

Reiki (RAY-KEY)

Reiki is known the world over as an effective system of relaxation, healing, and spiritual growth. The tradition of this practice stems from the efforts of a Usui Mikao (born 1865 died 1926). A Japanese spiritual seeker who synthesized Reiki from his search for enlightenment in the early years of the 20th century. Although the system of Reiki dates its inception less than a century ago, it has undergone many leaps and changes along the course of its development. It is a simple and effective tool that anyone is capable of learning, and it offers tangible, practical results. The simplicity of Reiki is its appeal for most people who are brought to Reiki seminars, and for this reason it has proliferated worldwide. In brief, Reiki is a healing art and spiritual tradition that grew out of Japanese culture. It is currently practiced as a hands-on healing modality in which practitioners become the conduit for the energy of Reiki to flow into themselves or another recipient. Reiki has been applied to a variety of physical, psychological, and spiritual conditions with astounding results. Today is used by millions of people including medical professions and laypeople alike. The beauty of Reiki is that it is personal, requires no additional tools or equipment and it can be learned by anyone who receives the initiation in a Reiki seminar. It never does or causes any harm. What we know as simply "Reiki" today is properly called the "Usui Reiki Ryoho", which means the "Usui Reiki Healing Method". It was developed as a result many years of study and practice, in several different disciplines.

Usui was well-educated Japanese man who held a variety of professional posts throughout his life, he was first and foremost a spiritual seeker which eventually led him to seek enlightenment by fasting on a mountaintop. When he had his awakening in 1922 on mount Karama outside Kyoto, Japan, Reiki was born. Usui's desire was not to keep it secreted away as an obscure practice, nor did he want it to be owned wholly or in part by his family. Reiki's founder recognized Reiki was so important timely that it was for the entire world.

Nowadays, millions of Reiki practitioners represent hundreds of different forms or lineages of Reiki. Although all authentic systems can trace themselves back to Reiki founder a Usui Mikao, the methodology and theory of systems vary greatly from one to the next. Reiki is an intelligent force that needs no conscious direction to flow easily without any command or effort on behalf of the practitioner. Reiki is almost too good to be true, especially because it is deceptively simple. To really appreciate Reiki as an art form, it is necessary to investigate what Reiki means. The traditionally accepted definition of Reiki among speakers of English is "universal life force energy". The reason that the two short syllables that comprise the word are rendered as such a lengthy description is owed to the ideographic nature of the Japanese writing system. Words are depicted using characters borrowed from the Chinese, which often convey several meanings, some of which are quite complex. Additionally, the culture divide between eastern and western minds can require extra explanation.

REI means "spiritual", "universal", "intelligent", "effective". KI is "life force energy" or a vital energy responsible for animating human beings in all living things. This a concept shared by most cultures, ancient and modern. All things have ki. Without it, there would be no movement or life in the universe. Various kinds of ki can be responsible for the functions of blood, of breath, or even of thought. The most refined variety of ki in Japanese belief is Reiki. It is divine or cosmic energy that brings our souls to life.

Reiki describes a spiritual form of ki, that is spiritually or divinely guided. Reiki as an energy is universal because it is present in all beings, intelligent because it is from the most rarefied plane of existence, and effective because it can be used in the face of any illness, injury or challenge. Reiki is soul energy or spirit energy. No person walking the face of the Earth is without a soul, so it stands to reason that we all share Reiki, among the energies that are responsible for our lives. Reiki works principally at the soul level, meaning that it is spiritual healing rather than physical healing. Reiki is considered to be universal because it is equally available to all people for treating all conditions without restriction or bias. It is applicable to everything by everyone. Reiki isn't just some part of the universe; it is the universe. Reiki moves in and through all things. Reiki is an intelligent force, because it is divinely created and has no ego. During a treatment, it reaches into the core of any situation, without conscious direction or feedback from the practitioner. It just knows where to go because it recognizes our spiritual reality. Reiki practitioners do not need to know the details of what is being treated, nor do they diagnose. The energy itself causes no harm, and it flows only through the practitioner to the recipient in a one-way stream.

