



# Reiki for Mental Health Professionals: Part II

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(Editor's note: "Reiki for Mental Health Professionals: Part I" was published in the Spring 2015 issue of this magazine. In that part of the article, mental health professional Karen Harrison discussed her experience and that of other colleagues in combining the practice of Reiki within their mental health counseling sessions. Part II expands on this topic by describing the ethical and legal matters mental health counselors need to consider when offering Reiki to their clients during a counseling session.)

## Giving Reiki during sessions

If you would like to give Reiki to a counseling client near or on her body, there are several ethical and legal matters to consider regarding touch, development of new skills, informed consent, filing insurance for the session and multiple relationships. "In some areas of the country, only licensed medical doctors, nurses or massage therapists may legally touch a client's body."<sup>1</sup> So it is important to check legal and regulatory sources before deciding to offer hands on Reiki during a counseling session.

First check the rules and ethical standards of your regulatory body for your license regarding touch. You will likely find the ethical standards only address sexual behavior or touch on the genitals but not touch on other parts of the body.<sup>2</sup> Donna Henderson, a Reiki practitioner and social worker on the Oregon Board of Social Workers, said that the Board would not be able to give legal advice but would refer the therapist to review the statutes and obtain a legal and ethical consultation from her professional association.<sup>3</sup> I reviewed the Code of Ethics for the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT). Regarding touch, the Code says that sexual intimacy with clients is prohibited but includes no information about other kinds of touch.<sup>4</sup> Next request a consult with the ethics and legal counsel of your professional association (see inset on page 58).

Adding Reiki to your counseling practice involves *practicing new skills*, even if you are already an experienced Reiki practitioner. The AAMFT Code of Ethics states that "Marriage and family therapists practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training and/or supervised experience."<sup>5</sup> Receiving quality Reiki training is important before adding Reiki to your counseling practice, and additionally you

might consider receiving a few consultations from a mental health therapist who is also a Reiki Master who uses Reiki in her counseling practice.

Donna Henderson pointed out that she was able to receive continuing education credits as a social worker for her Reiki I and II classes, which implies that Reiki falls within the scope of practice for social workers.<sup>6</sup> The International Center for Reiki Training has received approval to grant continuing education for Reiki classes to social workers, marriage and family therapists.<sup>7</sup>

*Informed Consent* is a document that provides information to your clients about you, your treatment methods, potential risks and benefits of your treatment and financial considerations.<sup>8</sup> You could include a short description of Reiki and any special Reiki techniques you use in your informed consent or you could create a separate informed consent to use when you add Reiki to your practice. I have a separate informed consent for aura clearing,<sup>9</sup> which is a hands off Reiki method. In the document I describe

<sup>1</sup> William Lee Rand, *Reiki The Healing Touch: First and Second Degree Manual*, (Southfield, MI: Vision Publications, 2011), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Title 20—DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE, FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION Division 2233—State Committee of Marital and Family Therapists, Chapter 3—Ethical Standards 20 CSR 2233-3.010 General Principles. Retrieved from <http://www.sos.mo.gov/adrules/csr/current/20csr/20c2233-3.pdf>, 11 a-f.

<sup>3</sup> Donna Henderson, personal communication, December 19, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> AAMFT Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.aamft.org/imis15/Documents/Legal%20Ethics/Board%20Approved%20Code%20for%20Web%20Secured.pdf>, 1.4.

<sup>5</sup> AAMFT Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.aamft.org/imis15/Documents/Legal%20Ethics/Board%20Approved%20Code%20for%20Web%20Secured.pdf>, 3.6.

<sup>6</sup> Henderson, personal communication.

<sup>7</sup> Continuing Education Units. Retrieved from [www.reiki.org/reikiclasses/ceu.html](http://www.reiki.org/reikiclasses/ceu.html).

<sup>8</sup> AAMFT Code of Ethics. Retrieved from [www.aamft.org/imis15/Documents/Legal%20Ethics/Board%20Approved%20Code%20for%20Web%20Secured.pdf](http://www.aamft.org/imis15/Documents/Legal%20Ethics/Board%20Approved%20Code%20for%20Web%20Secured.pdf), 1.2.

<sup>9</sup> William Lee Rand, *Usui/Holy Fire ART/Master Manual* (Southfield, MI: Vision Publications, 2014), 33.

the steps of aura clearing. If I offer aura clearing to a client, I give an overview of the procedure and then if he wants to proceed, I have him read and sign my document first and place it in his file. For more information about using aura clearing in psychotherapy, see the article, “Reiki Aura Clearing and Psychotherapy.”<sup>10</sup>

*Multiple relationships* refers to having additional relationships with a client outside of the therapy relationship.<sup>11</sup> If a counselor refers her client for a separate session of Reiki only, it could be considered as developing a multiple relationship with the client that benefits the counselor and might be considered an ethical

breach. Dr. Beth Stapor, a psychologist who is governed under the rules of the State of Tennessee and the American Psychological Association, says, “I never combined Reiki and counseling because in the state of Tennessee, I couldn’t self-refer. If the client brought up receiving a Reiki session, I explained it and offered a separate session for it.”<sup>12</sup>

