

A Brief History of Reiki



Although the literal translation of Reiki is "Spiritual Energy," here in the West, it is also most commonly used to describe a Japanese energy healing system founded by Usui Mikao (1865-1926). Usui is said to have come from a samurai family. He was born a Buddhist and as a child studied in a Tendai Monastery (eventually becoming a monk as an adult). Throughout his childhood, he studied martial arts, and as an adult had jobs in a variety of career fields, and travelled.

As the story goes, sometime after he became a monk, he went on a 21-day fast on Mt. Kurama, and on the 21st day, he was spiritually awakened and acquired the Reiki energy and was shown the symbols. This had an immediate effect upon him, and he began using Reiki to very positive effect. In time, he had over 2,000 students, and created a manual which included the precepts and meditations.

Reiki was introduced to the West in 1938 when Hawayo Takata (1900-1980) studied with Hayashi Chujiro (1880-1940) in Japan and returned to her home in Hawaii. (Hayashi Chujiro was a student of Usui Mikao.) She used the adjustments to the system that Hayashi had provided to make it more accessible to people (use of symbols), and she altered the story a bit about Usui's background and his experience on Mt. Kurama to make it more acceptable in the United States, which was at war with Japan at the time.

Here in the West, Reiki is most often perceived as a tool to be used in hands-on or at-a-distance healing (Hayashi's teaching), and that is certainly a good way to work with it. However, information is continuing to come to light that indicates that Reiki's original purpose was that of spiritual development, which could then be shared with others as a teacher. It has been said that students who wished attunement or those who wanted healing would simply sit in the presence of Usui, and because he essentially embodied Reiki, the attunement took place with him physically drawing the symbols into the student's aura. The transmission/ attunement of energy occurred for the student, and self-healing was accomplished by the recipient, without any use of symbols.

The practice of Reiki today does not depend on any specific religious belief. It is first a path of personal spiritual development, and a system of hands-on (or distant) healing second, which has five elements to support balance and wellness:

1. The Reiki Precepts: For today only:
 - Do not Anger
 - Do not Worry
 - Be Humble
 - Be Honest in your Work
 - Be Compassionate to yourself and others.
2. Visualization Practices
3. Hands-on Practice for oneself and others
4. Use of symbols and mantras

5. Initiations/Reiju/Attunements

Reiki practitioners are initiated or attuned to Reiki by a Reiki Master.

*** All information regarding the history of Reiki is taken from the class manual "Shoden and Animal Reiki Training: The Basics", by [Kathleen Prasad](#), who studies with Frans Stiene of the [International House of Reiki](#), which is the source for the historical information.*