

Living with Diabetes the Reiki Way

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One of the most prevalent chronic health challenges that we face today is diabetes. Research has shown that the occurrence of diabetes in the United States is escalating; according to the NIH (National Institute of Health), it increased by 49 percent from 1990 to 2000 (www.ngh.gov.) Most have attributed it to the rising rate of obesity and our more sedentary lifestyles. Persons with diabetes face numerous challenges in day-to-day living, and some seek complementary therapies to help them manage the many aspects of their condition. Reiki is a wonderful tool that can benefit anyone who has diabetes.

Because there are many misconceptions and misunderstandings, let me briefly explain what diabetes is.

Simply put, diabetes is a chronic condition in which the body is unable to metabolize food products sufficiently. This is due either to an inadequate supply of insulin or interference with how the body is able to use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that controls the use and storage of the body's main energy sources, which are carbohydrates (sugars), proteins, and fats. Of these three, the "fuel" that is most readily available (and preferred) for use by all body cells is a carbohydrate (sugar) called glucose.

The pancreas releases insulin in response to the ingestion of food. During digestion, much of this food is changed to glucose. Glucose is carried by the bloodstream to the body tissues and cells where it is used as an immediate source of energy. What is not needed is stored in the liver as glycogen. What is not needed for glycogen is converted by the liver to fat and stored.

One of the most common misunderstandings that the public has about diabetes is that it is a problem with only glucose or sugar. In



truth, that is only part of the problem. The real issue is that diabetes is a nutritional disorder of carbohydrates (sugars), proteins and fats. All need insulin to work properly.

Proteins are broken down in the intestines into amino acids and absorbed into the blood stream. Amino acids are the building blocks that are used in the formation of new body tissues (growth) and in the repair of damaged ones. Amino acids can be used as a backup source of energy. When there is not enough carbohydrate available, the liver converts amino acids into glucose. Amino acids can also be changed to fat and stored for later use.

Insulin allows the body to build amino acids into new tissues and repair them for healing. That is why children in poor control of diabetes do not grow well and adults with diabetes may not heal as rapidly as they should.

Fats are absorbed through the intestinal wall and converted to fat cells to be stored and used when necessary as a source of energy. If a person does not have enough Insulin, glucose will not be used properly and the body will switch over to burning fat as its main source of energy. When fat is burned more rapidly than the body can handle, large quantities of ketones are the result. These acids then build up in the blood and upset the chemical balance of the blood. That is what most people know as diabetic "shock" or ketoacidosis, which gives one the fruity breath, sometimes mistaken for intoxication (not to be confused with "ketosis" in people who do not have diabetes, when the body burns fats for fuel).

Diabetes greatly increases the risk of gradual damage to blood vessels. These "target tissues" are vulnerable to the damaging effects of long-term high blood sugar levels. Different parts of the body can

be affected depending on the size of the blood vessel. Small blood vessel (microvascular) damage is primarily responsible for long-term problems in the eyes, kidneys and nerves. Large blood vessel (macrovascular) damage can cause complications such as heart attacks, strokes, or poor blood circulation to the arms and legs.

The three major types of diabetes are:

Type 1—referred to as insulin deficiency, occurs mostly in children or young adults (but can appear at any age). It is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks and destroys the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas. As a result, the pancreas produces little or no insulin. A person who has type 1 diabetes must take insulin daily to live. Type 1 accounts for five to ten percent of diabetes nationwide.

Type 2—accounts for 90 to 95 percent of people with diabetes. Approximately 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight. This form is most often associated with older adults, family history of diabetes (genetics), obesity, previous history of gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy), physical inactivity, and certain ethnicities. What happens in type 2 diabetes is that the body cannot produce enough insulin, or the action of the insulin that the body has is blocked (sometimes known as insulin resistance). Extra weight can make the organs and tissues in the body less able to respond to insulin and prevent it from getting to the cells. Insulin resistance tends to run in families, so genes are partly responsible. Note: Not everyone that has insulin resistance develops type 2 diabetes.

Of major concern today is that Type 2 diabetes is increasingly being diagnosed in children and adolescents. The term “diabesity” is a blend of diabetes and obesity. This used to be a problem of later life, but it is now being seen more and more among obese younger people, sometimes even children.

