitimate Reiki is to help individuals to re-focus and allows progression at their own speed and development. There is a social dynamic that has to be met to reincorporate injured or disabled individuals into a functional place in our society. Reiki and Reiki-based practices promote healthy social reintegration through the structured and positive social

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<sup>23</sup> Catherine M. Bell “What's So Powerful about Ritual?” *Pacific Rim Report* No. 22, (May 2001): 1.

<sup>24</sup> Paul A Offit *Do You Believe in Magic: The Sense and Nonsense of Alternative Medicine*. (New York, NY: Harper Press, 2013), 227.

contact with the injured or sick individual. As the recovery period progresses, if the focus is task-oriented rather than goal-oriented, the smoother the recovery. By giving healing the same attention and adherence that spiritual practices inspire, the healing process is given greater significance. The healing process and the task-oriented activities, such as meditation, offer a benefit of routine that reinforces positive life affirmation and behavior. These practices and routines then translate to a ritualistic behavior with a primary goal of achieving and maintaining good health. In 2017, the *Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine* published an article by author David McManus titled, “Reiki Is Better Than Placebo and Has Broad Potential as a Complementary Health Therapy.” The study has found that “Reiki is safe, gentle, and profoundly relaxing healing modality that can be practiced by anyone who received an ‘attunement’ from a Reiki master. This review has found strong evidence for Reiki being more effective than placebo, suggesting that Reiki attunement leads to quantifiable increase in healing ability.”<sup>25</sup>

### **The Practice of Reiki and Zen Meditation**

With the various approaches to and interpretations of Reiki, it is helpful to define and propose some selective practices that are most effective. Such Reiki practices integrate mindfulness and meditation, which have already been proven beneficial with plenty of nonanecdotal evidence. Research finds that meditation decreases blood pressure, “and the nervous system is uniquely affected by meditation and may benefit emotionally from meditating after a stressor.”<sup>26</sup> In general, most forms of meditation have shown to be effective in relieving symptoms

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<sup>25</sup> David E. McManus, “Reiki is better than placebo and has broad potential as a complimentary health therapy.” *Journal of Evidence-based Complimentary & Alternative Medicine*. (2017), 1055.

<sup>26</sup> Amy R. Borchardt, Peggy M. Zoccola, “Recovery from stress: an experimental examination of focused attention meditation in novices.” *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*. 41, (2018). [Web](#).

associated with stress and anxiety. As a result, individuals experience better sleep, concentration, and lower blood pressure.

Specifically, Zen-style meditation and practices like mindfulness have demonstrated true benefits to individuals suffering from issues related to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Due to trauma, the individual's levels of "risk factors" are greatly increased. The resiliency factor concerning health and wellness has to do with the ability to recover or "bounce back" from traumas experienced.

Yet practices like meditation, which adheres to a set of principles, and establishes a ritual-like routine, are often considered spiritual while health practices are often considered purely medical and physiological. Due to the separation of spiritual and medical realms, cultural slippage has led to confusion about the very intent of Reiki which does not simply shift the focus on healing to spiritual development, but in fact, integrates the two. In fact, many reputable Reiki users, teachers, and organizations such as The Center for Reiki Research<sup>27</sup> acknowledge the ability and capacity of the practice are inherent and natural for all humans. Moreover, to honestly teach a Reiki practice, in-person instruction and transmission is required. The in-person instruction and transmission then highlight the benefits of a teacher-student relationship. Hence, the established social bond between patient and provider are also extremely critical.

In addition to mindfulness and in-person bonds, the use of purification is important. Reiki that developed in Japan in the early 1900s relies heavily on Zen Buddhism and Shinto practices. Many of the Shinto practices show clear insight into preventative and restorative health practices

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<sup>27</sup> Anna Linda Baldwin, "It's Time to Shift Gears." The Center for Reiki Research, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).



that establish good hygiene with its practitioners. The practice of purification goes back to one of the Shinto origin stories from the *Kojiki*.<sup>28</sup>

The act of purification can be as simple as rinsing your mouth and hands with water or can include more profound acts like full body submersion in freezing ocean water while speaking your impurities as they wash away. Zen Buddhism, and the practice of zazen meditation, has shown tremendous benefit to individuals suffering from conditions such as PTSD. Both practices, combined with the compassionate care of a skilled healer, has led to amazing improvements in patients. For example, Michael Nguyen, a Gulf War veteran suffering from PTSD, became a Zen monk in 2003. He found so much improvement he felt the need to teach and share on a greater scale.<sup>29</sup> He reportedly led a monastic life for a while but left the monastery to better assist veterans and their families.

