



# Reiki and Palliative Care

*Easing the Pain of Terminal Illness. An inspiring and integrative journey through hospitals, hospice and heaven.*

BY TERRI A. HEIMAN

PHOTOS BY TERRI A. HEIMAN

Over the past year, I was guided to offer my Reiki Services to a terminally ill young mother. It is my hope that, in presenting a brief overview of my time with her, other practitioners will be encouraged and inspired to offer Reiki in hospitals or clinical settings. So many times Reiki is thought of in one dimension but, as I see it, there are no boundaries for what Reiki can do.

On a scale of 0-10 with 10 being the highest, "How is your pain right now?" Most cancer patients are familiar with this question. I now ask this at the start and finish of my Reiki treatments, especially when I am working with cancer patients who are in pain. I have found in my private practice and my hospital work that Reiki treatments can lower considerably the number on the pain scale, virtually every time a treatment is received.

Cancer statistics are so extremely high that everyone throughout the world knows at least one person who has suffered or will suffer with some type of cancer. And the word *suffer* is key here. Suffering comes in many forms: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual pain can be experienced. Pain management is vital, and as a result, palliative care has evolved as an approach to help alleviate pain, anxiety and other intense emotions. Palliative Care aims to improve the quality of life of patients and families facing life threatening illnesses.

Elle was in her 40's. She had two young children and a handsome husband. They had a large circle of friends and family. There were many stories and even more pictures on her hospital wall. I only got to know her in the last six months of her life when she asked for help. I had answered that request by offering Reiki.

At first it was just through our Community Reiki Circle that I would see Elle. She had been through breast cancer treatments several years earlier but had begun to encounter some problems. During these circles we would begin the evening with a talk about Reiki and have a brief meditation followed by running Reiki energy to all those present. More often than not, there were a few Reiki Masters and practitioners, as well as some people new to the energy. This created a beautiful balance in the giving and receiving of energy. During these Reiki Circles Elle began to notice that Reiki eased her suffering and pain. On many occasions Elle would remark how the energy helped to bring her back in balance to make it through her week of doctor's appointments and tests.

Elle seemed cancer free until other complications arose, including the need for multiple surgeries. On one occasion, I found myself allowed in the recovery room of Long Island Jewish Medical Center, in sterile gown and gloves, giving Elle a Reiki treatment only hours after surgery. As I worked with her that morning, calling in the Masters, using the Reiki Power Symbol (CKR) as well as the Tibetan Symbol (DKM) for healing, and focusing on the beautiful flow of energy I felt running through my hands, I looked up to see her team of doctors staring at me with looks of pure awe.

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Though they may not have understood what I was doing, there was a complete acceptance of my being there. They waited until I had finished to ask questions and to fill me in on Elle's condition. I was thrilled to feel this respect and to know that Reiki was finding its way into the hospitals and our health care system.

As Elle's stage four Cancer progressed I learned and experienced how Reiki treatments always seemed to take the edge off her pain. The second that I felt the energy flow I would ask Elle if she could feel it too. She always said yes as she closed her eyes and floated off. Her level of pain would fall during sessions like these when, I believe, her mind was freed from chatter and confusion. This allowed her a deep rest. Her friends and family always noted a difference and would comment on how sharp her thinking had been during the week.

The Reiki treatments she received were given in her hospital bed. Hospital beds can be hard to work around but with a little patience and familiarity, it is workable. By lowering the bed and the bed rails, I was able to work in an effective position. To respect her space, I found it best to ask each time before moving her bed position. I generally do not like to sit on the bed unless permission

is given, but I have seen others who jump right on. Determining the protocol for your patient at the beginning is always helpful.

Although I tried to come late at night or early in the morning, often her room was full and busy with family and friends. I would usually begin the treatment at her feet with a short prayer. Beginning at her feet and gently easing into the Reiki treatment allowed the energy in the room to shift as well. Frequently, I would direct energy to fill the entire room with the Distant Healing Symbol (HSZSN), the Power Symbol (CKR) and often the Tibetan Healing Symbol (DKM) as well. This allowed everyone to feel the energy, which was often described as feelings of love. Often the chatter would calm and the room would empty as I continued the treatment.

My sessions would then move up the ankles and legs to the knees and then up the base of the body. I found it important to spend extra time on areas that were infected with cancer. While sending energy, I often visualized the area free and clear of any cancer cells. Also, I would send energy up into the ninth chakra and connect with her higher self while picturing in my mind's eye complete perfection of Elle's soul. I found this to be helpful in her emotional and spiritual healing.

Elle and I would talk about where it hurt the most, and I would allow the hands to follow. Sometimes I would stay in one position for most of the session as she would drift off as if on a cloud. I always finished my session with great gratitude to my Masters and those that came before me for helping me to be a pure channel of love and light. I knew in my heart that I was helping in the greatest capacity of which I was capable.

My complete faith in Reiki allows me to always hold the hope for miracles, but sometimes the answer that comes back to me isn't so much about healing in order to live but healing in order to allow the soul to move on. It is at times like this that I find Reiki acknowledging the needs of the soul. It helps release the pain and suffering on a spiritual level and helps to release old karma. Most importantly, it helps complete unfinished business with others.

