



# Operating a Reiki Booth at a Book Festival

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ON FEBRUARY 28, 2015, the Medical Center in which I had been working for 33 years officially became part of a larger healthcare network. I had no information about how my new employer would respond to a Reiki presence within a traditional healthcare setting. Since late 2001, I had been blessed to be able to integrate Reiki primarily into oncology care at the hospital and within outpatient clinics; I have also taught Reiki classes to cancer survivors and family members there since I became a Reiki Master Teacher in 2005. I was therefore delighted when I was asked to coordinate and provide brief Reiki sessions on behalf of our Medical Center at Tucson's University of Arizona (U of A) Book Festival in March of this year. In its seventh year, the U of A Book Festival is the fourth largest in the U.S.; in 2014 it was estimated that there were over 130,000 participants. It has children's areas including science demonstrations and hands-on activities, book characters dressed in costumes posing for photos, book discussions, workshops, resources and more.

When I was asked to participate in the festival this year, I was only given two weeks' notice. As a Reiki Master Teacher, out of respect for the lives of my Reiki students and colleagues, I normally would want to give them more time to plan for their participation in a community Reiki event. So because there was so little time to coordinate this, I initially committed to having three or four colleagues involved for at the most two hours each. Spirit corrected my misguided plan, letting me know that if I was going to do this, I needed to do it properly and well. This involved providing Reiki from the start of the event each day at 9:30 AM and going until at least 4 PM, which meant that I would need more volunteers. Although the event was officially scheduled until 5:30 PM, I felt that by 4 in the afternoon, most folks would be tired and ready to leave the campus.

In case you have never planned a community Reiki event, let me share some of the process. You need to consider how to recruit participants, what level of training would be required, what instructions would be needed, the length of the proposed sessions and what consent forms and other informational materials you need to bring. I sent out an email to some of my Reiki Master colleagues and many of my students. Although I was most comfortable with students who had taken at least Level II or ART, I decided

that this could be an exquisite opportunity for even my newest students to work alongside fellow Reiki students and strengthen their confidence and ability to share Reiki in a mainstream setting. I emailed the participants multiple times in advance reminding them of the location, their scheduled times and to bring water, snacks and sunscreen. If they had business cards or brochures, I encouraged them to bring them to promote their Reiki practices if it felt appropriate. I also began to send Distant Reiki to the event for it to be successful, enjoyable for all and to create great value.

I came early on the day of the event to get familiar with our designated area inside the Medical Center's tent, set up chairs and clear the space energetically. It turned out to be an exceptionally windy day and the flaps of the tent beat noisily while papers from other exhibitors started flying around. One of my students arrived early and before we even put up our Reiki sign, folks were asking for sessions; this set the rhythm for the entire weekend. Even when we had seven practitioners at the same time, seats were rarely empty as one person after another wanted Reiki. As a Reiki Master Teacher, my heart swelled with much joy and pride working side-by-side in what felt like a field or wave of Reiki. It was also extremely meaningful and sweet to me to hear one of my Level I students, a breast cancer survivor who usually expresses self-doubt about 'her' Reiki, explain what Reiki was clearly and confidently even to first-time recipients or prior skeptics.

Let me share some of my students' reflections on the event and brief parts of their personal Reiki stories:

**Beate, Reiki Master:** Coming from the East Coast working in Cranio Sacral therapy, I have to say that Reiki found me through my life coach, Richard, who is a Reiki Master Teacher. He recommended that I call Marsha at once, and when I did she told me that she had an opening in her Reiki Level I class that week. Richard and Marsha had never met but this is a good example of how the universal energy in Reiki works. One and a half years later, having been attuned by Marsha as a Personal Reiki Master, I find myself giving Reiki at free clinics and events all over Tucson. The Book Festival was a highlight with people from all around the world of all ages lined up to receive Reiki. I had the honor to work on a gentleman from Pakistan who had only been in the U.S. a few months; he

came with his son who acted as translator. The response was overwhelming on both sides! Thank you universe for the gift of Reiki!

**Chuck, retired dentist, Reiki Master/Karuna Reiki® Level I:** The Book Festival was my first experience with Reiki in other than a quiet, serene, music enhanced (controlled) environment. My initial concerns about how and if Reiki would 'get through' were quickly allayed by the responses of the individuals with whom we shared Reiki. In spite of the cacophony and exuberance of a large group of people having a good time inside and outside our tent, the effects of Reiki did get through to those who received the brief sessions. I felt privileged and grateful to have been asked to be a part of the day. It was most rewarding and a Reiki-growing experience for me; I look forward to next year's festival.