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<sup>28</sup> John K. Nelson *Enduring Identities: The Guise of Shinto in Contemporary Japan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 178.

<sup>29</sup> Daisy Lin, "Former Soldier Turned Zen Monk Teaches Vets to use Mindfulness as Body Armor" *Huff Post Wellness*, December 6, 2017. accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).



Figure 3

*Etiquette for Using the Handwashing Water*, The Above Image is a representation of a typical posting outside a washing station near a shrine.<sup>30</sup>

Japan has been at the forefront of utilizing effective Reiki, and Japanese concepts of health, purification, and balance should be taken into consideration when discussing Reiki and Reiki-related practices. One important aspect of Reiki practice is simply to be clean. As shown in the image above the words on the sign indicate “Let's clean our hearts and our bodies when praying to the Kami”.<sup>31</sup> What are considered contaminating agents can and must be washed away like dirt and filth would be. For example, at the entryway of a Japanese shrine, there are communal washing stations where routine purification rituals with water take place. Over time, rituals such as

<sup>30</sup> *Etiquette for Using the Handwashing Station*, Japan Society, Accessed Feb. 15, 2021. [Web](#).

<sup>31</sup> *Etiquette for Using the Handwashing Station*.

purification became the main ideology behind these practices that heavily focus on cleanliness, purification, and removal of negative energy. In the case of the Japanese shrines, the purification rituals are more than restoring peace of mind: they provide renewal and constant refinement. The idea behind purification also touches on the health benefiting practices of good hygiene, where healthy and clean individuals can contribute to a greater community. These attributes then, in turn, help to highlight the main intent behind these practices.



*Figure 4.*

*Ladles at Ise Shrine*, the Above Image is the washing station at the Ise shrine.<sup>32</sup>

In Japan, Reiki practices do not only utilize Zen Buddhism and Shinto practices but work with the naturally existing healing power within the human body. In 2016, a Japanese cell biologist Yoshinori Ohsumi won the Nobel Prize in medicine for his research on how cells recycle and

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<sup>32</sup> *Ladles at Ise Shrine*, Japan-Guide, Accessed Feb. 15, 2021. [Web.](#)

renew their content, a process called autophagy.<sup>33</sup> This remarkable relationship, although unrecognized, between Ohsumi's research on the mechanisms of autophagy and Usui's experience in Reiki highlights the resiliency in the human body. The research truly highlights the human ability to recover and heal itself. In both cases, fasting and removal of stressors played a fundamental role in re-establishing the body. While Ohsumi's research was celebrated worldwide, the US too recognized some of the successful anecdotes of Reiki in *Newsweek Special Edition* in 2016.<sup>34</sup>

Reiki not only draws from the healing powers of the body, but goals centered around long-term peace and spiritual development. Yamaguchi Tadao, the author of *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui*, wrote about his mother, who is a Japanese Reiki physician. In her memoirs, Yamaguchi recalls, his mother would ask visiting scholars "what illnesses they had dealt with in the past" as a way to discern their levels of expertise.<sup>35</sup> The healing process is not instantaneous nor magical. The process does take effort to be truly effective. The practice itself focuses on treating others with the goal of restoring peace and happiness.<sup>36</sup> The long-term results occur through Reiki and task-oriented practices, which can turn into effective health-affirming rituals. Such daily routines and rituals for health practices are often culturally derived, but anyone can be taught and adapt the practices into their own daily life and see improvement. Task-oriented practices include being in the present—not concentrated on some goal-oriented activity or thoughts, consistent Zen-style meditations to remove the stressor,

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<sup>33</sup> "The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2016." *The Nobel Prize*. October 3, 2016, accessed June 23, 2020. [Web](#).