Thus, practitioners do not need protection. For there is no likelihood of taking on their client synergy or illness. A natural homeostatic mechanism exists in the human body and is also found in the immaterial levels of our makeup. It is self-correcting in self-liberating. Reiki supports these efforts by catalyzing change and eliminating the toxins or attachments that stand in the way of our well-being. The most commonly discussed benefit of Reiki is stress reduction. Naturally, when we feel less stress, we experience healing of the mind, body and spirit. However, Reiki's healing influence is much deeper than that which is provided by the relaxation it offers. Reiki taps into our divine potential to live, love and create unimaginable joy and success. Reiki encompasses so much more than words can articulate so I don't have a rote response when asked by Reiki newcomers to describe what the energy really is. I often find myself returning to the words "Reiki is unconditional love". Love is a cosmic energy that resides in every particle and wave of creation. It's the true nature from which we are created and to which we aspire. Love is perfect balance, and Reiki is a mechanism of that love within our beings, which are seeking to return to wholeness.

The founder of our system of Reiki is Usui Mikao. He was born August 15th, 1865. He was born into a family with ancient ties to the samurai. Today we know through the dedicated work of Reiki researchers and teachers that Usui worked hard to achieve success and lasting happiness in several different fields, including work as a journalist, prison counselor, social worker, company employee, Shinto missionary, and public servant. He was the private secretary of one of the most outstanding politicians in modern Japan. He built connections with officials in the government as well as the Army and Navy. It is likely that he traveled to foreign countries. After this period in his life, he branched into a business of his own, an endeavor that left him bankrupt at the age of 55. The state of financial ruin led him to question his life's work and legacy. If each and every one of his forays into the professional world had failed, he still had not achieved his life's purpose. Ultimately, this raised a fundamental question. What is the meaning of life? This contemplation compelled Usui toward achieving a state similar to enlightenment, characterized by overflowing peace that enables attainment of one's destiny. He studied many different spiritual practices, religions and other esoteric tools along the way. He was known to have loved to read books. He engaged himself in history books, medical books, Buddhist Scripture, Christian Scriptures. And was well versed in psychology, and Taoism. This great love of learning and his many areas of study paint Usui as the Renaissance man of his day, which breaks the convention of Japanese society. Sometime around 1919, the Usui began a three-year retreat at a Zen temple in Kyoto. Zen is one the schools of Buddhism that focuses on the availability of enlightenment in the here and now. After three years, he still had not reached his awakening. Usui asked the head of the temple for advice and was instructed by his teacher to try a more severe approach. In Japanese culture, certain ages are considered auspicious, while others are viewed as unlikely. In esoteric Buddhism, this translates to a belief that specific ages are windows for reaching enlightenment. Since the Usui had passed the last of these windows, his in teacher suggested that he must prepare to die to attain enlightenment. He was told that sometimes when one is prepared to die, the flash of enlightenment becomes attainable by approaching death by fasting and meditating, the Soul May either prepare for one's next life to be one's final incarnation, or less commonly, the soul may be swept up and taken to the Pure Land, thus reaching enlightenment. Under this pretense, Usui made his way to a sacred mountain in the outskirts of Kyoto, with the intention of fasting until he reached enlightenment, or perish trying. In February 1922, Usui climbed Mount Karama in the hopes of finding enlightenment. Usui meditated for 21 days, keeping track of the time with a pile of small stones. By the third week of fasting, the Usui felt very weak and near death. And yet this ascetic practice paid off. He felt the Great Reiki over his head which struck him like a great flash of light. Usui was rendered unconscious, but the flash ushered him into a feeling of complete peace. Upon awakening, he was refreshed and rejuvenated. The experience of receiving the flash of illumination, the Great Enlightenment brought him back into a state of perfect health. He summed up his experience "you exist in the universe and the universe exists in you". Usui is said to have experienced several miracles upon leaving his retreat atop the mountain. The first occurred on his descent, Usui he stubbed his toe, perhaps on one of the many Cypress roots and tore back his toenail. His natural instinct, which he followed, was to grasp the injury in order to staunch the bleeding. Within moments he noticed the pain had receded. When he inspected his toe, the nail had repaired itself and the blood had stopped flowing. This was his first experience with the miraculous power of Reiki. Although it set out to attain enlightenment, our founder had also received the

