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# REIKI AND TRAUMA

One particular question I’m often asked is; if and how Reiki can be used to heal trauma?

The concept of “trauma” means something different to everyone. It’s a word that carries an incredibly subjective interpretation. What is extremely traumatic to one, can be belittled, shrugged off and minimized by another, which raises the question, what exactly counts as trauma?

In terms of Reiki, trauma can include everything from a physical injury such as a broken bone or surgical scar, to a deep psychic insult that results in feelings such as loss, grief, anguish or even terror. These represent clear assaults to the integrity of the mind and body, and are easily identifiable as traumatic. But trauma can also arise from seemingly innocuous events, things that result in energetic disturbances that cause distress to the spirit. In Reiki, these are also considered trauma and are treated as such.  

Based on my experience working with people, I can say that an initial trauma can be caused in many ways. It can result from a physical injury, a health challenge, physical abuse, shock, sudden change, loss, or from mental/emotional abuse. But there are also other classes of trauma. Vicarious trauma, for example, involves internalizing the experience of another. This is particularly common in the healing profession itself. When a therapist or counselor connects empathically with a client or patient, they may actually internalize the emotions and experiences, causing them to take on the trauma as if they had experienced it themselves. Another form of trauma is trans-generational trauma. Passed from one generation to the next, this is actually much more common than people realize and they are often surprised to learn, that when left unhealed trauma can be passed down from one generation to the next.

Whether it’s the result of chronic violence, social isolation, persecution or war, living in a constant state of fear leads to changes in the DNA. These changes are then passed on, which means that children can actually inherit fear responses rooted in trauma that they, themselves, never experienced. I cannot tell you how liberating it is for people when they recognize this in themselves and are finally able to release it. It gives them the opportunity to connect compassionately with previous generations without being condemned to carry the horrific experiences of the past into their present lives.

I feel that it is also important, when discussing trauma, to mention PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The fact is, the body cannot tell the difference between the past and the present when extreme stress responses are involved. So when exposed to a trigger, past trauma can be experienced as if it were happening in the now. This is what many veterans experience after returning from combat, and I assure you, they are not the only ones.  So how can Reiki be used to aid the healing process when trauma is involved?

Reiki works on four levels: Mental, Emotional, Physical and Spiritual. It is an energy system that can release stuck, blocked and stagnant energy, encouraging and stimulating healthy, positive, pure energy to flow in its place, which in turn can activate and promote healing. It is particularly useful for healing trauma, because following a trauma, of any kind; one can develop what are known as “low vibration energy blocks”. These manifest as heavier weights that we then carry, emotionally and psychologically. Think of them as metaphorical roadblocks that get in the way of normal energy flow, causing the system has to re-route traffic in order to accommodate them. Reiki helps to open and reset the healthy flow of energy.

In order to guide our work, we use the principles of the chakra system and metaphysics, a branch of philosophy that, among other things, examines the relationship between mind and matter.  According to metaphysics, the unhealthy beliefs and emotions that stem from a traumatic experience, if not processed and released, get stuck in the body, causing pain, discomfort, and dis-ease. So, for example, when working with someone who has experienced an emotional trauma, I might focus on the heart space or the solar plexus, which relates to feelings of self-doubt and self-esteem.

But what happens if the source of the trauma isn’t clear? Sometimes it’s a journey of discovery. Not everyone who comes in knows exactly what the trauma is, where in the system it’s stored or how it is manifesting.  Often, a lot of what I do is to just help people identify their own feelings. We, as a culture, have become so conditioned to pushing away any negative or “bad” emotions that we have become numb to our own experiences. We may not even be aware that a trauma has occurred.

But there is one thing that connects all traumas and that is the body’s ability to store them, on a cellular level. They all have mental, emotional, physical and spiritual  repercussions, and it’s often the physical and emotional manifestations of the trauma that brings people in; the back pain, the fatigue or insomnia, a tight neck and shoulders, anxiety, depression (just to name a few). Helping people make the connection between the event (the trauma) and the symptoms is often the first step in healing, and Reiki can support this process, opening the heart space, allowing the person to feel again.

As for what to expect during an actual Reiki session, one may feel a number of things. It’s impossible to list all the potentials. The most common responses are; falling asleep, body twitching and tremors, tummy rumbling, sensations of heat, and a feeling as if electrical currents are running through the body. After a session, it’s important to know that Reiki takes up to 72 hours to feel the full and final effects. The body does not react as quickly as the energy moves because the body is more dense, so you may feel very relaxed immediately and then also have a response several days later. People frequently report feeling more centered, balanced, lighter or brighter. In relation to trauma, I would also add that it’s very possible to have an emotional release in the form of tears or laughter, during or following the session.

As I mentioned earlier, Reiki works on four levels. And energy work knows no boundary of time or space. It can be done in a one on one, hands-on session, in a group setting or remotely, via distance healing. It’s important to choose the setting that you are most comfortable with. It can also be used to treat the past, present or the future. So when working with people, especially those with past traumas or PTSD, I send Reiki healing to that time and place in order to target the root of the experience. So, whether it’s a mental, emotional, physical or spiritual trauma, whether you’ve been carrying it for someone else, or have absorbed the effects second hand... Reiki can clear out the blockages on all levels, encouraging the flow of pure energy to aid the healing process.

As a huge advocate of engaging in your own healing process, (I believe it to be one of the most powerful strategies of all) I encourage anyone who is interested to do a Reiki certification, so you can work on yourself, others and global situations. We all have the power and ability to collectively raise the vibration on Earth, sending healing vibes out to our beautiful planet.

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