<sup>34</sup> Trevor Courneen, "The Healing Power of Reiki." *Newsweek*. May 24, 2016, accessed December 23, 2018. [Web](#).

<sup>35</sup> Yamaguchi, *Light on the Origins of Reiki: A Handbook for Practicing the Original Reiki of Usui and Hayashi*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Yamaguchi, 64.

surrounding oneself in a positive environment, and seeking community-based healing activities. The task-oriented practices then enforce one's ability to take on the task at hand.

A Reiki practice is a multi-faceted one that does not stop at the first treatment, or treatment alone. The Reiki precepts stand as guidelines of behavior that will reduce individual stress and stress within a community. The goal of Reiki and Zen-style meditation is to remove the stressor, so that stability and resiliency are re-introduced and regained. Moreover, Reiki is often successful when practiced within a community.

Within a Reiki practicing community, there is less stress and better community cohesion. The task-oriented approaches enhance the overall social cohesion of an individual. It is necessary for suffering individuals who can no longer function in their social position go through a period of psycho-social reintegration into their community. The community, which refers to not just the environment in which the suffering one resides, also refers to the place where people seek help in healing and social cohesion. The American Psychological Association highlighted the importance of community connectedness in healing from trauma in 2016.<sup>37</sup> In pursuing community-based healing, Reiki serves as a tool for the overall social cohesion of an individual.

While these healing practices have taken place under different names in a variety of societies, the Japanese practice of Reiki and its effectiveness as a support treatment must be recognized and be considered. The study of Reiki involves not only anecdotal evidence in Japan, but it also involves the study of the human body, its resiliency, and biology. Recognizing Japan's experience and success, medical care professionals have been supporting and highlighting the need

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<sup>37</sup> Schultz, Katie, Cattaneo, Lauren B, Sabina, Chiara, Brunner, Lisa, Jackson, Sabeth, and Serrata, Josephine V, "Key Roles of Community Connectedness in Healing from Trauma." (2016). Accessed August 2, 2020, [Web](#).

for complementary medicine.<sup>38</sup> To support this effort, in 2003, research found that over forty percent of adults in the United States use alternative therapies.<sup>39</sup>

Although Reiki has made progress, there are various issues that need to be addressed. While certain literature focuses on Reiki and its utilization, Diane Stein has contributed tremendously to the field of Reiki. Stein has published a small multitude of helpful Reiki books and manuals. In her book, *Essential Reiki* published in 1995, she describes her frustration with the current Reiki practice, the digital business model that was the selling point of Reiki. She stated, “hopefully benevolent practice, the selling of distance Reiki and attunements over eBay seems a bit out of the original intent of the practice.”<sup>40</sup>

With a perspective of “nothing left but empty hands” approach to health, are there any functional practices that can be adopted into the daily routines of hands-on healers? In remote or impoverished regions, with less access to resources, what are the first responders’ abilities to render care throughout all stages of injuries? And how can their skills be expanded and enhanced? Research in alternative medicine should study how Japanese health practices can be adopted in the United States. The adoption of Japanese Reiki can be useful tool to reinvigorate the American medical system, not necessarily as a primary care treatment but as a complementary health therapy.

### **The Application of Reiki into Contemporary U.S. Medical System**

The cost of medical care in the United States is extremely high. This includes both lifesaving and life reaffirming medical procedures. Incorporating any additional health practices

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<sup>38</sup> William Lee Rand, “Reiki in Hospitals,” *The International Center for Reiki Training*, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Weaver, Kevin Flannelly, Howard Stone, Larry Dossey, “Spirituality, Health, and CAM: Current Controversies.” *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine*. (Nov/Dec 2003): 42.

<sup>40</sup> Diane Stein. *Essential Reiki Teaching Manual: A Companion Guide for Reiki Healers*, (Berkeley: Crossing Press 2011), 5.



into the current medical system is difficult but doable. The inclusion of practices such as Reiki will benefit one's overall health and does not impose a financial burden on the individual.

Alan Grayson, a former economist who “served three terms in the U.S. House of Representatives”, reported the financial cost of his 2017 emergency leg surgery. According to Grayson, the cost for his emergency procedure— after being treated at a ‘nonprofit’ hospital— and being billed separately from the physicians, totaled over \$69,240.<sup>41</sup> This is just one case.

