Teaching Skills for Reiki Masters

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Reiki teachers have the immense pleasure and responsibility to transmit the knowledge and practice of Reiki to a large number and wide variety of eager students. In order to do this work well, it is important to take stock of our teaching methods, taking advantage of the resources available to us that will lead to improvements in our presentation. As we consider the philosophy and purpose of the International Center for Reiki Training in relation to teaching, there are two ICRT precepts that capture our attention.

“Respect for the right of others to form their own values and beliefs.”

“To encourage students to become successful Reiki Masters if they are guided to do so.”

While it seems obvious that all Reiki teachers would strive for an attitude of respect and encouragement in their classes, it is not necessarily easy to achieve this without some useful techniques to add to the ever present guidance of Reiki.

The moment a person makes the decision to become a Reiki Master teacher, the energy of Reiki begins to guide one on the path to fulfill this purpose. Accepting this guidance and the divine responsibility that goes with it creates a process of self-discovery and growth. As more and more people are called to become Reiki Master teachers, we feel compelled to share the cultivated skills and principles we have had the privilege of learning in our studies and experience of professional group facilitation.

While many Reiki teachers have a knowledge of Reiki concepts and methods, it is the “how” of teaching that this article is about. Teaching Reiki classes can be enhanced exponentially when students who pursue the Reiki Master teacher level have strengthened their facilitation skills through self-awareness and education. Group teaching skills and the ability to use and promote emotionally healthy communication practices in Reiki classes are vital to successful experiences for the students and the teacher. Neale Donald Walsch once said, “A true teacher is not the one with the most knowledge, but the one who causes others to have knowledge. The Master is not the one with the most students, but the one who creates the most Masters.” These are important concepts that empower the privilege of service through which the teaching of this healing art is made possible. As we fulfill our role as Reiki teachers we pass on these sacred skills so that future generations may continue to benefit from the value Reiki has to offer.

Each of us has the ability to develop our skill used in the process of teaching Reiki classes. For some these skills are known and simply need to be reviewed and for others what is needed is a new learning experience.

Teaching Reiki Energy

It is important for all Reiki Masters to practice daily self-Reiki sessions to maintain health and a high vibrational state; this is especially important for those involved in teaching Reiki classes. As soon as you choose a date for a Reiki class, in addition to preparing your class materials, it is also important to begin energetic preparation as well. One way to do this is to begin praying for your students and sending Reiki to them, even before they enroll in the class. Do this by sending distant Reiki to all those who would benefit from the class as well as those who have signed up. This will create an energetic invitation for people to join the class and make it easier for them to decide if they’d like to take the class. At the same time it prepares those who have signed up to more easily learn and be deeply healed when they are in class. This process will help activate your teaching Reiki energy when you teach the class. This is another form of Reiki energy that many are not familiar with but which is important to those who teach Reiki classes. It is important to allow your Reiki energy to flow when teaching as it will help facilitate the class, making it easier to teach and helping to create important healing experiences for the students. To read more on this topic see the section on Teaching Reiki Energy by William Lee Rand at www.spiritualone.com/Online/Oct11/OctNL11.html#teach.

When a person makes the decision to learn Reiki, it is our responsibility as teachers to provide a learning environment that is emotionally safe and provides a respectful atmosphere. According to research on group dynamics the number one emotion people experience in a new group setting is anxiety. This feeling can express itself within the group. As a leader it is a true blessing to have skills that assist students to connect in honorable ways that do not arouse feelings of anxiety, particularly by establishing parameters of confidentiality and thoughtful practices by all. Creating this in the beginning of the class is essential, and there are many ways for Reiki teachers to accomplish this. One simple way is to create a set of clear guidelines that establishes the group’s
commitment to mutual respect, thus building connection, trust, and openness for every member of the group.

