

Adding to Our Bag of Magic - Augmenting Our Practice

Last week when Shobi was in ER, a nurse commented "You don't want to go over to that woman, she'll slug you. She is in such enormous pain" Her pain medication hadn't kicked in yet and she was so frightened that she was lashing out verbally to everyone. I went over and handed her a stuffed bunny rabbit to hold. (This is Clown's spontaneity.) That certainly caught her attention. "For me?" she said as she clutched the bunny to her chest. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she continued, "When I saw you walk in, I immediately felt better." (The clown puts the patient in the moment) "I've been so worried that my cancer is back." (Patient tried to go back to projecting doom) Staying with the moment, I asked "When is the last time you breathed?" She chuckled a bit. Then I put my hand on hers and the bunny rabbit, and we breathed together with the rising and falling of tidal waves - a little guided imagery - another way to "augment your practice." This short time was enough relaxation for the pain medication to kick in. I had been doing Reiki with her and also on the bunny which I left with her. When I returned to see how she was, she had her eyes closed holding the bunny to her chest and breathing deeply.

Shobi has been practicing Reiki as long as she has been hospital clowning. It is one of my augmented skills. Years ago I was a little hesitant to tell you all about Reiki, but since I have found so many "Reiki Clowns" over the past years at conventions and workshops, I have decided you all may benefit from knowing about it. I think it will be years before the hospital community will validate the use of Reiki, but many nurses know of it. I use Reiki all the time in the hospital. I don't announce that I am doing it. As it comes through simple touch, like holding a hand, it can be done with discretion. It is part of my selfless service. In Guatemala Father Bob Dunn saw me simply putting my hand on the top of patient's heads as I held their heads for the dentist. It was amazing how much heat was in my hand and it seemed to have a calming affect. Father Bob's comment was "I see what you are doing, we call it 'the laying on of hands.'" I probably blushed to match my nose. Later I explained Reiki to him.

At first, I was very skeptical of Reiki. However, I just felt so helpless when confronted by all the pain and suffering, that I wanted to do something. So I took Reiki classes. Over the years I have learned that there is something so immensely calming about this touch. I do not claim to be a "healer," I am just there. This is pure unconditional love.

The article to the right is written by my Reiki teacher Siddeshwari Sullivan.

- Shobi Dobi

Reiki - Human Touch at its Best

by Siddheshwari Sullivan, MS, RN

As I was walking my dog down the street a few weeks ago, Shobhana (Shobi Dobi) excitedly called to me, "You HAVE to write a story about Reiki and clowning!" She has been asking me for several years to do this, but this time she was insistent that it be done now. Interestingly enough, I had been feeling a similar urge. She then proceeded to tell me a few stories of her experiences with clowning and Reiki. Shobhana (Shobi) has taken several classes in Reiki.

Most recently, Shobi Dobi was clowning in ER, when a patient caught her eye and invited her into her room. The woman smiled, but it was through a vale of pain. Anxiously she said "The pain medication isn't working!" Shobi went over and spontaneously put her hand on the woman's back, right at the base of the neck. The woman calmed down right away. She started to breathe more easily and more deeply. Shobi then had the urge to put her hand gently on the woman's injured arm that was already in a cast. The woman calmed down even more, and thus could finally feel the effect of the pain medicine. Shobi said she could feel the anxiety, fear and pain leave the woman's body. She relaxed with every breath.

Another story Shobi told me was some years ago. She peeked into Billy's room, a 13-year-old boy she knew well from his repeated stays in the hospital. He smiled slightly to show it was all right for her to visit. His chemo was causing so much pain in his knees that he could not sleep. Shobi followed her natural instinct to put her hands on his knees. Billy immediately felt something different and asked, "How do you do that. It feels so good." Shobi responded, "Shh, Billy, go to sleep." A nurse walked by and asked what Shobi was doing, and Shobi responded "I'm just staying with Billy until he goes to sleep." Billy's pain was relieved and he fell asleep.

As we stood in the street, Shobhana also told me a story of Shobi Dobi gently rubbing the cheek of someone who was getting dental work. The person relaxed and felt pain relief. The dentist told her that this is actually a technique. He referred to it by some medical term which neither Shobhana nor Shobi remembers. The dentist told her that gently stroking one cheek helps relieve pain on the opposite cheek. And Shobi did this without any "knowledge." In the last issue of Hospital Clown Newsletter, I read about Shobi Dobi in Guatemala and realized that this is where her experience had taken place. What a gift to these people!

The human touch, augmented by Reiki! Reiki is a Japanese word for Universal Life Energy. Yes, we all have some of it, which is why touch is so important in supporting healing and in providing comfort. In a Reiki class, the innate energy we all have flowing through us simply gets increased permanently. After that, we don't have to think about it. Anyone or anything we touch that needs the energy gets it without our directing it in any way. We seem to naturally do what is right for that person at that time. Taking a Reiki class seems to increase people's intuition, giving them a clearer message of what is needed. It is a simple way to increase people's comfort - our own and the people we touch. Another blessing of Reiki is that we receive it while we "give" it. Furthermore, it protects us from taking on other people's negative energy - and they don't receive ours (if we happen to be in a bad mood, or feeling sad). It is totally a win-win situation. Reiki is divine, intelligent, loving, healing energy. It can only be beneficial for both giver and receiver - human touch at its best!