In 2018 U.S. citizens spent “\$3.65 trillion on health care, more than any other country worldwide”, yet the country ranked only 27<sup>th</sup> in levels of health care.<sup>42</sup> Financial burdens are a significant stressor for many individuals, especially the injured. At the same time, health care cost must be weighed with changing conditions and perceptions of alternative practices like Reiki. In order to understand how incorporating health practices like Reiki may be *adopted* and *adapted* into a foreign system, we need to look at how the healthcare field has changed.

The evolution of the study of medicine shows a fluid and ever-changing nature to the dynamics of what are the key concepts of health. A theory from medical sociology, “the Medicalization thesis,” is a description of the far-reaching power and influence of the medical field. Medicalization often has purposeful direction, the development of standards of fitness, and the ability to measure the quality of life.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, medicine and the concepts of health have often been used as an agent of social control. The expression of this can be seen in teaching the importance of basic hygiene, such as hand washing. In a more serious framework, when a society faces a growing number of individuals suffering from PTSD and other illnesses, there needs to be

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<sup>41</sup> Alan Grayson, “My broken leg cost me an arm and a leg.” *Orlando Sentinel*. January 20, 2017, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>42</sup> Erik Sherman, “U.S. Health Care Costs Skyrocketed to \$3.65 Trillion in 2018.” *Fortune*. February 21, 2019, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>43</sup> The medicalization thesis is sourced from medical sociology and refers to the overall way that the field and business of health and medicine influences society through social pressures.

an understanding of their sufferings and symptoms and solutions for their health. The necessity for such understanding is evident considering the significant rise in PTSD-related suicide cases within the United States.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the large gap in the U.S. healthcare system in treating PTSD, and the system's dysfunction and inadequacy in long term care—along with the financial burden placed on patients—could all be significant factors in the increasing number of veteran suicide cases.

In April 2019, the *New York Times* reported “approximately 20 suicide deaths every day among veterans.”<sup>45</sup> Several years earlier, in 2016, Veterans Affairs National Suicide Data Report indicated suicide as the tenth leading cause of death in the US.<sup>46</sup> Covered by healthcare and other support systems, additional aids such as resiliency re-establishing practices like Reiki can greatly benefit the American medical system and produce a positive effect on people's lives. In doing so for veterans, hopefully Reiki can help reduce these suicide rates. Fortunately, there have been some efforts to incorporate Reiki into the contemporary medical system.

In 2015, “a Seattle-based Reiki program received funds from Washington State's Department of Veterans Affairs to provide veterans with free reiki training and treatments. Veterans who have taken the training have come back to say how helpful this simple, yet profound modality has been in assisting healing, centering, and focusing.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “PTSD and Death from Suicide.” National Center for PTSD, 2017. Volume 28/No.4. [Web](#).

<sup>45</sup> Jennifer Steinhauer, “V.A. Officials, and the Nation, Battle an Unrelenting Tide of Veteran Suicides.” *New York Times*. April 14, 2019, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#)

<sup>46</sup> “VA National on Suicide Data Report 2005-2016. *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*. September 2018. [Web](#)

<sup>47</sup> “Reiki Program for Veterans with PTSD Receives State Funding.” *Associated Bodyworks Massage Professionals*. October 22, 2015, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).



Moreover, in 2015 the Washington D.C., VA Medical Center released a policy paper titled “Complementary and Integrative Health Validation Policy Package Version 2.0.” The policy allows and increases the use of Reiki as part of hospital services. According to the policy paper,

. . . In 2007, the American Hospital Association reported more than eight hundred American hospitals, greater than fifteen percent) offered Reiki as part of their hospital services. Reiki programs are currently offered at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), MedStar Washington Hospital Center, Georgetown University Medical Center, University of Maryland Medical Center, Winchester Medical Center, INOVA Fair Oaks Hospital, Warren Memorial Hospital, and Fauquier Health Hospital. Research suggests that Reiki can decrease blood pressure, and assist in the management of pain, depression, and anxiety.<sup>48</sup>

The incorporation of Reiki into contemporary health promotes a more holistic approach to the healthcare practice and builds a necessary foundation for greater resiliency. Reiki can serve as additional support in all three dynamics—*psychological, social, physical*—particularly in treating the psycho-social traumas associated with veterans.