And this was the case with Elle. It became apparent that her cancer was spreading despite medicine's best efforts. The choice was made to move her to the Hospice Inn at Huntington in New York, a Hospice Care Network facility, with hopes that she would be more comfortable there. At first I wondered if I would be able to continue the treatments with her once she was moved, but I



Hospice Inn at Huntington in New York.

did not let that stop me. I trusted that Reiki would guide me and it did! And once again, I was well received by all the staff. Darin London, NP, Director of the Hospice Inn even joked with Elle that she had brought her own private Reiki Master and how lucky she was for that! I was able to visit at any time and was always given respect for our time together.

Elle was fortunate with her friends as well. She was always surrounded by others and was never alone at night. Her friends began asking questions and their interest in Reiki was great. Reiki was interested in them as well! Often when I would finish a session with Elle, I would wander into the sunroom where the others were sitting. I would ask if I could offer any energy and almost always someone would look at me with an affirming nod of the head. I found that offering mini sessions to her family and friends also helped in relieving their pain and suffering on spiritual and emotional levels. For the most part, these mini sessions were basic in that I started at the head then moved to the shoulders and finished at the heart. I would call in my Masters and my guides and use the Power Symbol (CKR) and the Tibetan (DKYO) for their own personal healing. Sometimes I would call on the Distant Healing Symbol (HSZSN) to help bridge the time and space of eternity especially with her family members. I would end by sealing in the energy with the Power Symbol (CKR) no matter how short the session was. When I left the Hospice Inn, I always noticed the beautiful energy coming from Elle's room and flowing all the way down the hall.

Many times Elle would be sleeping as I left and I would not wake her to say goodbye, knowing that the effects of Reiki would carry her through for a long while. It was often reported that her days following a treatment were filled with strength and energy and a nice appetite. Sometimes it was even puzzling to others that she was so awake! But I knew the reasons, and I knew the importance of continuing the treatments.

One important question that often came to me from her friends and family was if I was prolonging her life with Reiki. At first I joked that if I could prolong life there would be a huge line at my door. But in reflection, the answer was that I was helping to ease her suffering using Reiki so that she might finish her time in a more loving and peaceful manner. It wasn't how much time she had remaining here on earth, it was about Reiki helping to ease the pain for this transition. To me, that is the real value and gift... not prolonging but helping the quality of her time left. This is the essence of Palliative Care. And as I experienced it, it was helping Elle. Reiki was working in conjunction with all the pain medications. It added another dimension to healing her spirit and creating peace.

I saw Elle two or three times per week. Whenever I would sense her calling me I would come. Each time my Reiki intuition would be right on. She would remark that she was just thinking about me! She was often heard describing me as an angel who would just appear, but I think she was connecting

with many angels through the energy. Working with advanced Reiki energy, one becomes more experienced with tapping into the higher chakras and into the soul star energies. It is through these vibrations that angels and guides and messengers appear. As I worked with Elle utilizing this advanced energy, her room would fill with her guides and masters. (Sometimes the room would be very full!) These were the guides and masters that I truly believe were available to help her through to Life ever after. This, I believe, was the energy that she was describing when she called me an angel.


My sessions with Elle continued, but I noticed a shift in the manner of the treatments. There were times when just holding hands and sending energy through them was all that was necessary. These were times when the spiritual aspects of Reiki were called upon and began to come through as we would talk about her faith and her strength to hold on and fight. We would say prayers for her soul and ask for her karma to clear and cords to be cut. She would ask to let go of anger, which directly called on the spiritual principles of Reiki... *Just for today, do not anger*, and we would work with this concept as I would ask her to let go of all that was angering her. The idea of “just for today” made it so much easier for her to let go.

There were times that I would simply chant to her heart, Om Mani Padme Hum, a Sanskrit chant bestowing compassion on the soul. Reiki would still be pouring from me and my hands would get very hot. It was at times like this that I felt the strongest connection to Reiki and its unlimited possibilities. I trusted Reiki to flow for the highest good of all and knew that it was doing just that. The spiritual aspects of Reiki are instrumental in taking one’s healing to another level. Reiki allows one to create a spiritual path if one is not already present. And, in creating a spiritual path, one begins to create one’s own prayers and ultimately to find peace within.

Elle’s soul was released from her physical body and her suffering ended. At Elle’s services, many people came up to me and thanked me for my help. Each one had a story or comment about the work I did with her and each one was affected by the beauty and love of Reiki. As I sat at her funeral, I continued to send energy all around the church through the Distant Healing Symbol (HSZSN) and even placed my hands on those around me. I know in my heart and through my faith in Reiki that it had served the highest good not only for Elle, but also for her family and her friends.

Reiki continues as I send energy and pray for Elle’s soul as she makes her transition through death. Using the Distant Healing Symbol (HSZSN), I connect with her spirit each morning in my prayers. I know that she no longer suffers and is now at peace. I don’t know how long I will continue sending energy but trust my intuition that it will continue as long as it is needed.



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