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Reiki is an ancient art of healing touch rediscovered in Japan in the late 1800's by a man named Dr. Mikao Usui. He was a highly educated man and, after years of studying, he discovered the original sanskrit writings of the Buddha's disciples, which included teachings about healing. He meditated, fasted, and contemplated the teachings for 21 days. On the last day of his retreat, he had a powerful meditation experience, after which he found that his hands had powerful energy to provide comfort and to accelerate a person's natural healing process. He also discovered that he could pass on this power to others.

The way a person receives this power is through the initiations a student receives in the class. The initiations (some people call them attunements) open up the energy channels and seal them open. Afterwards, the person is a conduit for this energy. If their hands are on or near a person or object who needs the energy, the energy flows and does exactly what is best for that person at that time. This is what increases the intuition of someone who has taken a Reiki class. It seems that the Reiki, this divine loving force, makes things happen for the highest good of all.

Several years ago, I was visiting a friend. Another friend, whom I had not seen in a long time, was sitting on the floor, her back against the wall and her knees bent. I naturally sat down beside her, rested my hand on her knee and said, "Hi! How are you? It's good to see you." She looked at me in surprise and responded, "How did you know?" Now it was my turn to be surprised: "Know what?" I asked. "That knee has been hurting me for weeks." Reiki at work.

Another example of this comes from a student, whom I will call Alicia. Reiki classes take place over a period of three to four days, during which a student receives four initiations. In one class, after only two initiations, Alicia went to a bookstore and was browsing. She later told me she was not thinking of her hands or of the class. Suddenly her hands heated up tremendously, the way they did when she was practicing Reiki in the class. She was surprised, looked around and saw a woman standing near her. At that moment, the woman walked away, and Alicia's hands cooled down. About ten minutes later, the same thing happened: Alicia's hands heated up, the same woman was standing nearby. As long as the woman was there, Alicia's hands stayed hot. After a several minutes, the woman walked away and Alicia's hands cooled down.

Another time, I was walking down a hallway and an acquaintance mentioned she had a headache. I spontaneously put my hand on her neck, and immediately the headache started to subside.

Mary Ann (not her real name) came to me for Reiki to help relieve her of migraines. She loved her first Reiki session. That night, however, she had a severe anxiety attack -- and she was scared to come back for her Reiki session scheduled for the next day. She did come back and in our discussion she mentioned that she used to have anxiety attacks often as a child. At some point in her childhood, Mary Ann decided she wanted to be in control of her anxiety and later developed migraines. After four Reiki sessions, both the migraines and the anxiety had greatly diminished. She continued to receive regular Reiki sessions and she took the class and gave herself daily Reiki. Migraines and anxiety are rare occurrences for her now. She even discovered a side benefit: she is no longer scared of flying! About a year ago, a friend asked me to give Reiki to his mother, Sandra (not her real name), who was in the terminal stages of cancer. I drove to her home and gave her

several full Reiki sessions. In the first session, she talked about being ready to die and about being held back by her children. As I talked with her son, it became clear that it was time to discontinue a medication that was prolonging her life.

With each Reiki session, there was a clear jump to the next step in her process of dying. She was able to let go; her children were able to let go. During those few weeks, I gave her son Reiki, which gave him energy to continue supporting his mother. I stayed with her and her son during the last hours of Sandra's life. Her son had been praying at her bedside all day long. I came in the afternoon, and each time I gave her Reiki, there was another leap toward her transition. Shortly after midnight, she died very peacefully at home in her own bed, surrounded by love and by prayer. Her son held her hand, and we both kept urging her to keep going to the Light and to merge with It. Tangible spiritual energy filled the room with love, thick, enveloping and deeply peaceful.

Although full Reiki sessions can accelerate healing, clowns can use Reiki to provide comfort and support pain relief, with just a few minutes or even just a few moments of touch. Reiki simply augments the things clowns naturally do. Holding the hand of a sick child or of an upset parent. A hug. Holding a stuffed animal (or other toy) for a bit gives it Reiki, and then the child (or child-at-heart) can receive the comfort of this loving energy from the stuffed animal even when you are not there. Just resting your hand on an area that hurts can relieve pain. Or maybe your hand wants to rest on some other area--for just a few moments. Sometimes those few moments of touch will strike an inner chord, opening up a person to talk about worries, old hurts. Sometimes people cry with Reiki. Tears are so healing--they bring peace to the heart, especially when someone who cares is also present. With Reiki, you might even find yourself saying things that surprise you--and that bring tears, or laughter, or inspiration or understanding. The more I practice Reiki, the more attuned I feel to the divine energy flowing in my life. When my hands are on myself or someone else and the Reiki energy is flowing, I feel a blanket of love enveloping me, causing deep relaxation and bringing new insights. I feel like I am "walking with God;" sometimes I am being carried. I also know that I am a vehicle for my clients to experience the same divine support for their journeys.

Siddheshwari Sullivan has been a registered nurse for almost thirty years and has worked in hospitals, nursing homes, home care agencies, in private homes doing work with dying patients and in methadone clinics. "For sixteen years, I had looked for my niche in nursing. Then I discovered Reiki fourteen years ago and took my first Reiki class. It was an immediate recognition. I said to myself, "This is what I went into nursing for!" Five years later, I became a Reiki Master and started teaching as well as giving Reiki sessions. I founded the Reiki Center of the East Bay in November 1992, where I give Reiki sessions, teach classes and hold other workshops on healing. For more information about Reiki in your area, feel free to email me at: siddheshwari@earthlink.net or call me at: 510-653-9884."