

## **Reiki for Dogs**

By Kathleen Prasad

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### **Peace in the Shelter**

I sat in the aisle of the shelter, on the concrete floor at one end of the hallway. On either side of me, barking, jumping, pacing and frantic dogs vocalized their stress and upset. Once I had put in my earplugs, I positioned myself in the lotus position, hands resting on my lap. I closed my eyes and set my intention that I was open to facilitate a space for healing for the dogs in the shelter. I invited the dogs to come forward and enter the healing space if they wished; if they didn't want any energy today, that was fine too. I imagined roots coming down from the base of my spine, connecting me firmly to the earth. I imagined my heart opening, offering harmony and peace to all dogs here. Then I spent a few moments focusing on the "hara breathing" technique, one of the foundational Japanese Reiki breathing techniques taught in Level 1 Reiki. I felt the energy flow like buzzing in my hands and arms as my awareness went deeper into a meditative state.

After several minutes I noticed a distinct change in the sounds around me. Through my earplugs I began to hear the crying and barking sounds diminish. Within fifteen minutes you could hear a pin drop. I opened my eyes just to enjoy the silence; all up and down the aisles, the dogs had come to the fronts of their kennels and were either fast asleep, sitting up at various stages of relaxation, or just intently staring at me. After about thirty minutes I closed the treatment by thanking the dogs for their openness to the energy. I rose and left the kennel in the space of a quiet Reiki nap.

I have been offering Reiki for many years in a variety of shelters and sanctuaries, barns and private homes for many species of animals. A great benefit for these animals is the stress-relief and relaxation that is a direct result of a Reiki treatment. And this benefit is not for experienced Reiki practitioners only, but can occur for anyone who learns the simple techniques of Reiki. As Amelia Funghi, Director of Operations at the Oakland-Tri-Valley SPCA in California shared of a recent beginner's Reiki class, "There was a memorable moment during the training when the 20 participants had spread out into the shelter sitting in kennels and in front of cages as they began to practice for the first time. The stillness, calm and silence that pervaded the shelter were palpable. I never experienced such a feeling of tranquility in our shelter and among its inhabitants. Delightful!"

### **Basics of Reiki**

The name Reiki, pronounced "Ray-key", comes from the Japanese words "rei" meaning spirit, and "ki" meaning energy. Reiki is a system of healing created by a Mikao Usui in Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although originally taught as a system of spiritual development and self-healing, an amazing by-product of this self-healing is the "ripple effect" healing on the bodies/minds/spirits of those around you. Dogs, already very "in-tune" to the language of energy, are especially open to its healing effects.

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When using Reiki to heal, the practitioner's role is actually quite passive. The practitioner simply sets an intention to facilitate the healing process of the dog and opens to the energy flow. By creating a deep sense of harmony and peace (the outward signs of which can be seen in the relaxation of the dogs treated), Reiki helps create the ideal conditions for self-healing within the dogs treated. So, in reality, Reiki practitioners do not "heal," but merely support a dog's ability to self-heal.

For animals who are healthy, Reiki helps to maintain their health, enhances relaxation and provides an emotional sense of peace and contentment. For animals who are ill, Reiki is a wonderful healing method as well as a safe complement to Western Medicine, Chinese Medicine, homeopathy, flower essences, and all other forms of healing. For example, Reiki can reduce the side effects of chemotherapy, support an acupuncture treatment, and enhance the effects of flower essences. For dying animals, Reiki is a powerful yet gentle way to provide comfort, relief from pain, fear, and anxiety, and to ease the transition to death.

Reiki is ideal for use with dogs because with Reiki, since effectiveness is not dependent upon physical contact, the dog controls the treatment, accepting Reiki in the ways that are most comfortable, either hands-on or from a distance, or a combination of the two.

Reiki techniques are easy for anyone to learn and use. Because Reiki does not manipulate energy within the dog, it can do no harm, even when used by the most novice practitioner. Reiki, by its very nature simply supports a dog's self-healing path back to balance and harmony.