In the case of veterans, combat related traumas and injuries requires a multi-faceted approach in *physical* recovery, *social* reintegration, and *psychological* reinvigoration. Long term care for these suffering individuals must include a multi-faceted approach that does not hurt them financially. Incorporating Reiki-based practice is simple and affordable. For example, in 2013, the Department of Veterans Affairs organized a free Reiki session for veterans in Chicago. Around 125 veterans have participated.<sup>49</sup> As of 2019, Reiki sessions are “costing anywhere from \$20 to \$200 in most cases.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> “Complementary and Integrative Health Validation Policy Package Version 2.0” Washington DC VA Medical Center, September 28, 2015, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>49</sup> The Reiki Share Project, August 2013. Accessed August 2, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>50</sup> Jess Feldman, “What is Reiki and Where Can you find it in Northern Virginia?” August 16, 2019 accessed, August 2, 2020 [Web](#).

The adoption of Reiki in the U.S. medical system will also help families and communities have a deeper understanding of the healing process that requires not only a Western-based medicine but also a holistic approach that boosts one's natural ability to overcome instabilities and imbalances. For example, Mrs. Hawayo Takata, a famous Reiki practitioner from Hawaii suggested to "train someone in the patient's family to do the treatments, and when the client was strong enough, they took the training as well."<sup>51</sup> The flexibility of Reiki and its health affirming practices help address and alleviate some of the sufferings of individuals with PTSD and other forms of illnesses. Reiki can be adopted through the establishment of a community for these and other suffering individuals. Rev. Takahashi from the Soto (Zen) Volunteer Association, stated "temples have to acknowledge the pain and suffering that takes place in present-day society and find ways to help people cope with these issues."<sup>52</sup>

### **Reiki in Real Life**

To provide further understanding and evidence of global utilization and effectiveness of Reiki, I drew from my travel interviews that justify its integration into the medical system. My interview questions were simple and few—allowing the interviewee to speak freely. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and in a conversational method so that the interviewee was not pressured. Due to privacy issues and respect for my interviewees' reputations, I will not be able to release their names.

For my interviews, I selected over one hundred individuals who claimed to be trained or Reiki-certified practitioners across North and South America.<sup>53</sup> My travel interviews took place

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<sup>51</sup> Diane Stein, *Essential Reiki: A Complete Guide to an Ancient Healing Art*. (Berkeley: Crossing Press 2011), 14.

<sup>52</sup> John K Nelson, *Experimental Buddhism: Innovation and Activism in Contemporary Japan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2015), 124.

<sup>53</sup> Discussion-based interviews with Reiki practitioners and healthcare professionals. The interviews took places during travels in Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica, and in the United States between 2008 to 2019.

in Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica and the United States. During my interviews with variety of individuals from these countries, I utilized mixed methods of communication, mostly in-person conversations that often times touch on the multifaceted aspects of Reiki and Reiki-based practices.

To further illuminate the current state and practices of Reiki in the Western Hemisphere, I developed a small set of questions that help to provide understanding on How Reiki is *perceived* and *utilized* within the Western medical standard. My interview questions are below:

1. What ritual cleaning or washing were individuals doing before and after treatments?
2. Does the individual meditate?
3. What principle(s) of Reiki does the individual consider to be the most important?

The areas where most interviewees agreed, were Q1 that they washed their hands *before* and *after* each ‘in-person’ patient. Although hand washing is such a normal daily routine for people, especially in the medical field, research at Cambridge found that only thirty two percent of doctors and medical practitioners actually comply with hand washing standards.<sup>54</sup> Hence, Q1 is crucial in the very fundamentals of Reiki practices and the effectiveness of it. Thankfully, almost all interviewees stated compliance with hand hygiene.