ability to heal. When the popular versions of Reiki history propagated by Western lineages Usui is thought to have stopped at a local eatery. The owner of the facility could tell by a Usui's haggard appearance that he had been in seclusion on the mountain top for weeks and offered him a gentle meal preferred by most people returning from such a practice. Usui insisted on a hearty meal instead in the innkeeper was amazed that Usui's stomach, thanks to Reiki, could tolerate it. The kindly man who prepared Usui's food since his granddaughter to deliver it to a Usui. He noticed that she was in great pain with tears streaming down her face. Upon inquiring why she cried, Usui learned that she had been suffering from a toothache. The young girl was unable to visit the dentist, for he was too far away. Usui compassionately offered to try his newfound Reiki gift on her, and the girl's pain dissipated altogether. Usui returned to Kyoto to meet his teacher at this in temple. The teacher confirmed that the experience at Mount Kurama had indeed brought the Usui the state of enlightened peace that he had sought. Usui's teacher was also the first person to plant the seed for pursuing the healing arts, as he encouraged Usui to share this new gift with the world. The gift of healing revealed itself to be a Usui's particular purpose. He returned home to Tokyo and shared his newfound healing abilities with friends and family.

Usui is said to have had over 2,000 students in the years between his awakening and his death in 1926. In April of 1922, just one month after his experience on Kurama, Usui founded The Usui Reiki Ryoho Gakkai. In time news of Usui's spiritual gifts and healing spread far and wide. He endlessly gave Reiki treatments and eventually added familiar concepts of the initiation ritual, and the symbols and mantras. In 1923, Tokyo was devastated by the great earthquake, so he responded by serving those impacted by its destructive influence. Over 100,000 individuals died or went missing. Even more were injured or homeless. Usui initiated several others as teachers of Usui Reiki in order to meet the great need for healing at that time. This event sparked the spread of his Reiki system. Practitioners in Japan claimed that he would treat up to five people at one time, one with each hand, one with each foot, another still others with his eyes and breath. It is estimated that thousands received healing from Usui and practitioners of Reiki. This selfless act may have ignited the desire of many others to learn the system. The next few years, Usui would move his teaching headquarters to a larger facility and began to travel more frequently to teach Reiki across Japan. The Japanese Navy became familiar with Reiki and several high-ranking officers brought it onboard naval ships as a first aid measure and to reduce the amount of medical equipment necessary. His travels continued, and on one of these teaching trips Usui experienced a stroke and ensuing cerebral hemorrhage, he passed away March 9th, 1926.

Arguably the most influential of Usui's Reiki students was a former Navy captain named Hayashi Chujiro. Hayashi was born in 1880, and went to the Japanese Naval Academy. He attained the rank of Captain. He worked with the Rear Admiral who became one of Usui's successors and the 3rd president of the Reiki Association. Hayashi met Usui at a lecture on Reiki sometime around 1924. Hayashi, like several other officers in the Navy would go on to study with Usui, and became Shihan in 1925. As one of the last Shinpiden students of the Usui, a number of researchers have speculated that Hayashi may have received updated or modified teaching. Due the Hayashi's purported medical background, the Usui urged Hayashi to open his own dojo and teach Reiki through his more clinically minded perspective. Doctor Hayashi updated Reiki several ways. First, his focus was predominantly on physical healing. Or at the very least, on the physical effects of healing through the spiritual gifts of Reiki. This may have been due to the Navy's involvement in the early days of Reiki. Given that they would have been less interested in the spiritual aspect. Hayashi also adapted the practice of using tables on which to give Reiki, much as we practice Reiki massage tables today. He preferred for his clients to be treated by two practitioners, improving the efficiency of treatments at his clinic.

Hayashi died in 1940. On May 11th, he chose an honorable method of death by suicide as a means of avoiding conflict in the upcoming war. It is likely that Hayashi having just returned from training practitioners in Hawaii, was pressured into revealing intelligence to the Japanese Navy, and this conflicted with Hayashi's otherwise peaceful way of life. In lieu of disappointing his country or causing harm to his students, Hayashi made his choice of death by suicide in accordance with Japanese culture and tradition, as a means of dying with honor.