### **Approaching Animals with Reiki**

The approach of the practitioner is key when working with dogs and Reiki. Dogs appreciate being given control of the treatment: in other words, being allowed to say "yes" or "no" to the treatment as well as determining the way the treatment will unfold. This means the practitioner needs to follow a few basic rules to be successful in the treatment:

1. Always begin by asking permission of the dog directly OR by setting your intention that you are open to facilitate the healing process for the dog for as much energy as he or she is open to receive, or none at all (this is a form of permission).
2. It's best not to initiate hands-on contact when beginning treatment. Always allow the dog to be the one to initiate contact. This is because many dogs are very sensitive to the energy or to our human presence and may find physical contact to be too intense or uncomfortable.
3. Allow the dog to move freely in the treatment space. Pay attention to what the dog is telling you by his or her behavior. Signs of relaxation and other appreciative movements (such as licking of hands or coming forward for a pet) show a willingness to connect with the energy.

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4. Dogs appreciate a passive and open approach. Do not "beam" or "send" energy to the dog or try to push healing mentally onto a specific health issue the dog has that you "think" needs healing. Instead, try "offering" the energy in a non-assertive manner. In this same vein, your body language should match this passive intention: in other words, don't initiate and hold eye contact, don't make yourself "big" and dominant in your body position. For example, try to stay on the same physical level with the dog and remain in a non-threatening pose. Ideally, don't stand up over a small animal on ground level or have your hands up and palms facing out like a predator about to pounce.
5. Let go of your expectations about how dogs should behave during treatments (they usually do not behave like humans, lying down motionless for 60 minutes). The typical treatment consists of an ebb and flow of hands-on/short distance Reiki as well as short periods of movement and relaxation. Also, let go of your expectations about what healing result the dog should manifest.
6. After you finish the treatment, always thank the dog for participation in the treatment.

## Exercises to Try

*Reiki Bubble:* Imagine you are creating an energy bubble of peace and harmony around yourself. Invite the dog to move into and out of this bubble freely.

*Reiki Bridge:* Build an imaginary "Reiki bridge" of peace and harmony from your heart to your dog. Invite your dog to cross the bridge if he or she wants to participate in the healing treatment.

## Treatment Schedule

Although sometimes healing can be seen in one or two treatments, for continued health and well-being, all dogs benefit most from a regularly scheduled program of Reiki:

- For working, agility, or show dogs: Begin with a series of four treatments on consecutive days, then once a week or every other week for maintenance. Daily treatments suggested on the most demanding of days.
- For dogs recovering from injury/illness: Begin with a series of at least four treatments on consecutive days, followed by once or twice a week until recovered.
- For senior dogs: Begin with a series of four treatments on consecutive days, followed by once a week or every other week for support of age-related issues.

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- For dogs nearing their transition: Begin with a series of several treatments on consecutive days, followed by a few times a week or as needed for support in this process.
- Even healthy dogs appreciate the relaxing effects of a Reiki treatment; think of it as spa day for your beloved canine!

*Note:* Reiki is not meant as a substitute for veterinary care. Always consult your veterinarian about the best course of medical treatment for your dog. For a list of Animal Reiki Practitioners in your area, visit:

[http://www.animalreikisource.com/practitioner\\_directory.html](http://www.animalreikisource.com/practitioner_directory.html)

### **About the author:**

Kathleen Prasad is an Animal Reiki Teacher, founder of Animal Reiki Source and co-founder of The Shelter Animal Reiki Association. Kathleen is a student of classical Japanese Reiki methods, training with internationally recognized Reiki researchers Frans and Bronwen Stiene of the International House of Reiki. She has co-authored *The Animal Reiki Handbook* (Lulu, 2009), *Animal Reiki* (Ulysses Press, 2006) and edited and contributed to the books *Tails from the Source* and *Animal Reiki Tails, Volume 2*. She has written many educational articles on animals and Reiki for holistic publications around the world. Kathleen has taught Reiki to the staff of organizations such as The East Bay SPCA, The Humane Society of Silicon Valley, BrightHaven Healing Arts Center for Animals, Guide Dogs for the Blind, and The Elephant Sanctuary. She has also authored *The Animal Reiki Practitioner Code of Ethics*, which has been published in professional Reiki publications and adopted by practitioners around the world. In addition to offering an extensive animal Reiki training program and worldwide practitioner directory on her website, she self-publishes a free e-newsletter on Reiki and animals. Kathleen enjoys life in beautiful Marin County, California with her husband, daughter, and two horses.

Visit Kathleen online at [www.animalreikisource.com](http://www.animalreikisource.com).