The answers to the second question took me by surprise. Many Reiki practitioners reported infrequent or non-existent meditative practices. Regular meditation is responsible for many health benefits including decreasing anxiety and PTSD symptoms. It is also one of the most crucial components of practicing Reiki. Meditative practice is significant for both the practitioner and the recipient because engaging in healthy behavior is fundamental to any health-giving practice.

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<sup>54</sup> Dahan, V., Erasmus T., Brug, H., Richardus, J., Behrendt, M., Vos, M., & Van Beeck, E. (2010). “Systematic Review of Studies on Compliance with Hand Hygiene Guidelines in Hospital Care.” *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*, 31(3), 283-294. doi:10.1086/650451, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

For my last question, nearly everyone cited something different. The answers often cite what they *felt* as “important” to *their* Reiki practice. For example, some practitioners focused on hand-based energy healing, while others focused on the healing power of crystals. Many incorporated concepts from modern yoga.

For the duration of my interviews with over a hundred individuals, I kept notes and made a list of recurring therapeutic methods. Due to the overwhelming nature of the feedback, the results of my interviews did not lend to easy reporting. For one thing, Reiki-based practices and organizations have different goals and modified versions of Reiki. Next, the inconsistencies and variations may originate within the Western concept of Reiki as a means of spiritual development versus a healing practice. After deeper reflection, observation, and analysis, this research work highlights the American Reiki practices do vary and are different than Japanese Reiki. These variations do not necessarily imply illegitimacy but highlight the experimental nature of the practice. The difference is on “what works” for the individual. The contemporary challenge in Reiki-based practice is that, often times, “what works for the individual” is questionable. For example, can telephone Reiki therapy be qualified as a legit Reiki practice or does the practice has to be in person?<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, over 90 percent of the interviewees work in the health care industry, while others worked in the fitness or massage therapy industry. Due to the flexibility of its application, adaptations, or combinations, utilization of the Reiki practices proved to be unlimited. Yet practitioners who claim to be sharing their bioenergy, hopefully, are practicing good dietary habits, and have a meditation practice.

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<sup>55</sup> Jess Feldman, “What is Reiki and Where Can you find it in Northern Virginia?” August 16, 2019 accessed, August 2, 2020 [Web](#).

Reiki practice encourages a behavior that requires social contact and in some aspect mimicry. When encouraging suffering individuals along their recovery path it is important to have a role model to help guide the recovery process. Idealistically this is expressed in the form of a “do as I say as well as what I do” in terms of provider-patient relationships, encouraging better role modeling.

### **Reiki as a Holistic Practice**

In order to move forward with Reiki, whether as individuals or in the medical system as a whole, there are some basic principles and precepts that need to be followed. Compartmentalization of Western medicine typically focuses on one dynamic: symptom management. To explain and highlight the effectiveness of the holistic approach of Reiki, three dynamics need to be considered: biological, psychological, and social. By using these three dynamics of health a Reiki practice can be further understood through Usui's core precepts as outlined below:

*Kyo dake wa* (Just for today)

*Ikaru-na* (do not get angry)

*Shinpaisuna* (do not worry)

*Kansha shite* (be thankful)

*Gyo hageme* (work hard)

*Hito-ni shinetsu-ni* (be kind to others)<sup>56</sup>

These precepts are social guidelines, rules of a sort that are agreed upon by individuals and help to shape what a Reiki practice is. The Reiki precepts are widely spread and copied and translated many times in print. The principles are most likely sourced from Meiji-Tenno, and the five rules

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<sup>56</sup>Frank Arjava Petter, Tadao Yamaguchi, Chujiro Hayashi. *The Hayashi Reiki Manual*. Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus Press, 2003 p. 20.

of life that are to be recited daily.<sup>57</sup> Reiki is not just mindfulness; it is specific mindfulness. Working with another individual the agreement to follow these suggestions is reinforced. Usui's precepts are the guidelines that help to focus an individual during specific and special recovery times, allowing the recovering individual to regain resiliency in the best scenario possible. Although much of the anecdotal evidence associated with Reiki lacks a scientific method of measurement, the after-effects of the practice are observable and recordable. Social changes and improvements within a group are notable, and psychological improvements are made

**The First precept** is “for today only.” Author Brownwen Stiene, highlights that the first precept applies to all the following precepts.<sup>58</sup> Do not worry about tomorrow, do not try and be perfect today, but if you mess up, learn from your mistakes, and try again tomorrow. By removing the stress of trying to be perfect, or worrying about the future, the focus can then be shifted to the present moment. Once the balance is restored and the stress of future events controlled, the Reiki practice can focus on the healing necessary then and there.

