



Is Reiki a gateway drug? First off, you're probably saying, "What the heck is Reiki? I've never heard of this drug. Where can I get my hands on it? Is it another CIA plot to use explosive cigars to assassinate a benevolent dictator, if there is such a thing?"

Well, maybe not the CIA part, but the well-meaning dictator, yes. That dictator being you and me and everybody else you encounter. We all have the best of intentions, right? At least, most of us most of the time. So often we fall short of our intended by focusing on all the wrong facets of an issue. It's part of the human condition. *Reiki is defined as Spirit-Guided Life-Force Energy.* However, I feel it's best described as a gateway drug into Spirituality.

Reiki, in and of itself, is an extremely nebulous practice to try to wrap one's mind around. Keep in mind that in its purest form, Reiki and other spiritual practices aren't meant to be wrapped in a neat little package. In actuality, Reiki found me along my journey to mental health. In addition, or likely because of a healthier outlook, Reiki was able to provide a deepness to life for me. I had my first transpersonal experience (in other words, an event where you are able to feel and experience life outside yourself) via an astral projection at seventeen, but for the vast majority of people, their first transpersonal comes via Reiki. This event alone can illuminate one's path for the rest of their life.

Now, just because one's path is illuminated doesn't mean stumbling blocks don't delight the way. For what Reiki is illuminating is a person's shadow. Those parts of ourselves most of us like to deny and push down and distract from, because it's just not pretty. It is only by shining light on this darkness that we can gain the opportunity to grow. Are there other methods to do this? Of course! Are there people in these spiritual practices that are too full of themselves? Of course! Beware of someone claiming their way is THE way, no matter how charismatic, alluring, or intimidating they may be. Love does NOT equal force. Where'd I learn that? Reiki teaches what I call "the art of non-doing".

See, Reiki is unlike most practices out there, in that there's really nothing to study. Sure, there are wonderful books and manuals. Other than the classes that surround a student's attunement (when the Reiki energy is passed from master to student), Reiki is unique in that all one must do is practice it. Reiki, at its core, is like anything else in life. You get out of it what you put in to it in terms of practice and meditation. To borrow a golf saying, it fits my "find it in the dirt" mentality.

Often people seek this sort of thing out because of some implied or inferred desire for a magic bullet. The thing is, you are that magic. You are that bullet. Being and becoming the magic bullet is the student's job. A Reiki Master's (not much for this title or other labels, but that what we're called) job is to pass on the energy that resides within them while providing support and experience along their student's journey to self-empowerment.

Self-empowerment is the key to any spiritual practice. Any master or guru worth their salt is working with the notion of illuminating the guru within their students. Otherwise Reiki becomes a gateway drug to co-dependency. In this twisted relationship, the student fuels the master's ego while the master pontificates just enough to keep the student within the "safety of the nest."

Notice I still haven't really said what Reiki is other than some generic definition most any Google search could tell you. What it is is difficult to put into words because it speaks the language of our souls rather than our egos. Additionally, it doesn't have an easy definition because it means something different to each who take on this blessing. Ultimately, it allows the student to become their own Usui. (Usui was the founder of the practice known as Reiki although I suspect it has gone by many names over time.) Also, make no mistake, Reiki is NOT a religion, does NOT seek to usurp religion, but can instead enhance one's religion. And while we're talking about what it doesn't do, it doesn't seek to undermine traditional medicine or therapy, but enhances it.

For me, calling Reiki a gateway drug to spirituality is apt. Being a practitioner for a decade means I have been led to weave Reiki into other spiritual art forms leading to my growth as a person and, by extension, a healer. For you can't grow in either without growth in both. You can't grow without seeking out and facing darkness. Does this lead to a "dark night of the soul"? Well, if you think it should, it will, but that's fodder for another article.

How does this gateway drug work? That's up to you. Now that that question is out of the way, why do we have to define and label? Why can't we just say it makes me feel good and points out, sometimes with extreme prejudice, what doesn't feel good. Can that be the only label we affix to this? I mean, we place and misplace faith in things, people, and places all the time without question. But to place faith in yourself, a reflection of God's love, insults us and inspires us to insult, for some base fear.

After all, how can we be wrong by inviting love and making room for love in our lives? This is the result of Reiki practice. Now, what about that dictator I mentioned earlier? What can Reiki do for that? When applied daily, Reiki exposes the nuances we hide behind all the time. Not good enough. Not time yet. Not enough momentum yet. Too much. Too soon. Too awkward. Too pretty to be smart. I'm not_____. Or I'm too_____.

In writing this, my aim is to spread knowledge of a wonderful practice and provoke further questions regarding it. Love for love's sake to my fellow Lowcountry residents as we head into the season of love and growth.

Chris (Sutty) Suddeth was born in Greenville and has lived his whole life in South Carolina. A graduate of USC, Sutty lives with his wife and daughter on Fripp Island, where he is a full-time Mr. Mom with his own holistic health business. He's been a practicing Reiki Master and emotional energetic healing specialist since 2010. He uses his passion and proficiency with energy work to inform his writing and is expecting the publication of his novel *Swoondalini* this year.

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