Class Guidelines

In order to create openness and a feeling of emotional safety, it is important that students agree to the following guidelines:

- As a group we commit to confidentiality.
- Each person will be respected and has a right to his or her own opinion.
- Group members are encouraged to listen to the speaker of the moment.
- Cell phones will be turned off during class.
- Students are encouraged to honor starting times throughout the class.

Group management skills and tips can assist in the enrichment of the learning environment. The following list is a collection of ideas from several professionals in the field of teaching and learning:

- Some people prefer not to close their eyes in group settings for personal reasons. The neuroscience community encourages educators and professionals to be trauma aware when in a position of leadership. When an activity such as a meditation or attunement is utilized, an acknowledgement is offered to the group that participants may close their eyes or keep their eyes downcast, if they wish.
- For thousands of years, storytelling has been a powerful teaching tool. Storytelling is a meaningful way to communicate ideas, principles and the essence of our collective Reiki experience. It is important to remember to balance the number of personal stories told as a leader. A helpful reminder is to think of personal stories like cayenne pepper in a fabulous recipe. Just the right amount and the flavor is delicious; too much and it can ruin a potentially great meal.
- With all the information available to teach, time can go by quickly in a Reiki class. It is important to add gentle reminders in reference to returning on time after breaks and meals.
- Utilizing a class outline provides a template to guide you through your day of teaching.
- Creating a supplies list that can be used in each class, as part of your class preparation, is a very helpful tool.
- Reiki Master teachers are encouraged to honor all schools and lineages. It is imperative to model non-judgment especially when students bring up topics or comments that are controversial or that you may not agree with. Acceptance, finesse and Reiki guidance can infuse mindfulness and non-judgment into our leadership skills.

Group Development

Bruce Tuckman, an American psychologist known for his theories on group dynamics, relates that there are specific stages of group development. These stages can be especially evident during Reiki classes when students are together over a period of time. Tuckman teaches that forming, norming, storming and performing phases are natural and inevitable as part of the human experience.

According to Tuckman, these phases are as follows:

- Forming: The group comes together and gets to know one another.
- Norming: The group begins to feel nurtured and has a sense of connection.
- Storming: The group may challenge the leader or one another and also create strategies to move beyond this stage.
- Performing: The group practices its craft and creates a sense of flow.

Participants in Reiki classes can experience some or all of these stages. As a Reiki Master teacher, the cultivation of knowledge and theories espoused by Tuckman and his colleagues can be exhilarating. The opportunity to acquire increased confidence when facilitating groups is in alignment with the vision and philosophy of the International Center for Reiki Training.

Creating Group Rapport

As mentioned above, the group coming together and feeling a sense of connection and group nurturing are important parts of the class dynamic. And in fact, this is necessary if the group is to enter into a higher learning state. However, it’s not necessary to simply observe the class and wait for this to happen. Group rapport is something you can facilitate. And the greater sense of group rapport you can create in your class, the easier it will be for you to teach and for your students to learn. This is something that needs to be done at the beginning of class.

A powerful tool for creating group rapport is to create group activities. When people do things together, they consciously and unconsciously observe each other’s body language, which helps them become familiar with each other. Familiarity is a key element in dispelling group anxiety. This becomes even more powerful when the group does things that are helpful to each other.

Here are a number of ideas and activities that will develop group rapport:

- Smudging. Have the students smudge each other using sage or another sacred herb. This can be done with the sage in a cup if you are indoors or with a sprig of sage if outdoors. If indoors ask if anyone is sensitive to smoke and if so, ask them to stand by an open door. If a person’s sensitivity is too great, you could use an energy clearing method instead of smudging.
- Energy Clearing. Have the students choose a partner and then demonstrate how to clear each other’s energy field. This is done by saying a short prayer giving thanks for the clearing that is about to take place, and next placing one’s hands on either side of the partner, above the head with palms down, then motioning the hands up and down slightly as one moves the hands
gradually down from above the head all the way to the floor, then tapping the floor three times. This is done on the sides as well as front to back. Once completed, the students hug each other and switch.