Gestational diabetes (GDM)—a form of diabetes developed in the latter weeks of pregnancy. Gestational diabetes is caused by the hormones of pregnancy, which work against insulin. This form of diabetes often disappears after the birth of the baby. However, women who have had gestational diabetes have a 20 to 50 percent chance of developing type 2 diabetes within 5 to 10 years. Maintaining a reasonable body weight and being physically active often helps to avoid it.

Pre-diabetes—although not an official category, “pre-diabetes” is a term often seen. Pre-diabetes refers to Impaired Glucose Tolerance (IGT) or Impaired Fasting Glucose (IFG), depending on the test used and the resulting blood glucose levels. In these cases, blood sugar is higher than normal but lower than the diabetes range. This is an important point since one out of five Americans has this form of diabetes, many times without being aware of it. This increases the risk for getting type 2 diabetes, but doctors are finding that losing weight, exercising and making wise food choices can delay or prevent its onset.

Managing diabetes with Reiki

Managing diabetes with Reiki can be thought of as balancing and healing all aspects of one’s being. The levels of being include physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Since Reiki heals on all levels, let us look at each of these to see how a person with diabetes can care for himself or herself with Reiki. (For a meditation for healing these levels, see my article, “Self-healing Meditation” in *Reiki News Magazine*, Vol. One, Issue One.)

Physical level of being (physical or etheric body)

Physical relates to the physical body. The biggest challenge that faces a person with diabetes is all the things that must be done every day to manage their blood sugars.

These include:

- Testing blood sugar before and/or after meals
- Maintaining an active life style/exercise
- Planning meals
- Medication (pills or insulin)
- Care of equipment, such as insulin pumps
- Stress management

In addition, many people are diagnosed with diabetes later in life when habits are ingrained and often a challenge to change. The diagnosis of diabetes requires a major change in lifestyle. It is a long-term responsibility, one that you will have the rest of your life. Daily management requires a commitment to taking care of yourself, something that many of us do not do well.

When you add these responsibilities to the everyday responsibility of work and family, it is not surprising that one’s stress level increases exponentially!

Since diabetes is a lifelong condition, the old saying “knowledge is power” is of paramount importance for the person with diabetes. A good place to start is with a Diabetes Educator. Many hospitals now have educational programs covered by insurance. Diabetes Educators are certified practitioners and can help a person learn all they need to know to manage their diabetes. To find a Diabetes Educator, call 1-800-832-6874.

Reiki can help!

Reiki is a way to stay healthy and cope with the stresses of everyday life. Learning Reiki and daily self-treatments is one of the most powerful tools in the self-management toolbox for those with diabetes. Giving oneself Reiki is making a deposit in the bank account of life! With all the daily withdrawals of life, Reiki fills the account back up with life force energy.

I encourage all my clients with diabetes to learn Reiki. I sometimes attune them during a session, give them a manual or materials to start reading, and then do some instruction with each visit. I teach them in a way that will encourage them to give themselves

Reiki every day, even if it is only for 15 minutes. Stress often throws the blood sugar out of balance and can cause higher than normal blood sugars. Receiving Reiki regularly through self-treatment or from a practitioner is the best way to help minimize the effects of stress on the physical body, especially the blood sugar.

Anytime there is stress, or some physical problem, it is a simple matter to place Reiki hands on the area and let the energy flow. Some find it easier to do it at bedtime, just by placing the hands on the body and letting the energy flow. This will restore energy spent during the day and replenish reserves. The hands may also be placed over the solar plexus (stomach area) where the pancreas is located. This will nourish it and help to relieve any stress gathered there. This is an important area to treat anytime stress builds up. During treatment it may be helpful to repeat, "I am calm, I am relaxed, I am in control," and then take a few deep breaths. Taking a few deep breaths can offset the release of stress hormones, allowing the blood sugar to remain balanced.

If you have to give yourself insulin injections, or wear an insulin pump, rotation of sites and caring for the skin is an important consideration. Activating the Power symbol (and perhaps the Mental/Emotional as well) and placing it over the insertion site or injection site, can decrease discomfort in that area. It can also decrease the anxiety and discomfort of the injection.

