



Understanding the Effects of Stress and How Reiki Can Help

Part Two

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IN PART I of this article, which appeared in the Spring 2015 issue, we focused on how to use Reiki in reducing stress and its negative influences on our bodies. Reiki can also assist in rebalancing the “fight or flight” and “rest and digest” systems of the body to make a major, positive contribution to the healing work that we do for ourselves and others. Since the stress response involves more than these two systems, and both interact with the limbic system in more severe stress reactions, some background information will reveal these additional factors. Historically, the parasympathetic (rest and digest) part of the autonomic nervous system evolved some 500 million years ago and is about twice as old as the sympathetic (fight or flight) system.¹ In addition to its rest and digest functions, it’s also responsible for the freeze reaction—an instinctive response to stress prior to the fight or flight response. This “deer in the headlights” reaction shuts us down to conserve our energy, while hoping that if we don’t move or say anything, the “stressor” will lose interest and go away. Reiki offers several techniques that I use to bring calmness to these stressful situations. Reiki becomes our teacher if we listen and allow it to guide us.

Severe Stress Reactions and the Limbic System

The limbic system^{2,3} is another important player in severe stress reactions. It contains many important structures and is extensively linked to other parts of our brains. Through these functions and connections, the limbic system impacts our memories (formation and recall), emo-

tions, survival instincts, sensory perceptions and regulation of movement. It also plays a major role in regulating hormones, the pituitary gland, body temperature, the adrenal glands and many other vital activities. This well-connected part of our brain allows the fight or flight and freeze reactions to interact with each other as well as influence other areas of our brain.

Our brain has developed to protect us and has a survival bias toward remembering the one berry that made us sick, rather than the many other berries we enjoyed. Through this bias the limbic system can also magnify the impact of a negative traumatic life event by calling in past memories, sights, sounds and even smells that make it difficult for us to separate the past memory of events from the reality of the present moment. Our minds, in this case through the limbic system, are so powerful that just thinking about a past memory or projecting a negative thought onto a coming event causes the same stress response in our bodies as actually living it! This can result in stress, anxiety, inability to think, uncontrolled emotions, and in extreme cases, behavior that is out of character for a person. When this “nor-

mal” limbic response to an abnormal situation (trauma, shock, violence) persists and is amplified frequently, it can become extreme anxiety, panic and/or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) if it is not healed.

If a person isn’t able to fight or flee, then a part of the person gets locked into the abnormal situation and is not aware that he or she is no longer in danger. As a result, this part is constantly in a state of negative stress, literally not knowing if it will live or die. This is where Reiki healing is needed to release unresolved emotional trauma to reduce this burden of unresolved stress. When Reiki releases these parts that are trapped in the past, the person can become aware that the danger is gone and can relax and be in the present moment. The healing attunement and extraction technique of Aura Clearing received in ART/Master training are also useful for releasing the memories of traumatic, unhealed experiences. This is an important way that Reiki heals because each of us needs our energy in the present moment to stay healthy, grounded and balanced.

In addition to doing self-Reiki frequently, there are other simple ways to help counter this negative memory bias

¹ Peter Levine and Ruth Buczynski, *How to Learn from the Unspoken Voice of Trauma*, teleseminar, Information about purchasing this seminar series and one other can be found at <http://www.nicabm.com/trauma-2012-new/> and at <http://www.nicabm.com/treating-trauma/?del=programspage>.

² Regina Bailey, “Limbic System,” *About Education*, Retrieved at www.biology.about.com/od/anatomy/a/aa042205a.htm.

³ John E. Hall, “Limbic System,” chap. 58, and “Autonomic Nervous System,” chap. 60 in *Guyton & Hall Textbook of Medical Physiology* 12th ed. (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Saunders, 2010).

daily: one is by making a special effort to remember positive events in our lives, to gradually shift the way our brain reacts and thinks through its way of balancing its “survival mode” programming; another is by taking at least three deep breaths when we notice our anxiety rising. By teaching our clients this breathing technique, we can empower them to help bring their reasoning brain back on-line between sessions. Inhaling calming essential oils such as lavender may also be helpful between sessions since the sense of smell connects directly with the brain. The following are additional techniques the Reiki energy has guided me to use in severely stressed individuals. Several of my students and clients who are also Karuna Reiki® Masters have validated these techniques by using them on themselves and their clients.

