



Reiki and Yoga

A Complementary Flow

BY KIMEIKO HOTTA DOVER, M.ED

THERE'S NO DOUBT that yoga's popularity has boomed in Western culture. In fact, more than 36 million people in the United States practice yoga while another 80 million say they're interested in trying it, according to a 2016 study by the Yoga Alliance & Yoga Journal.¹ If you are one of those millions of people who practice yoga and also practice Reiki, you have probably recognized some very foundational points of similarity. Yet, despite yoga's popularity and its complementary relationship with Reiki, the practice of Reiki remains new or relatively unknown by many people.

The energy we call *ki* in Reiki is known as *prana* in yoga, and both Reiki and yoga aim to release stress and promote energetic

flow and balance. These are common aims that can help yogis expand their practice spiritually—yoga teachers and Reiki Masters can work together to explore this mutually beneficial relationship by introducing Reiki in information sessions and in yoga classes and retreats.

Two local yoga studio owners have embraced the partnership of yoga and Reiki. Galina Ziberberg owns the Yin Yang Yoga Loft where she teaches a variety of yoga classes including a yoga teacher training program. Aware Yoga studio owner Kellie Dearman runs regular yoga and meditation retreats and specializes in trauma-sensitive yoga. Both Galina and Kellie regard

yoga as a spiritual practice, which is reflected in their open hearts and minds and in their heightened appreciation of and sensitivity to energy.

Reiki Information Sessions: Show, Don't Just Tell

To truly learn what Reiki offers within the format of an information session, it's important to allow people to experience its power first-hand.

I offered a free Reiki information session during a regularly scheduled yoga teacher training class. Galina had just started to teach her students about chakras so the timing was perfect. We opened the event to all studio members including Reiki practitioners of all levels and lineages, attracting a group with a 3:1 ratio of Reiki novices to practitioners.

At the time, participant Inna Krochek was a yoga teacher trainee. She recalls arriving at the session with mixed feelings. "I was a bit skeptical, although I am a yoga teacher and the concept of energy is an important aspect of the practice," Inna says.

The session included a brief description of Reiki and its uses and a 30-minute guided meditation. The Reiki practitioners shared varied experiences during the Reiki talk. After that, I initiated a healing meditation, during which the practitioners circulated, giving each person chair-Reiki for about eight minutes. They didn't speak but made brief notes on their observations about each person's energy, especially areas where energy felt congested.

Inna said that "jumping in and experiencing it firsthand," was more meaningful for her than hearing about Reiki. "The overall experience was definitely a very pleasant one. I felt an enhanced feeling of relaxation as well as heat coming from the practitioner's hands. I am definitely interested in further exploring this," Inna says. Now a certified yoga teacher, Inna was keen to try Reiki in a yoga class because she wanted to see "how Reiki can be combined with yoga postures, something that I may be interested in combining in my classes in the future."

At the end of the meditation, I invited the Reiki novices to journal their experiences of the meditation and Reiki. When they were done, the Reiki Masters shared their notes. This step generated surprise, excitement and exclamations of "how did you know....?!" Participants were amazed to see how closely the Reiki practitioners' notes reflected their physical, emotional and/or mental states. Several people stayed to ask questions long after the information session had officially ended.

Reiki and Asanas

Another effective way to introduce Reiki is through yoga classes. The physical postures, or *asanas*, for yoga are part of a system that includes breathing exercises (*pranayama*) and meditation, with the aim of releasing and balancing energy. Yoga *asanas* help release "issues in the tissues," which is similar to the way Reiki hand positions gently release and balance energy. Combin-

ing yoga and Reiki can work especially well in restorative and yin yoga classes because poses are held longer.

I have practiced yoga with Reiki in two ways—first, as a sort of Reiki share, in which I paired with another Reiki practitioner. We took turns giving Reiki to each other in various restorative poses, agreeing that it was an effective way to gently accelerate and amplify energetic releases.

Secondly, I have given Reiki during yoga classes, always with another Reiki practitioner when working with groups of eight or more. In these settings, ratios and duration are essential. It's best to limit the class size to ensure there will be enough Reiki participants to give each recipient a meaningful experience. In my opinion, five minutes of Reiki per person in one pose (or whatever lesser amount of time the participant can engage in the pose) works well as a minimum, with more time in more poses being better.

It is important to establish some expectations about Reiki at the beginning of the yoga class. I liken the experience to being an appetizer rather than a meal: tasty, but not filling. For a complete and satisfying experience, I encourage the curious to book a separate Reiki session... and they do! Giving free information sessions and complimentary Reiki in yoga classes has led to paid clients and registrations in Reiki classes. Not surprisingly, people are more willing to pay to receive and learn Reiki once they have experienced it, especially in a setting that is familiar and comfortable for them.