**The Second precept** is, “do not (give in to) anger.” One should act as an elixir or salve for the issue; in fact, acts of anger are often connected with PTSD symptoms. The founder Usui, as well as many other researchers, have discovered that in a state of anger and stress, recovery and healing are slowed or in many cases stopped.

**The Third precept** is “do not worry” psychologically and physiologically. Like anger, worry is additive to an individual's stress. Worrying, especially about future events and outcomes, removes the individual's mind from current conditions. To break the cycle of illness and injury, instead of focusing or worrying about a future that could happen, an intervention or change must

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<sup>57</sup> Linda G. Whitmore “Memorial Stone Translation of Master Usui” *Shingon Reiki*. Aug 21, 2019, accessed Mar 8, 2021, [Web](#).

<sup>58</sup> Bronwen Stiene, Franz Stiene. *The Japanese Art of Reiki: A Practical Guide to Self-Healing*. (Deershot Lodge, UK Orca Books: 2005), 92.

be made. For the practice of Reiki, the stillness and meditation that occurs during a treatment session quiets the mind and brings individual attention to the present moment. It focuses that attention on resolving the cause of the ailment and allowing the natural processes of healing to occur.

**The Fourth precept**, “be thankful,” means that a thankful action is activism. The act of being thankful is a positive and creative action. During this peaceful and creative state, Reiki treatments are shaped by practice and guided by the natural life-affirming techniques. A mental state of thankfulness also prohibits negative emotions that are stress-inducing. It is difficult to be thankful and angry at the same time.

**The Fifth precept**, “work hard,” means that labor in some form is necessary for healing and healthiness. A productive effort is critical to the health and offers a measure of a sense of purpose to individuals. The process of recovery is not benign or effortless. Healing is a constructive, life-giving, and life-affirming process. Because the practice of Reiki is a constructed practice derived from multiple sources, it follows that recovering individuals should be engaged in activities that promote similar results. Active forms of meditations, ritual purifications, and healthy community-building activities all contribute to the speed of recovery.

**The Sixth precept**, “Be kind to others,” shows the communal nature of Reiki. Resiliency is boosted greatly by a healthy community that is made up of individuals that work well together. In a global community, the resiliency that occurs when kindness is a basic consideration is exponential. Once again, shifting the focus away from stress-promoting actions and emotions, kindness, and acts of kindness work toward establishing a peaceful and happy environment that is conducive towards healing.

The precepts are the fundamental guidelines that fit into the multidimensional paradigm of Reiki. The dynamics of health, and how they relate to Reiki, can be better clarified. The biological dynamic requires putting the “Ki” in Reiki. If you break down the symbol for Ki, using Dr. Yoshinori Ohsumi's research showing the link between Ki and metabolism, you have “water” over “rice.” The connection to your metabolism leads you to mitochondria and cellular aerobic respiration. Ohsumi studied the mechanisms of starvation. The Process of fasting, a form of planned starvation, triggers programmed cell death. “Apoptosis” is the programmed death of an individual cell, within the body, that is an aspect of cellular regeneration and differentiation. Think of this as the body’s way of recycling. Older damaged cells and tissues get destroyed or burnt up and consumed by the new. A quite simple comparison of metabolism to an “inner flame” is accurate. The “Strength of the Inner Fire” may also be measured by a metabolic rate. Metabolism, energy production, and storage all have all critical of tasks for life as we know it. The production of bioelectricity can move things in a positive direction.