• Clearing and Energizing the Room. Have the students walk around the room sending Reiki to the walls, ceiling and floor and into the room. If they don’t have Reiki yet, ask them to imagine they are blessing the room.

• Hugs. Ask the students to hug each other (with permission). This quickly changes the energy of the group, creating lots of smiles and a nurturing and loving space.

• Introductions. Have each student share his or her name, where they are from, why they decided to take the class and something they like about themselves.

• Group Reiki. If the students have Reiki, ask them to sit in a circle and place their hands on each other’s shoulders and think of Reiki. Do this for 5–10 minutes or so. This is very healing, helps to release tension and anxiety and creates group acceptance and nurturing.

• Guided Meditation. Conduct a guided meditation in which the students hold hands and feel the group energy or actually move in consciousness from one person to another as part of the meditation. This causes the individuals to feel the energy of the group and become part of it.

Listening Skills

Mastering the skill of mindful listening as a Reiki Teacher is another important tool in the Reiki class. Many students need to be heard in empathetic and tender ways. Mindful listening allows this to happen. Some of the principles that can be helpful in developing listening skills are:

• Giving the student who is talking your undivided attention with both your eye contact and overall body language.

• Practicing non-judgment, which encourages emotional safety. As you listen you may or may not agree but you can accept what the speaker is saying as being true for him or her.

• Attuning to the speaker. Notice the body language, tone of voice and emotions behind the words. Is the speaker angry, afraid, joyful or excited? It can be very important to respond to the emotion in addition to the verbal information.

• Listen carefully to the question to make sure you understand it. You may need to ask questions to really understand what the student is asking. You might also restate the question to get acknowledgement of your understanding. Once you are sure you understand the question, create an answer that specifically addresses the student’s question. This may be an answer you have used before, but the question could require that you use your experience and knowledge to create an answer that you have never used before. Don’t make the mistake of allowing key words the student uses early in the question to trigger preformed answers. This can often lead to giving an answer to a question the student hasn’t asked.

• Being Quiet. An immediate reply is often perceived as unsolicited advisement. In addition, when you allow some quiet after the speaker has spoken, a self-discovery moment can emerge during the pause in which the speaker realizes the answer for himself.

Mindful listening is a talent that comes naturally for some people. However for most, the ability to be present, attuned and empathetic as a communicator is a set of skills that can take time to develop. Developing mindful listening as a powerful tool is a gift for both the Reiki Master teacher and the students we serve.

Though the brain plays a crucial role in the way we experience group dynamics and communication with others, it appears that the heart is the stronger force. Therefore heart friendly teaching skills, which come easily when we are centered in Reiki energy, have far-reaching implications based on new and innovative research. Today many interdisciplinary fields of study are researching the benefits of heart intelligence. For instance The Institute of HeartMath, a non-profit organization, encourages heart-based living for all people. They are passionate about sharing many of their latest research findings that relate to the promotion of thriving educational settings. HeartMind believes that the self-regulation of emotions, one area of their studies, can be improved when people experience the emotional safety of relationships.

Emotional healing and resilience develop when people have learning experiences that are rich in heart-intelligent practices. According to Howard Martin, Executive Vice President of HeartMath, the exciting new research suggests that the heart is a sensory organ that learns and remembers. Martin passionately describes the heart as the strongest source of bioelectric energy in the physical body. Martin teaches that it is through the heart that our spirit integrates with our humanness. These extraordinary new findings indicate that our heart senses much more than traditional research once believed. Developing the ability to follow our hearts while teaching will create the flexibility needed for students to more easily grow and learn. (See www.heartmath.org)

As we teach, our students are gifted with the wonder and joy of Reiki. The value of this experience can be enhanced through the awareness and practice of heart friendly skills including mindful listening and group facilitation techniques. As we allow Reiki to work through us and merge with its flow our skill naturally develops and the value we offer becomes an experience of love and nurturing for the students and for the teacher.

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