Reiki at Retreats: An Immersive Experience

Yoga retreats lasting a weekend, a few days, a week or even longer give opportunities for more immersive Reiki experiences.

As part of a Reiki III training with Toronto-based Reiki Master Teacher Salima Pirani, I was asked to find eight volunteers to receive Reiki from me while she observed. It struck me that a yoga retreat would be the perfect practicum setting. For several years, I had been attending them with my friend Kellie Dearman, and she was now facilitating her own.

One of the 25 guests who seized the opportunity was retiree Maureen Robertson. "For me, Reiki was a totally new approach to self-discovery, but at my age, I am willing to try new experiences," Maureen says.

Recipients shared their experiences at mealtimes and in their communal bedrooms, creating such a buzz that I ended up giving 11 Reiki sessions in two and a half days, unfortunately leaving a few volunteers waitlisted.

Sarah Burgess says her Reiki session opened her up to further introspection during her yoga retreat last year. "Yoga for me had always been first about exercise and stretching and less about internal mental and emotional well-being. By introducing Reiki and incorporating it in with the yoga and meditative aspects of the retreat, it helped give the weekend a very well-rounded, wholesome vibe," Sarah says.

Kellie is used to hearing feedback like Sarah's. "Many participants have been able to experience emotional releases and a deepening awareness of personal issues, both physical and emotional. The combination of yoga and Reiki, especially in a dedicated setting, has allowed for much soulful exploration for retreat participants, which is exactly the intention of any retreat embarked upon to deepen one's spiritual connection." These days, Kellie presents opportunities to receive Reiki at all of her retreats, explaining, "I have been thrilled with the benefits Reiki has added." This summer, Kellie and I offered our first four-day concurrent retreat at the lovely Shanti Retreat Centre on Wolfe Island in Ontario. While Kellie facilitated a program of yoga and meditation, I taught a Reiki I certification course. Each of my Reiki students had a chance to participate in one yoga class per day while Kellie's guests were invited to a Reiki information session, a chakra workshop and to receive Reiki from my students in chair and table sessions.

Time, space and freedom from everyday routines and responsibilities combined to make this retreat especially magical. Yoga retreat guests who knew nothing about Reiki before the retreat experienced a great deal of it during their chair or table session. Some were surprised to discover how relaxing it was, while others were amazed to experience powerful releases. Notable examples at this retreat included relief from tinnitus, grief and anger. At the same time, my students enjoyed confidence-building practice with a

variety of volunteers, and validation that the Reiki was working. Many of our guests said they'd choose a concurrent retreat again and

some expressed eagerness to learn Reiki themselves. This yoga and Reiki retreat was certainly a successful experiment with results that included a deepening of the participants' yoga experience and a new appreciation for Reiki as well as Kelly's and my appreciation of the results of the confluence of the two energies. In fact, having witnessed the benefits, yogini Kelly is now expanding her practice by taking Reiki classes herself. ❁❁

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Karuna Reiki® Master certified by the Canadian Reiki Association and a college professor with over 25 years of experience teaching adults. Passionate and ever-curious about Reiki, she has studied Levels I, II and III each three times, with four different Reiki teachers including William Lee Rand. Kimeiko welcomes opportunities to collaborate. To contact Kimeiko, email her at Reiki@kimeiko.com or visit her website kimeiko.com.

Endnote

1 Yoga Journal and Yoga Alliance, *Yoga in America Study*. Paris, France: IPSOS, 2016.

Four Ways Reiki and Yoga Can Work Together

1. Reiki helps deepen a yoga practice: Reiki gently accelerates and supports physical and emotional releases in asanas. It can also help deepen spiritual awareness in yoga practice.

2. Reiki can help engage students in a new way: The novelty of Reiki enlivens yoga programs to attract and retain participants. At the same time, it expands Reiki awareness and engages new Reiki clients and students.

3. Yoga offers the right space for Reiki: Yoga studio owners are often pleased to book Reiki events when their space is vacant. Yoga studios are airy, uncluttered and tend to have good energy. They can be quickly transformed with a few folding tables and chairs into rooms that are ideal for Reiki information sessions, shares, workshops or courses.

4. A marketing marriage: Reiki practitioners and yoga studios can benefit from cross-marketing to receptive audiences through established channels, including in-class announcements, studio flyers and posters, email lists and social media posts. ■

Reiki ART Manual *The class manual used in the Advanced Reiki Training class*

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