You can also check for areas that have become overused and are no longer good absorption sites. They may feel hard or warm if an infection is brewing. Reiki the insulin (and/or medication) or pump. This raises the medication to its highest vibration and sometimes helps mechanical equipment to run better or last longer.

If you have a wound that won't heal, place your Reiki hands over the area and add the Power symbol to increase the effect. If you have any complications from diabetes (eye problems, circulation or kidney problems, nerve damage), all can be helped by placing your Reiki hands on the area and allowing the energy to flow!

Healthy eating habits and eating the right foods are an integral part of diabetes management. The more you work with ener-

gy, the more your body becomes sensitive to the energy of food. It is in some ways, easier to eat healthier because you can "feel" the energy of the food. Pay attention to how you feel when you eat a certain food. Healthy foods will make you feel good and give you energy while less than healthy foods will make you feel heavy, bloated, etc.

You can shop with Reiki, simply holding a hand over the food and "feeling" it. Food that is healthier will feel "lighter" or more "full"—meaning full of energy. You can also look with Reiki eyes. We are multi-sensory beings, and we can develop our senses in many different ways. Use your eyes to "see" the energy of the food simply by noticing what food "catches your attention" when you look at it or where your eyes are drawn first.

This can be very helpful in finding healthy, nourishing foods. My sons laugh at me when I shop because I gently pass my hands over food items and feel them before I add them to my basket. Or I look at the food. If it does not look right, I do not buy it. (Obviously, working with energy has helped me to develop this tool.) Before you eat, you can place a Power symbol over the food with the intention of blessing it and raising it to its highest vibration. If you are not attuned to Level II, simply place your hands an inch or so above the food and give Reiki briefly, holding the intention that the food will nourish your body and your spirit.

Persons with diabetes often have a love/hate relationship with food. If they developed diabetes because of being overweight, food is obviously an issue. Weight is a multi-layered issue and is not caused simply by overeating. It is not always about what you eat. It is often about why you eat and what the food represents. Obviously, working with a counselor to work through these issues is a tremendous help. Finding other ways to love and nourish yourself are just as important. Treating yourself to a Reiki session or taking time to read a good book is a treat!

As a Reiki practitioner, one myth that I often encounter is that Reiki should not be given to someone who has diabetes. I think this came from the concern about low blood sugar or a person with

diabetes going into insulin shock. Reiki simply brings about the relaxation response. This may lower the person's need for insulin at that time because they are relaxed. When you talk to a client with diabetes, explain that Reiki is simply a relaxation technique.

You may suggest the client schedule their session after a meal or that they have a snack beforehand. Most persons with diabetes know when their sugar is getting low or their medication is peaking and will know how to respond. If you have concerns, you can have some crackers or milk available for them. (Candy is not the best choice for low sugar. Milk is a better choice; it has carbohydrates and protein. Anyone who cannot drink milk, can check with a nutritionist to see what might be a better choice.) If the client is unsure how Reiki affects their blood sugar level, they may want to test it before a session.

A person with diabetes who receives regular Reiki sessions or gives himself or herself Reiki on a regular basis, needs to be aware of the effect it may have on their blood sugar levels. Due to the relaxation response, insulin or diabetes medication requirements may decrease and a dose adjustment may be in order. Some persons with diabetes are also on medication for high blood pressure and may find that regular self-Reiki or Reiki sessions and the resultant relaxation response may reduce the amount they need of that medication as well. In either case, it is important that they consult their physician to determine if an adjustment in medication is indicated.

Emotional level of being (emotional body)

The emotional body involves the emotions and feelings one experiences every day. In our society, we often try to stuff or bury our feelings. Feelings are simply the energy of emotions. All emotions pass. You can love yourself enough to feel the emotion, honor it, knowing it will pass and then do what you need to do to take care of yourself. Anytime uncomfortable emotions come up, take just a few minutes to give yourself some Reiki and allow them to be what they are. They are not you. They do not define you. They are simply the energy of an emotion or feeling. They will pass. They always do.

When you feel the need to eat or to choose something unhealthy, invoke the Mental/Emotional symbol, allow the energy to flow, and ask yourself, "What am I feeling? What do I really need now?" Then love yourself enough to give it to yourself. Take a break, call a friend, and of course, give yourself some Reiki!

