

## **Combining Reiki with Massage Therapy**

**By Sarah Falkner, LMT, Reiki Advanced Practitioner**

Combining Reiki and massage therapy has a synergistic effect: each enhances the effects of the other, and together, they can produce a remarkable experience. I incorporate Reiki into my Swedish massage-based sessions in a variety of ways. Working for the most part intuitively and in the moment, I am continually surprised by the versatility and intelligence of Reiki and the energies of the Reiki symbols, and how they can be integrated into different approaches.

After a check-in discussion with my client, full medical history if it's their first visit, and some time and space for them to get on the table and prepare themselves, I generally begin a bodywork session while the client is fully draped, with a brief "visit" to each major area of the client's body. Combining Reiki, energy scanning, compressions and gentle rocking, this part of the massage is very important. The client is soothed by the comforting initial work, and helped to tune into tensions that may be preventing them from lying comfortably and settling into the table. If it is a first-time client, this is also their introduction to my touch and energy. For a very tense person, or one with a lot of armor or guarding, this beginning establishes trust and communication between us; using the Reiki symbol for Balance with the hands-on application of Reiki directed towards grounding, balancing and calming is very helpful in such a situation. For others, the introduction functions more like an appetizer before the main course; in this case, the Reiki symbols for Power and for Growth and Expansion with the hands-on application of Reiki helps to open, penetrate blockages and soften dense tissue and warms the client up for deeper work. The preliminary phase is also important for the practitioner's work. It lets me get an idea of the scope and breadth of the client's physical and energetic patterns, how they respond to my touch, and how they breathe.

I always prioritize attention to a client's stated goals and intentions for their massage, e.g., "I always like a good foot rub", "I want to release this neck pain and tension", "I have tennis elbow", "I'm working on opening my third chakra", "I just need to calm down." But there are also many holding patterns, blockages, compensatory loading, etc., that clients aren't always able to articulate, yet are grateful to have addressed. Compressions and rocking help me feel the density of body tissues, assess flexibility and range of motion; Reiki and energy scanning help me assess energy flow and balance.

After the introduction I proceed with detailed work to each area of the body, interspersing eclectic Swedish massage with Reiki. Sometimes I employ both modalities simultaneously, either sending Reiki through a hand that is also engaged in a Swedish massage stroke -- particularly compression and friction -- or sending Reiki through one hand resting lightly on the body or just above it, while the other hand is engaged in a Swedish massage stroke.

When working with the Reiki symbols, I chant to myself, visualize, and draw with my breath or hand. I also allow Reiki to flow without using a symbol by stating to myself and asking the universe to send Reiki for peace, balance, relaxation, or healing. If a person is fidgety or ticklish, the Balance symbol and hands-on application of Reiki combined with compressions and an overall very slow pace can help them slow down and feel less irritated. If a person is unable to let go of an area, jostling and the Balance symbol often help; I have also used the Release symbol to release tension. In very dense blockages where I might use trigger point work or acupressure, a Power symbol can help -- another approach is using the symbol for Growth and Expansion to expand an area from within. I have used the Energizer symbol when a client has requested an energizing massage, or if an area feels stagnant. The symbol for

Meditation is great at the head and chakra areas when a client enjoys meditation and opening up to divine energies.

Occasionally I will not feel connected with my client, or they have stated they feel disconnected from life in general, and I have chanted the Connection symbol mantra to myself while working to strengthen our connection to divine energies and assist the energy in flowing where it is needed. And as for the Love symbol -- as my Reiki teacher taught me, it's always appropriate! It is an especially crucial symbol for clients who are dealing with issues surrounding abuse, addiction, trauma, grieving, prejudice, or low self-esteem. The Love symbol is also very helpful for those times when it feels like a client is pushing your buttons, or if you feel challenged or ungrounded by the session; it sends forth unconditional love to you both while helping you find patience and remain compassionate and tolerant.

Many clients enjoy a combination session in which I give a head-to-toe eclectic Swedish-based massage to one side of the body, followed by an equally thorough Reiki treatment; then we turn over and repeat! Some clients feel they can drink in more of the Reiki energy after a Swedish massage has gotten rid of distracting pains and tensions. Similarly, many clients desire a meditative experience, and find that having muscle tension addressed thoroughly with a deep and vigorous massage lets them go deeper in the Reiki that follows. Reiki is an excellent segue between areas of the body when doing very detailed work. It can also soothe an area after deep or emotionally intense work. And try using Reiki to empower any tools you use in your massage: oils, cremes, heated stones, and hot and cold packs.

Reiki is also effective for closing any segment of the session, and also completing the entire session. I usually bathe the entire body in Reiki after completing each side. I generally close my sessions with work to the neck and head. Many of my clients who have not requested a Reiki focus to their session notice that they are experiencing Reiki for the first time at this point in the massage. They may ask, "What was that magnetic sensation?" or share a pleasant vision they have at that time.

It is my pleasure to share with you my own personal experiences combining the healing arts of Reiki and massage in the hopes they will inspire you. But it is your own personal sensibility, approach, creativity and sensitivity that will be the best guides on a fulfilling, effective, and very rewarding path.

Sarah Falkner is a Licensed Massage Therapist and Reiki Advanced Practitioner, and apprenticed with Robin Rose Bennett in the Wise Woman Tradition of Herbal Healing and Plant Spirit Medicine. She is co-owner of Opal Center for Massage and Allied Therapies located in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where she offers eclectic sessions primarily based in Swedish massage and incorporating Reiki, aromatherapy, heated stone massage and more.

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