Using Karuna Reiki® for Severely Stressed Individuals

The first technique is using Karuna Reiki® and the Distant Healing symbol to receive a “setting or level of activation” and to turn down the fight or flight setting in your client or self (see table 1 for a summary). Initially I ask HSZSN to connect to the sympathetic system. Then Zonar prepares the area for deep healing. I also ask for a number to see where this system is currently set, knowing that normal is a setting of 45–55. Visualizing a dial from zero to 100 can be helpful. Channel Halu to the next decreased setting. Continue with Halu until you perceive setting to go into a healthy range.

Always trust your Reiki-guided intuition as you gain more experience with the technique. It may take several sessions to get the system into the “normal” range and retrain the links between the fight or flight and limbic systems. Harth stabilizes the new setting—you can imagine the symbol resting inside your dial and keeping it at the new level. Rama further grounds and integrates this new setting into your client.

A person who has had multiple, challenging major life events or PTSD can present with an off-the-scale score of over 100. It is important to recognize that additional training or experience beyond Reiki or support from a multi-disciplinary team is strongly suggested with PTSD clients. Please refer to “Reiki and PTSD: Healing the Soul” for more information on working with PTSD clients.⁴ Taking that fact into consideration, if a client has a score of greater than 100, I have been guided by the Reiki energy to clear the emotional and then mental aura by connecting through the Distant Healing symbol.

One or more of the following phrases may come to mind:

- a) Anything that is ready to go.
- b) Anything that needs to go now.
- c) Anything (frequently beliefs or old patterns) that no longer are serving the person.

Holy Fire and Halu are energies that readily clear the aura. SHK, Shanti and/or Harth will fill the aura with their calming, peace and compassion afterwards. Sealing this energy in may occur at this point or at the end of the session.

After turning down the sympathetic system, you are ready to fill up the parasympathetic side by using the Distant Healing symbol to connect with the rest and digest system. Much of this system runs through the Vagus nerve — from the center of the head, down through the neck, heart and to the abdominal organs. You can access this with one hand at the base of the skull and one over the heart or a hand on the heart and belly. Again, use Zonar to prepare the system for deep healing. This is a zero to 100 scale again, only this time the objective is to fill this system up to 100% to nourish your client.

⁴ Kathie Lipinski, “Reiki and PTSD: Healing the Soul,” *Reiki News Magazine*, Winter 2012, 60–67.

Table 1 - Turning down the Sympathetic (fight or flight) Nervous System with Karuna Reiki®

1. Use the Distant Healing symbol to connect with the sympathetic system of the brain.
2. Use Zonar to prepare the area for deep healing and ask where the person’s fight or flight system is currently set. Envision a dial from zero to 100 or simply ask for the number.
 - A. A “Normal” setting is 45–55, since we need this system to be on alert for any life threatening events, an anxious person may be in the 70–85 range and a currently distraught person in the 85–100 zone.
 - B. Other situations leading to a very high score include: the aftermath of surgery because of a perceived “invasion” of the body and long-term, unresolved stress.*
3. Use Halu to decrease the setting to a healthy level.
4. Use Harth to stabilize the new setting and fill the system with the essence of universal compassion for self and others.
5. Use Rama to ground the new setting, re-energize the person and harmonize the upper and lower chakras.

* Through my Reiki sessions, it has come to my attention that the parasympathetic system has four layers that correspond with: a) the initial nerve that travels from the brain, b) the secondary nerve that connects to the organ, c) the organ, and d) what is called the radiant channels or circuit in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Blocks can form and inhibit flow from one layer to another. CKR, UDKM, Holy Fire and Halu may start flowing to release these blocks and allow more energy to reach the deeper levels of this rest and digest system. Sometimes this is a step-wise process, occurring over several Reiki sessions.

Table 2: Filling Up the Parasympathetic (rest and digest) Nervous System

1. Connect with the parasympathetic nervous system using the Distant Healing symbol.
2. Use Zonar to prepare the area for deep healing, and ask where the person's rest and digest system is currently set. The goal is to lovingly fill this system up to 100%.
3. Use Holy Fire, Usui Reiki and Karuna Reiki® symbols to help in this process. Prior to Holy Fire, a score under 20 could take up to 30 minutes to bring up to 100%. Using Holy Fire, this takes less than half the time!