When you begin to worry about the future, about developing complications or worrying about how you are going to manage your diabetes day to day, you can invoke the Mental/Emotional symbol or the Karuna Reiki® symbol for peace. The Karuna symbol heals the past, enhances the ability to stay focused in the present, and releases the future. Allow it to flow through you and feel the peace.

Mental level of being (mental body)

Mental refers to thoughts and beliefs. One of my favorite authors, Louise Hay, says, "It's only a thought and a thought can be changed." It really is that simple. When an old belief or old pattern of thinking rears its ugly head, stop, say thank you, and change it. You can say, "That was then, this is now. I choose to now think this way!"

When I worked as a Diabetes Nurse Educator (before I studied Reiki), one of the things that bothered me most was hearing someone refer to themselves as "diabetic." I would always make it a point to help them see that they were a person first—someone who had diabetes—and that they could adjust the diabetes to meet their lifestyle. This may seem petty, but it really is about adjusting or shifting beliefs. If you maintain your identity, it is easier to have a better mindset when dealing with diabetes. It becomes something you do to take good care of yourself. You are still you!

Adding Reiki to that, again with the Mental/Emotional symbol, can help you change the way you think. The Japanese Reiki Technique called *Seiheki Chiryō* can be used to heal bad habits, change or release an unwanted state of mind or feeling.

Seiheki Chiryō (Change Habit Technique)

This technique can be done with a person sitting in a chair or lying on a Reiki/massage table. It can even be done in bed if that is more comfortable. You can do it for your client or they can do it for themselves if they have Level II Reiki.

1. First, think about the habit, state of mind, or feeling you want to change.
2. Create an affirmation that is positive and opposite of the habit.
Note: Affirmations are always said as a positive statement. For example, to stop worrying about the future: "I trust the process of life. All I need comes to me when I need to know it." To lose weight: "I eat only when I am hungry." Or, "I eat only healthy foods."
3. Think of the Mental/Emotional symbol or draw it in the air or on both hands.
4. Place the dominant hand on the back of the head and the other hand on the forehead, over the third eye.
5. Repeat the affirmation confidently several times, out loud or silently. If doing it for a client, have the client say it aloud with you. Then let the energy flow for a few minutes.
6. Remove the non-dominant hand from the forehead and continue giving Reiki to the back of the head for several minutes or for as long as you are guided.

7. Suggest that the client write the affirmation on an index card and carry it with them, so they can repeat the affirmation several times a day, or whenever the urge to engage in the habit comes up.

Another way to heal your thoughts is to work with the Reiki Ideals. (See accompanying article for how this may be done.) This is true whether you have diabetes or you are a Reiki practitioner treating clients who have diabetes. The Reiki Ideals are a guide for living. They assist one in developing and maintaining a personal philosophy for life.

Spiritual level of being (spiritual body)

Spiritual is what some call the "soul" or the essence of a person. It is what keeps us keeping on when times get rough. It is our connection to Source energy. The spirit is perhaps the most important aspect of our being. It makes us who we are and helps us connect to Source, whatever we believe that to be. With the daily tasks of self-care and managing diabetes, the spirit often gets weary. Reiki is a wonderful way to nourish the spirit and help one to "stay the course."

A technique I use for some of my clients includes guided imagery during a Reiki session. This one works well and is often very powerful and healing.

The Reiki Ideals

Just for today...

Do not anger

Do not worry

Be filled with gratitude

Do your work honestly

Be kind to people

Just for today is the basic premise. The Ideals ask that we be mindful; that we be fully present in the moment. All we really have is this moment. When we stay in the moment, we keep our energy and spirit with us instead of sending them out into the future with worries or concerns, or to the past with resentment, blame or guilt.

The ideals provide a blueprint for living for all of us. They can be especially meaningful for those with chronic health conditions. For the person with diabetes, focusing on one day at a time can help prevent the feeling of being overwhelmed by all the responsibilities of self-care. "Just for today—I will do the best I can. Just for today—I love and accept myself just as I am, and I know that I can handle all that comes my way."

Create a powerful consciousness of the Ideals through this simple exercise: If you are Level II, activate the Power symbol and the Mental/Emotional symbol (and other symbols if you wish). Place one hand over your heart and one hand over your solar plexus, allowing Reiki to flow and focusing in turn on each of the Reiki Ideals. Really connect with the Ideal and feel it throughout your being. Starting and ending your day with this ritual is a good way to keep yourself grounded. Repeat it any time during the day that you find yourself feeling angry, worried, or out of balance.

