



Photo by Rachael Drozdoff

Even our furry family members need Reiki during a pandemic.

Reiki During the Pandemic

BY MARSHA R. DROZDOFF, MSW

HAVE YOU RECENTLY REFLECTED on where your life was before the pandemic? To be more precise, how was your life, and your Reiki practice, before the COVID-19 stay-at-home mandates? My life had so many beautiful things going on. I was teaching in-person Reiki classes monthly, facilitating groups, mentoring students, volunteering at Pima Animal Care Center, and doing daily Reiki treatments on myself. Everything changed, and although I miss some things from the past, I will share how there are many gifts into the present.

I'd just returned from an incredible trip to Cuba, where I delighted in the culture and the people and gave Reiki to our tour manager's hands and a fellow traveler who had an allergic reaction, rash, and anxiety. Also, on March 4th, I received

an award related to my community work with Reiki, as a finalist in the category Healthcare Champion at the Women of Influence Awards 2020, presented by Tucson Local Media. By the second week of March, everything came to a screeching halt that jarred all of our lives. Each day heartbreaking images and COVID-19 numbers confronted us.

I sent distance Reiki to our first responders, healthcare providers, and essential workers. I sent Reiki to those impacted by the virus, including their loved ones. As a Reiki Master Teacher, I encouraged my students to do the same, and one student even started a weekly e-mail communication requesting that we direct Reiki healing for one or two specific parts of the crisis. We felt like a united community. We also felt saddened and lost on how to proceed.

I had been facilitating a monthly community Mindfulness and Meditation group and a Reiki Share in one of our fire districts. Since meeting in person was no longer an option while complying with the Center for Disease Control's guidelines, I needed to access confidence and creativity to discover alternate approaches and possibilities. I watched and re-watched practice videos on using Zoom and scheduled my meditation group online. It initially felt awkward, and I felt self-conscious, like a novice Reiki student who doesn't know if she will feel anything working on herself or others. That meditation group was a success, and it became the introductory experience for my first Zoom Reiki share. Spirit reminded me to trust Reiki and get out of the way of my head, trying to figure it all out. I put the symbols in the computer room, meditated, set my intention, and pushed the "start the meeting" button. The Reiki share participants were so happy to be together and to see each other, especially those who lived alone and felt isolated.

After we did a check-in on how folks were using their Reiki practice during this extraordinary time, I divided the group into pairs, and they decided who would go first. A few participants acknowledged that they had forgotten how to do distance sessions, so I did a brief review, and with gentle music playing from my home, the 15-18-minute sessions began. I like folks to share their experiences afterward so we can all learn from each other.

The most significant discovery for many was how powerful and relaxing the sessions felt. One woman said she was taught her in her Level II training never to use the mental/emotional symbol when sending Reiki, but felt compelled to do so this time. Perhaps it was because she could see her client over the computer, or because she heard that inner voice stating that we needed it at this time. Some group members used the hand method, some preferred using the teddy bear method to send; one member showed off her teddy bear made with ties that were her father's and created after his passing.

What was I going to do about Reiki classes? I had been teaching at least one Reiki class per month and was mentoring a three-month Reiki Master training. I had a Reiki I training scheduled, and two students had already paid. I postponed the training for a month with a vague hope that maybe this virus would be short-lived. I finally sensed that this would be with us most likely into 2021 and that this was a critical time to offer Reiki for stress reduction, comfort, wellness, and healing.

Since my background is in Usui Reiki, how would I do attunements? I always said that I would never do attunements online unless it were an emergency. This situation *was* an emergency, and the need was urgent and imminent. I went into prayer and meditation to learn how this process could work. I then invited one of my colleagues to be my first subject; she said it felt lovely and very relaxing. She also gave me feedback about what additional instructions my students might need for preparation. I felt confident (or mostly confident) offering this to a student, a friend from California, who had initially planned to travel to Arizona for training.