After balancing the fight or flight and rest and digest systems with these techniques, proceed with a traditional Reiki session, paying careful attention to integrating the energies and grounding the person as you conclude the session.

Client cases

Joyce is the first client with whom I used these techniques. She had anxiety and panic attacks and was on medication for both yet still felt anxious and overwhelmed on and off daily. I began by connecting to her fight or flight system with HSZSN and then turning down this sympathetic nervous system. I used Zonar to prepare this system for deep healing, then asked for the current setting, which was in the 95 range. After this came Halu which decreased her score to 65. Harth and Rama stabilized this new setting. Joyce was amazed at how calm and grounded she felt. Over a relatively short period of time, her pre-session fight or flight score gradually dropped and stabilized in the 70s, even with continuing multiple daily stressors in her family life. She also has learned Reiki to practice on herself and her children. Later, following the Reiki energy, I began to fill up her parasympathetic nervous system to 100% during sessions (hers was initially at 20). Now her limbic system can be set into the normal range of 45–55 with greater ease. By combining these two techniques plus emotional and mental aura clearing, she now handles the stressors in her life without overwhelm and feels much more grounded and centered. After consulting with her physician, who was familiar with my work with Reiki and also knew that I was a licensed pharmacist, Joyce decided to reduce her med-

ication for panic attacks. She has not had to take medication for the past year!

George was in the hospital, the day after knee replacement surgery, when his wife requested a session for him. When I arrived in his hospital room he was in pain, despite a recent dose of pain medication, and was “not himself.” After he was repositioned, we maneuvered the bed so that I could have easier access to his head without disrupting any cords or IV’s. I connected with his fight or flight system with the Distant Healing symbol. I started with SHK to calm him. Zonar prepared his sympathetic system for deep healing (starting score at 98), then came Halu to reset his overactive system to 70, followed by Harth and Rama to stabilize this system at this calmer level.

Next I connected to George’s rest and digest system with HSZSN, then used Karuna Reiki® symbols. Zonar prepared his parasympathetic system for deep healing (initial score 2). Shanti, Iava, Gnosa, Harth and Rama followed and graciously filled this system up. I was also drawn to his adrenals where SHK started to calm what felt like shock from the surgery. Zonar, Shanti, Gnosa and Rama completed this calming through preparing his adrenals for deep healing, instilling calm and peace, re-educating them about what “normal” was and integrating this new knowledge and peace. Similar work was done over his incision. During the session he fell asleep, and awoke after the final integration, grounding and sealing of

the session. His eyes were their normal brightness now, and he remarked about what incredible peace he was feeling. Later I received a thank-you note from his wife who said, “The Reiki session in the hospital was the turning point in his recovery.”

Sharon came for her first Reiki session in tears, shaking as she spoke. She had been diagnosed with breast cancer, had had a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery and now this area was infected and not healing. The medical bills were piling up and her husband had just asked for a divorce. SHK started flowing as she was telling me about what had happened. Once she was on my Reiki table, SHK continued to flow, and she gradually stopped crying. I was guided to her emotional aura and used Zonar to prepare the area, then connected to all that was ready to be released with the Distant Healing symbol; Holy Fire cleared this aura. The same technique was repeated with the mental aura. This brought her fight or flight score to a measurable 96. The first four Karuna symbols were used to reset her score to 70 and stabilize her sympathetic system.

I next worked on Sharon’s parasympathetic system, after connecting with the Distant Healing symbol. I was shown multiple blocks within this system and Zonar and Halu cleared these with ease. Holy Fire then came in and started replenishing her rest and digest system in the first 2 layers. Gnosa helped this system “know and understand” what normal felt like, followed by Harth to fill it with love, light and compassion and Rama integrated and grounded this process. My attention was then drawn to the area of surgery and infection in order to optimize the lymph and energy flow down her arm. Mother Mary, Archangel Michael and Jesus all participated in the session at different times and sealed it with love, light and

grace. Rama and Kriya were both used to integrate and balance the session, as well as to ground and anchor Sharon to the core of Mother Gaia. I was amazed with how much compassion, grace and ease Holy Fire brought to Sharon's first session and she was amazed at how much better she felt.

Reiki has expanded my understanding of the effects of stress on the human body and taught me how this energy can help us better serve our clients, as well as enhance our self-care. Learning to re-balance the fight or flight and rest and digest systems with Reiki can be a useful addition. ❁❁



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