### Ethical and legal consults

It would be wise to obtain an ethical and legal consult on this issue to find out if you are still governed by your counseling

## Combining Reiki with counseling or counseling with Reiki

When I started offering Reiki professionally in 2000, I wanted to make sure that I was operating ethically and legally. I obtained a consult with the AAMFT Ethics Case Manager. Although the manager then “as well as the current manager who I met with this year” advised that it would be safest to keep my counseling and hands on Reiki practices separate, when I explained my practice rules and procedures to them, each manager felt that I was operating my practices with careful consideration for the ethical standards involved. The manager from the most recent consult stated that the topics to consider in these decisions are informed consent, scope of practice, scope of competency, touch, and multiple relationships. Here is a list of her suggestions to me:

**The Counseling Client Informed Consent Document includes:** a description of Reiki, how it is included, and an option to decline Reiki. Any extra charge for adding Reiki should be discussed as well as issues of touch (see Scope of Competency below).

**Scope of Practice:** Review state regulations for what your license allows you to do and speak with licensing office personnel about adding Reiki.

**Scope of Competency:** This refers to the quality of your Reiki training and your certification and experience as a Reiki practitioner. Although touch is not addressed in the AAMFT Code of Ethics, in some cases it is reasonable and appropriate. What is appropriate and inappropriate and what to do if touch does feel inappropriate should be included in your Client Informed Consent Document.

**Client referral for your Reiki classes:** Although referring a client to your Reiki classes is very much like a referral to group therapy or psychoeducation, it might appear exploitative. Check your state regulations on self-referral. Have the client sign a form that states that the class is voluntary as well as how confidentiality will be handled or consider referring the client to another class or give them several offerings, one of which is yours.

**Counseling law application if client discusses counseling issues in a Reiki session:** To avoid this possibility, be clear about what services are being provided as anything that looks like counseling might be regulated no matter what you call it—spiritual counseling, for instance. Consider obtaining professional liability insurance for your Reiki practice as well as for your counseling practice.

Here is how I set up my counseling and Reiki practices to uphold the ethical and legal considerations in 2000, which still hold true today:

**Describe each treatment:** Find out what a client’s treatment goals are to discern what would best meet her goals.

**Counseling with Reiki:** As part of a counseling client session, I offer up to 20 minutes of hands off, chair Reiki. I explain that I do not place my counseling clients on a massage table nor give them hands on Reiki due to ethical and legal considerations.

**Reiki with Counseling:** As part of a Reiki client session, the client can freely talk about his problems. I suggest some silent time as well in which he would be relaxing deeply to obtain the most benefit from the Reiki session.

**Existing Counseling Client Asks for Hands on Reiki:** I give the person a referral to another Reiki practitioner. The counseling clients must have terminated services with me for two years in order to switch services and come to me as a Reiki client. Two years is the time frame the ethical codes use regarding multiple relationships with a former client. In my informed consent for Reiki, I state that the services I am providing are separate from my counseling services.

\* Ethics Case Manager, personal communication, March 7, 2000.

\*\* Ethics Case Manager, personal communication, January 6, 2015.



rules and regulations even when you are offering Reiki to that client. I consulted with Loree Kessler, Executive Director of the State Committee of Marital and Family Therapists in Missouri and she said that she thought it was alright to refer your counseling client for a separate Reiki session. She said the question to ask is whether or not it would be exploitative.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that the regulatory board cannot give you a legal opinion but can only respond to ethical complaints. Donna Henderson, said, “If there is a complaint, the board will ask what the process was that the licensee went through to make sure that [she is]... practicing within the scope of practice and not violating the client in any way? Did she get legal counsel in order to touch her client? Is there consent from the client for touch and is the consent documented?”<sup>14</sup> If you want legal advice, contact an attorney licensed in your state who works with laws governing your profession. This area of law is a specialty, and you will most likely find such a professional working in the city of your state capital.

In 2000, I received an ethical opinion from Dr. Jerry Morris, who is a distinguished psychologist and marriage and family therapist in Missouri and who has served on the Council of Representatives (the legal board of directors) and the Finance Committee of the American Psychological Association. He advised that if I were giving hands on Reiki as part of counseling, it would provide possible protection for me from an ethical complaint by having an additional person in the office to observe. He said the safest way to practice ethically would be to keep the counseling and Reiki practices separate.<sup>15</sup>

If you accept *insurance for a counseling session*, consider whether the insurance company would accept your giving Reiki during the session as a valid method if your files were ever audited by the insurance company. Because marriage and family therapists, substance abuse counselors and social workers can now receive continuing education credit for their licenses and Reiki is approved for CEs, we have a good argument that Reiki does fall within the domain of the counseling standards of practice.

