

TOKYO AMERICAN CLUB

# iNTOUCH

December 2005

**Japan's  
Uncertain  
Future**

Universal Healing  
Christmas Causes  
Ringside Responsibilities

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# Feeling the Force

by Hilary Wendel  
Photos by Shane Burke

"Life creates it, makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us." While Yoda from *Star Wars* was talking here about the Force, he might just as easily have been explaining the workings of reiki.





## Language of the Life Force

**Reiki** Derived from the Japanese words for "universal energy" (*rei*) and life force (*ki*). Reiki involves a practitioner channeling this "universal life energy" to a "receiver" for healing purposes.

**Aura** The bio-magnetic field surrounding the body, which can be seen by people who are trained to see high vibration energy.

**Chakra** Any of the seven points of physical and spiritual energy within the human body.

**Qi** Life force energy found in and around all living things.

**Universal Life Force** An energy that exists in the universe, which can be channeled by a reiki master for healing and other positive uses.

**Attunement** Adjustments made by a reiki master in order to ensure the flow of energy from the universe to the receiver.

**Distance Healing** Reiki healing that takes place when the receiver is not present. Healing energy can be sent anywhere in the past, present or future. It can even be sent via e-mail or the Internet.

**Reiki Master** A person who has learned reiki up to master level but is not qualified to attune or teach reiki to others. The next level is reiki master teacher.

**Integrative Medicine** A combination of treatments such as reiki or acupuncture and traditional medicine. Also referred to as complementary medicine or care.

Living in Japan I often feel as if I am one of the last ones to pick up on health trends that surface back home. By the time they hit Tokyo, the health trendsetters have often moved on. Stodgy, old politicians were already practicing the South Beach Diet before I got a whiff of it. Yoga is now mainstream, and Spinning classes back in the United States involve computer-generated video courses. But there is something out there that is very much cutting edge, despite its centuries of history.

Reiki is a form of ancient healing with its origins in the yogic and tantric practices of India. It is now practiced by thousands of people across the world. But exactly how does it work? I went to a 20-minute reiki session in the Recreation Department to find out. My practitioner was Barbara Matsuura, who has been teaching a course through the Women's Group for the last five years.

I walked in there as ignorant as I could possibly be. I had the faint impression that I might be in for a massage, or that it might involve taking off my clothes. In fact, the only thing I was asked to remove was my jewelry. Metal, Matsuura told me, can interfere with the flow of energy. She asked me to lie down on the table and placed a small towel over my eyes to help me relax. She explained that by placing her hands on certain parts of my body she would channel energy to me. This energy, in theory, would bring my body and mind into balance.

She referred to this energy as the "universal life force." Now before you shake your head and stop reading, you might stop and think about other terms for this energy that are easier to fathom. Some people might have heard of "qi," a cosmic force that the Chinese have believed in for thousands of years. This energy is believed to circulate in every living being and be responsible for all physical changes in the universe. It is the basis for the balance of yin and yang, and the practice of everything from acupuncture to feng shui. Consider also the energy that we now know resides in the atom. Although we remember from physics class that our universe is made up of forces of energy, we don't learn how this energy relates to our bodies and our emotional states.

Reiki is meant to bridge this gap. The reiki practitioner attempts to harness the positive, or "loving," energy that surrounds us in order to restore balance in the body, which may have been disrupted by such things as a cold, anxiety or even cancer.

Matsuura also teaches reiki classes to students who want to become practitioners. Linda Gauvin has been studying under Matsuura for several years. The Club Member is a firm believer in the benefits of reiki and even uses it with her children when they are about to come down with something. While she admits reiki is not a cure, she sees it as another tool in a mother's toolbox, just as important as the thermometer or bottle of aspirin. Gauvin herself

occasionally enjoys hour-long reiki sessions from Matsuura. She says it relaxes her more than a full night's sleep or intense massage.

Although reiki was formally developed in Japan in the 19th century by Mikao Usui, it has yet to be accepted by Japan's traditional medical establishment. Reiki practitioners are generally not allowed into hospitals and clinics here. In the United States and Europe (particularly Germany), however, reiki is quickly becoming an accepted form of complementary healing. Many US hospitals now have sections dedicated to holistic healing, which include reiki practitioners. With more and more nurses being trained in such practices as reiki and Roling, patients are seeking out these treatments to provide pain relief or speed up traditional treatment methods.

While in my short session I did feel relaxed, Matsuura says that everybody has a different reaction. Some people sleep, others burst out laughing or even cry. Twitching and kicking are also common reactions. Matsuura says that these are the result of pent-up emotion, tension and memories being released.

Whether you would like to receive a reiki treatment or learn how to become a reiki master, you can get started this month at the Club. Plus you have an opportunity to be at the front of a health trend. But don't blink or you might miss it! □

### Reiki Session

Tuesday, December 6

6:30 p.m.

Recreation Building (AB Room)

To make an appointment, e-mail Barbara Matsuura at [integratedhealingarts@yahoo.com](mailto:integratedhealingarts@yahoo.com).