*Figure 2.*



*This image is of the Usui memorial in Tokyo, showing the engraved precepts of Reiki.*<sup>59</sup>

When discussing incorporation of Reiki into contemporary medical system, the importance of placebo must be mentioned. In 2018, the *New York Times* (NYT) article “What If the Placebo Effect Isn't a Trick?” sheds light on the power of placebo medicine. The article suggests that improvements of health causes positive changes within suffering individuals. The article also highlights the biologically and scientifically observed molecules linked to the changes and positive outcomes after placebo therapy.<sup>60</sup> As the term *psychosomatic* implies, the healing that originates in the mind, overcomes the bodily suffering.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, beyond the benefits that have been shown from the regular zazen meditations and hygiene establishing Shinto purifications, Reiki also employs placebo and psychosocial healing. As Dr. John Nelson mentions in *A Year in the Life of a Shinto Shrine*, “Finally, there is the more practical aspect of human hygiene to consider as an element of purification rites.”<sup>62</sup>

Beyond the practice of Reiki, people have reported the benefits of performing a ritualized practice in a social setting. Regular ki works as in practices like chi-Jung, Tai-chi, and Aikido which are in some way like Reiki as they reinforce holistic resiliency. With a regular practice of Aikido or Tai Chi, as the individual’s fitness increases, personal body awareness increases. Moreover, as personal body awareness increases so does the understanding and the application of Ki-based health concepts.

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<sup>59</sup> “Usui Memorial Stone”, Google Image Accessed May 4, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>60</sup> Gary Greenberg, “What If the Placebo Effect Isn't a Trick?” *The New York Times*. November 7, 2018, accessed June 23, 2020, [Web](#).

<sup>61</sup> “Psycho” relates to the mind, and “somatic” refers to the body.

<sup>62</sup> John Nelson, *A Year in a Life of a Shinto Shrine*. (University of Washington Press: Seattle & London, 1997), 104.

## Conclusion

Reiki practices and Zen-style meditation have shown true benefit to the healing process of suffering individuals. Resiliency and task-oriented activities play a fundamental role in the ability to recover from previous traumas. The goal of Reiki and Zen-style meditation is to remove the stressors so that stability and resiliency are re-introduced and regained within the body and mind. Practices like Reiki could be labeled more appropriately as psycho-socio reintegration because integrative medicine is too vague—especially considering the literature and practice of sham Reiki.

Moreover, while there has been some research done on Reiki and its outcomes, additional attention must be given to the use of Ki-based health practices by emergency responders. This adds to their capacity to treat the worst of conditions with limited resources. In a society with astronomical costs for health care, what is better than harm-free services that benefit our physical and mental well-being?

Reiki training by nature can be incorporated into any sport or training exercises. For example, the popularity of the “Spartan Races” and the “Tuff Mudder” races could be capitalized to start or incorporate the “disaster recovery Olympics.” The two races are obstacle course races that challenge individuals along seriously physically demanding tasks. The physically trying nature of the course and grueling conditions lead to a lot of injuries like rolled ankles, cuts, bruises, and broken bones. This is a perfect opportunity to teach the resiliency of Reiki. What this paper suggests is a “Spartan” race with a lifesaving twist. While working as a team, groups must perform Basic First Aid and extraction tasks, with a finisher Reiki instructional cooldown and assessment of their “resiliency.” The whole event could be billeted as a “Team building, confidence building, resiliency establishing” exercise.

Finally, to further advance the development of Reiki into resiliency practices, this paper proposes a study of at least thirty individuals who are interested in increasing their baseline health. The thirty individuals could then be further divided into three groups of men who would all receive identical instruction in a low six-week exercise regimen. The three groups then would follow the exercises in one of three different “recovery” groups. One group would be a control group with no additional recovery instruction to establish a baseline for comparison. The second group would receive a sham or placebo recovery instruction to limit the placebo effect. Finally, a third group would follow an exercise with instruction in and six weeks of Reiki practice. Results from such a study would help to clarify and focus any evidence for the effectiveness of a Reiki practice, giving more credibility than the chaotic ocean of anecdotal evidence that currently exists.

Moreover, by utilizing Reiki-based practices in Western medical practices, the benefits go beyond the recipient of these services. Social involvement and group interaction encourage a healthy community that reinforces each other through regular practice. The community is then better equipped for reintegrating individuals by easing their sufferings, including those suffering from trauma and PTSD. The overall adoption of Reiki can be a major force in reinvigorating the resiliency in American health.

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