### Starting a Reiki practice alongside your counseling practice

I have loved having a Reiki practice along with my counseling practice. On a typical day, I see several counseling clients and several Reiki clients. I am always happy to see Reiki clients on my schedule because I find it an easier, more relaxing service to provide that often works more quickly than counseling. For example, a woman came for a Reiki session who said she had been suicidal off and on for three years and was again in a suicidal state. She described her troubles and cried before she ever got on the table. I was worried because I don't accept clients who are actively suicidal

into my counseling practice. I treated her with Reiki and helped her get in touch with her spirituality. She was a Latino woman and she liked the idea of connecting with Mother Mary. I taught her how to listen to the guidance of Mother Mary by posing a few simple questions and then listening for an answer. It worked! By the end of the session she was laughing and smiling. She scheduled again but later cancelled saying she felt fine. I checked in with her two more times over the next few weeks and she reported that she no longer felt suicidal and was much better. I can't conceive of a session of counseling working that quickly. [Editor's note: Please keep in mind that the author of this article is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, and as such has the appropriate training and experience to work with a client who is in a suicidal state, even though she does not accept actively suicidal clients. As Reiki practitioners, we are not trained to work with clients who are actively suicidal and although we can offer Reiki to them, we are obligated to advise them to see professional medical/counseling help.]

On the subject of using counseling skills during a Reiki session, Beth Stapor writes, “If a person came to me as a Reiki client, then I was licensed with my expertise to provide [him or her]...counseling. Some clients came in and wanted both Reiki and counseling. I would take them in as a Reiki client and while giving them Reiki, they would talk through much of the session about their issues.”<sup>16</sup> It would be a prudent idea to check with your state regulatory body to see whether any counseling you provide during a Reiki session could possibly be governed under counseling laws. You might be able to say you are providing spiritual counseling during a Reiki session if you have a ministerial license. If you do this, include information about spiritual counseling in your Reiki Informed Consent document.

### Teaching your counseling clients Reiki

I have occasionally taught a counseling client Reiki. Consider how it will affect your client/counselor relationship to teach your client Reiki. If you share personal Reiki experiences during class, how will that affect the counseling relation-

<sup>10</sup> Karen Harrison, “Reiki Aura Clearing and Psychotherapy,” *Reiki News Magazine*, Summer 2003, 23–26.

<sup>11</sup> AAMFT Code of Ethics, <http://www.aamft.org/imis15/Documents/Legal%20Ethics/Board%20Approved%20Code%20for%20Web%20Secured.pdf>, 1.3.

<sup>12</sup> Beth Stapor, “The Reiki Counselor.” Retrieved from [www.reiki.org/reikinews/reikicounselor2000.html](http://www.reiki.org/reikinews/reikicounselor2000.html).

<sup>13</sup> Loree Kessler, personal communication, December 30, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Henderson, personal communication.

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Jerry Morris, personal communication, February 12, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Stapor. Note: See sidebar for additional information about combining Reiki and counseling in a single session.

ship? Before class I tell the client that I will not mention anything about her personally in class or that she is or was a counseling client and that it would be best for her to also not mention her client status in order to protect her confidentiality.

I recently had a client in class, and she was able to use Reiki to handle her problems much more quickly than counseling alone might have offered her. In our next counseling session, I used hands off Reiki to quickly make progress on three of her major life issues that she had not previously discussed. We were both amazed! She connected with the grace and forgiveness of God through Reiki and felt the energy so strongly that she was convinced that God had forgiven her. I definitely think that attending the Reiki class is what allowed her to progress so quickly in counseling.

### Summary

As you can see from this article, there are different opinions about what is ethical and legal practice so it is important that you check out the legal and ethical issues for your state before adding Reiki to your counseling practice. And there are good reasons for adding it. Reiki can help by providing a calm environment and helping you to be centered, by providing you with inspiration for your client's problems and by helping you to take better care of yourself. Additionally your Reiki skills will help position you to market to a holistic clientele. Adding Reiki to my counseling prac-

tice and having a Reiki practice has enabled me to bring my best self to counseling. I remain refreshed, engaged, compassionate, and eager to work with my next client, even after twenty-one years. I wish for all mental health professionals to be able to enjoy the many benefits of working with Reiki in their counseling practices.

For more information on this subject, see "Reiki and Mental Health" by Kathie Lipinski.<sup>17</sup> This article describes Reiki in a rehabilitation center for persons with chronic mental health problems. Also see "Experiences of a Reiki Therapist" by Therese Johnson<sup>18</sup> wherein she describes giving one session of Reiki during which a 25-year methamphetamine addiction was ended. At the time of writing of the article, her client had been sober for eight years. 🌸



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<sup>17</sup> Kathie Lipinski, "Reiki and Mental Health," *Reiki News Magazine*, Fall 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Therese Johnson, "Experiences of a Reiki Therapist," *Reiki News Magazine*, Fall 2009.