**Regina, Reiki Master Teacher:** I experienced my first Reiki treatment from Marsha when I moved to Tucson and had a pinched nerve in my solar plexus; I was amazed that by the afternoon of the following day, the excruciating pain was gone and never returned. I have gone on to become an RMT and have taken Karuna Reiki® Level I with plans to take the second level later this year. At the festival, I was especially impressed with the curiosity and sensitivity of young children to the Reiki energy.

**Dorrine:** The 45-year-old daughter of a close friend recently passed. The day before her passing, her husband signed her up to receive Hospice services. The first and only service that she lived to receive was a Reiki session even though no one in the family was familiar with Reiki. My friend (her mother) was there and told me that the Reiki seemed to bring some peace to her dying daughter. I took Reiki Level I when it was offered to me as a cancer survivor at the Medical Center. Although only six months had passed since my training, I decided to volunteer at the Book Festival. The clients ranged from a boy of 10 to an older Asian woman who spoke no English. When the older woman finished, she told me (through her daughter who translated) that she felt very relaxed and enjoyed the warmth of my hands. I expected to be very tired after giving Reiki for three hours. Instead I was pleasantly surprised to see how relaxed and well I felt on the drive home.

**Barb, Reiki Master and Yoga Instructor:** I have had the pleasure of giving Reiki sessions on a massage table in the quiet healing space in my home. I have also given Reiki to people in their homes while they sat in a comfortable chair. When I saw the tent at the Book Festival, I was taken aback by all the people coming and going, the noise in the tent and the chatter and confusion around our Reiki space. I could not imagine how we were

going to bring soothing Reiki energy to anyone in this setting. However, after I and other volunteer practitioners cleared the space around us, the healing power of Reiki came through the chaos. Many individuals were drawn to the healing space that we created with our hands and hearts. Each one sat down and became still and receptive to the gentle flow of healing energy. A particularly memorable exchange happened when a young, pregnant woman sat down and gave me permission to touch her belly. She quickly closed her eyes, and I could sense the energy of the little being who was almost ready to be born reaching out to me. I was humbled and awed.

For myself, as a Reiki Master Teacher, there were many gifts from the festival. I was impressed by how many young children and teens asked for Reiki; upon exploring if and where they experienced stress, even the youngest child acknowledged feeling stress at school, with friends or at home. Each of these young recipients was a novice to the world of energy healing and loved the perceived benefits. This reminds us to perhaps create more classes or healing opportunities for our young folks in our respective communities. I also reached out to other medical specialists such as in pediatrics and orthopedics who were present under our Center's tent and used the opportunity to introduce and educate them about the benefits of Reiki for their patients, colleagues and themselves.

The following are some challenges and lessons to be mindful of if you are creating your own community Reiki event.

1. Some confirmed Reiki volunteers may have personal obstacles and not show up the day of the event, leaving you short-staffed.
2. Despite being assigned a time, due to circumstances, some may show up later than scheduled, which can affect the earlier practitioners and cause them to need to volunteer more hours than anticipated.
3. When we were short-staffed, as the coordinator, I felt obliged to work long hours without a break. Although Reiki does not deplete us, as we receive Reiki while giving Reiki, I had not honored my own humanness and personal limitations. I was totally depleted by the time I left on Saturday. I reflected on this that evening and set new standards for myself and my other participants to take lunch breaks, walk around and leave when their shift was over.
4. Accept limitations; it is permissible to not offer sessions during a time period when there may be inadequate staffing. It is most important to listen to our bodies and to spirit or that inner voice that is guiding us from within.
5. Send a thank-you note to each Reiki volunteer participant.

6. Allow for some debriefing and sharing of the experience whether in writing, phone calls or possibly during a Reiki share. The latter can also inspire other Reiki students to participate in future events.
7. Give positive feedback to the main event coordinator with the intention of being invited to participate again in the future as well as to contribute to his or her own evaluation of the event. I was able to report that we had given 225 Reiki sessions, talked with perhaps a few hundred additional folks and also provided hand-outs on Reiki and stress management strategies.
8. Most of all, remember to have fun! After I packed up on Sunday and did a Reiki blessing over the area, I went to another tent on the Mall that had great end-of-the-day specials. Needless to say, I went home with a happy heart and a bag full of great books for \$1 each! 🌸



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