One of the most powerful of the Reiki Ideals is: "Be filled with gratitude." Because there are so many things to do and be mindful of, being thankful can make a significant difference in the life of a person with diabetes. Working with the right doctor and/or nurse educator, having a good day, good weather, a chance to talk to a friend, and a good support system are all opportunities for gratitude. Gratitude nourishes the spirit. The more grateful we are, the more good we see. The more good we see, the more good flows to us.

The Distant Healing Bridge

This is a guided imagery that you can do for yourself or you can work with a Reiki practitioner to guide you through the process. If you have Level II, you can use the Distant Healing symbol. If not, you can visualize walking over the bridge.

1. Start with a general relaxation session. Give Reiki for 15-20 minutes or guide the client through a progressive relaxation.
2. Activate the Distant Healing symbol and have the client imagine standing on a bridge. They may be at the foot of the bridge or in the middle of it, looking over at the water beneath them.
3. Allow the energy of the symbol to flow, using the imagery of the water underneath the bridge as the past. Or, have the client imagine that they are walking over the bridge to go back to their past.
4. Allow the energy of the Distant Healing symbol to send Reiki back to heal the past. The client may have a specific event in mind or may want to just allow the energy to go to whatever needs to be healed.
5. Put your hands on the client's heart and solar plexus (stomach area) and activate the Mental/Emotional symbol.
6. Allow Reiki to go to the past to heal anger, sadness, grief, resentment or whatever needs to be healed.
7. Ask that the client begin to forgive themselves and let go of blame.
8. Ask the client to call their spirit back—the part of them that remains in the past; the part that is still caught up in the emotion. Ask them to let it go now.
9. You may suggest that they ask an angel or guide to be with them if they feel they need assistance.
10. Continue to let the Reiki flow as you support them (or yourself) in the process.

Some people with diabetes get caught up in blaming themselves for getting diabetes or have anger or shame around it. Reiki can flow to the past, releasing anger and resentment. The client can then focus on forgiving themselves and on calling that energy back, leaving the old emotion in the past. This frees up energy so that they have more energy to deal with every day life. If needed, the practitioner can then help the client work on self-love and acceptance.


If a person is worried about the future and/or complications, or just worried about how they are going to manage, use the same steps outlined above but have them walk over the bridge and stand at the base, facing the direction of their future. Then suggest they envision it the way they would like it to be. Encour-

age them to see themselves healthy, managing their diabetes well, and whatever else is important to them. Ask them to “act as if” and accept that it is already done. This brings their energy or spirit back to the present, and they let go of worry, which is wasted energy.

Healing Chamber

Another imagery for healing emotions around having diabetes is the SHK (Mental/Emotional symbol) chamber. It can be done by a practitioner or by the client, if the client is attuned to Level II.

1. Start with a general relaxation session. Give Reiki for 15-20 minutes or guide the client through a progressive relaxation.
2. Have the client imagine they are in a healing chamber.
3. Activate the Mental/Emotional symbol and have them imagine that they are in a shower.
4. Allow the energy of the symbol to flow and use the imagery of the shower to wash away old hurts, angers, resentments, sadness or grief.
5. Imagine a drain underneath their feet and imagine the emotions flowing into the drain to be washed away.
6. After they feel that the emotions have been washed away, the shower then changes to a soft mist that now fills them with positive healing energy such as love, peace or joy. You may suggest that they remember a special occasion and connect with the joy or happiness they felt at that time.
7. Have them imagine the positive healing energy filling them up, until they are glowing inside. Suggest they place their hands over their hearts and feel the energy. Remind them that it is always there for them any time they need it. Very powerful!!

Managing diabetes does not have to be an overwhelming chore. Taking care of one's diabetes is really a way of loving oneself. When you take the time to do the things you need to do, you nourish your spirit and that helps you stay the course. Reiki is a gift that you give yourself. It can help you manage the everyday responsibilities of diabetes. Reiki can help you to remember how “sweet” life really is when you are present in the moment and aware of all your blessings! 

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