I set up an introductory Zoom hour to discuss attunements and to show her the hand positions. Since I would be holding my breath during the actual attunement, my student needed a visible cue to know when to move her hands to the next position; Spirit let me know that I could use my Tibetan healing bowl. That morning I prepared myself and the room; I sent distant Reiki to connect heart-to-heart with my student and to have a successful training and beautiful attunement. I called in her etheric self and felt her sitting in my chair. It was Easter morning and a spiritual day for her; physically, she was to sit in her healing room and begin to meditate to prepare herself. I called her on my iPhone when I was ready and started the Reiki music I generally use. After saying some welcoming words, she placed her hands in front of her heart chakra, and with every ring of the bell, moved them to the next position. It felt beautiful and connected; my heart was joyful, and it felt like there were blessings all around us.

Following the attunement, she was to lie on her couch and begin working on herself doing chakra balancing. Although we agreed to talk in a few days, she wrote me a wondrous reflection on the attunement and the compassionate touch that seemed to flow from her hands. I e-mailed hand-outs and a full manual to her and another classmate, and two weeks later, using Zoom, we met for the rest of their Reiki I training, with class certificates mailed a week later.

What did I learn? Reiki works no matter what the circumstances might be. By necessity, having to learn how to do distant attunements now gave me the ability to teach students anywhere in the world if needed.

As for the Reiki Master training that I was teaching, the night of our brief Zoom practice session, I received a text that one of my students was in the Emergency Department and probably had COVID-19. Fortunately, he did not

need hospitalization but thought it best to discontinue his training. I asked him to delay deciding and to trust Reiki. I offered to send distance Reiki to him until he was medically stable and asked him to at least just put his hands over his lungs despite his fatigue. I am glad to report that he is well and progressing beautifully in his training, which we resumed all together six weeks later after giving him a one-on-one session to catch up.

During our session, he expressed doubt about proceeding with the training to become a Reiki Master Teacher if we all had to remain separated for an indefinite time. I spoke to his heart, doubts, and fears. He had never had a distance Reiki session nor done one outside of his Level II training. I encouraged him to ask one of his classmates to send him a scheduled treatment and to observe the benefits and sensations mindfully, which led to a fascinating online discussion when we were all together in class. This is our present reality, and as healers, we need to be flexible, adapt, and continue to be of service.

One last area of concern that tugged at my heart was what to do about my Reiki volunteer work at the Pima Animal Care Center (*Reiki News Magazine*, Summer 2020). As my husband has medical risk factors, despite my deepest intention to do this profound work at the Center, I knew that I could endanger his life if I contracted COVID-19 and brought it home to him. I even thought of volunteering with another organization that worked online; nothing spoke to my inner desire. Then a dear friend who teaches animal massage and read my last article in *Reiki News Magazine* asked me if distance sessions are as powerful as in person. I couldn't believe that my blinders had prevented me from seeing what I needed and could do to support these beloved dogs in need.

I asked one volunteer at the Center if any dogs were needing distance Reiki; she identified one, and I initially did Reiki sessions from my healing room. I then wrote to the volunteer manager, who offered to send me a weekly list of dogs with their photos to work on from home. The first week there were 13 dogs, and the photos didn't match up with the names. I also wasn't sure how to send to so many dogs at once.

My prior comfort level with humans was to send to only five individuals at a time; otherwise, for me, it felt too crowded, and I had difficulty connecting with each life. But these were different times that needed different approaches. I experimented whether I was calling in half of the dogs at a time, using guardian angels and spirit guides to bring in all from the list, doing additional work one to one over their photos, and more. Each session brings discoveries, joy, and learning. I notice how my relationship with each dog grows from day-to-day. I notice how I am using and chanting the Karuna Reiki® symbols. I notice how the Distant symbol is actually a bridge energetically and how I am there with each life at the Center instead of being at home. Sometimes, I am in tears because the connection and work seem so profound.

Honestly, I do miss the smells, noise, teamwork, and even the messiness after hours of being there in person. I miss having a dog fall asleep on my lap or blocking me from exiting the kennel because the Reiki felt too wonderful to end. Although I miss some of these things from the past, I have welcomed so many gifts into the present.

Yes, my life and Reiki practice before COVID-19 were different, and probably so were yours. If you open up your eyes and heart during this pandemic and always allow Reiki to guide and teach you, you will experience the new and excellent opportunities waiting for expression. Wishing you good health and many blessings. 🌿

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