In 1935, Reiki's history would be forever altered when Hawayo Takata, an American born woman and the daughter of Japanese parents traveled to Tokyo. She made her journey to tell her parents of her sister's recent passing and to seek medical treatment for a variety of conditions. According to the popular story she told, just as she was about to undergo anesthesia for surgery, her intuition guided her to seek alternative treatment. This is how she was pointed in the direction of Hayashi's clinic. Takata was born in Kauai in Hawaii, December 24th, 1900. She is considered to be second generation Japanese. She was the daughter of Japanese immigrants who moved to Hawaii to start their family. She developed gallstones, asthma, appendicitis and at least one tumor. In 1935, Takata's sister died of influenza while her parents were visiting family in Japan. This is when Takata seized the opportunity to travel to Japan to both inform her parents of her sister's untimely death and to take care of her medical concerns. She often recounted while laying on the operating table, she heard a voice inside her saying this operation is not necessary. When she asked her doctor for an alternative route of treatment he asked his sister to take Takata to Hayashi's clinic. Takata was treated daily at Hayashi's clinic and within four days experienced the healing breakthrough. At that point, her gallstones were flushed. Treatment continued for weeks. After which time the popular version of Reiki history tells us that she plotted a way to learn Reiki. Initially her request had been refused by Hayashi because she would be returning to Hawaii, although she was the Japanese descent, she was not a native-born citizen. Reiki was esteemed and preserved as a uniquely Japanese art form. Takata eventually persuaded Doctor Hayashi to teach her Reiki. She spent the next six months as Hayashi's prime pupil, studying Reiki with great enthusiasm. After returning to her home in Hawaii, Takata Sensi initiated approximately 55 new practitioners. In October 1937, Hayashi and his daughter arrived in Hawaii. Hayashi taught 14 Reiki Seminars, attended by approximately 300 students. The primary changes made to Reiki included the removal of Japanese terms. Many of the Japanese Reiki techniques were still taught, although mostly in simplified formats. Takata's North American audience outside of the Japanese American community in Hawaii was predominantly Caucasian. With the onset of World War Two anti-Japanese sentiment ran high and the healing system or spiritual movement with their pronounced Japanese flavor would probably not have survived. In addition to the simplification or removal of the Japanese techniques, Takata told an altered form of the history of Reiki. Much like a fable or parable, this Reiki story was the teaching tool meant to impart necessary spiritual and moral lessons. In addition to providing a pseudo-historical explanation of Reiki. Over the years, the history has been explored so that more factual data has been integrated into our current understanding of Reiki. Takata changed to Usui Reiki made it more palatable to western practitioners and planted the seeds for Reiki to grow. Without Takata's ability to transmit the soul of the Reiki system through her dynamic teaching style and embellished historical narrative, Reiki may have not survived at all. Her passion and commitments Reiki, as well as her adherence to the gokai, inspired students of all backgrounds to grow with Reiki. Takata continued to teach Reiki throughout Hawaii and eventually to the mainland of the United States and Canada. She shared Reiki extensively and was for a time the only instructor outside of Japan in the last years of her life. However, she began to train initiate other teachers. Her travels led to the widespread practice of Reiki on a variety of communities worldwide. Takata believed that Reiki in Japan may have died or gone underground and she needed a plan to preserve it as she had known it and taught it. So Takata taught many classes across the globe. Her students are responsible for the globalization of Reiki Takata taught 22 students to the third degree, calling them Reiki Masters, just as she called herself This group of students disseminated Reiki global audiences, one class at a time, and each of them adapted the system either by default or design. As the practice was spread with a new generation of teachers, Reiki was shared with new students at an accelerated rate, eventually leading to millions of practitioners worldwide today. Takata was a dynamic teacher and she generally taught Reiki as an oral tradition. Students were not permitted to take notes or keep copies of the symbols. This cast confusion after her death. When her students convened after her death, they noted variations among the way that the symbols were drawn. Takata also instructed her students of all degrees according to their needs, which means that sometimes she adapted her teaching so that they would be best understood and appreciated by those in attendance. When Takata passed away, many of her 22 students decided how to continue the system of Reiki without her. Two organizations arose in response to confusion regarding Takata's successor. The first group was the American Reiki Association. Which would later defect from her

teaching and become home to a form of Reiki called Radiance Technique. The other group was called the Reiki alliance. The alliance recognizes Takata's granddaughter, Phyliss Furumoto as her successor. In time, one of Takata's 22 students made the decision that would impact the rest of the Reiki World. Iris Ishikuro was initiated by Takata as the 10th Reiki Master. Iris initiated only one other person, a man named Arthur Robinson. Iris implored Arthur not to charge \$10,000 fee. For Reiki Master training. Robinson honored this wish and Reiki spread like wildfire. Today there are scores of different styles of Reiki, most of which can be traced to Takata.

Reiki is become infused with many outside influences, most of which are result of western New Age and metaphysical movements. Ideas pertaining to the Chakra's or as Angels, ascended, Masters, Crystal Healings, Shamanism and color healing, as well as additional systems had been tacked onto Reiki's traditional methods. As it is adapted by subsequent generations of Reiki teachers and practitioners.