



Energetic Bodywork: Ancient Origins for Modern Health

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Thousands of years ago Eastern cultures developed systems for healing and health maintenance based on the body's natural energy. There is a great deal of mystery and confusion surrounding these ancient healing arts. One of the major misconceptions is that it is often confused with massage. Actually massaging is never used in shiatsu and energetic healing such as Reiki. These Eastern techniques have healing properties that can penetrate the body much more deeply, effecting the life force or chi of each individual.

What is Chi? Each person has a vital life force coursing through his or her body called *chi* by the Chinese and *ki* by the Japanese. It is the essence of your physical body and spirit. This energy flows throughout our entire bodies in pathways called meridians, which are generated from the chakras. The smooth flow and balance of chi forms the foundation of health.

Shiatsu, literally meaning finger pressure, works with the meridian system similar to the principles of acupuncture but without needles. Due to physical and/or emotional stress and trauma one's chi can become blocked along these pathways. As a result, illness, fatigue, headaches, backaches, sciatica, joint pain, digestive and reproductive disorders, to name a few, can occur. Shiatsu applies stretching and moderate pressure to the body, facilitating the free flow of energy promoting health and relaxation. Shiatsu offers psychological as well as physical benefits because each meridian has an emotional aspect allowing for an improvement of one's mood. Shiatsu is often thought of as aggressive and painful, but actually it is neither. Shiatsu is a very relaxing experience often moving the receiver into a deep, peaceful calm while relieving muscle aches and pains accumulated from stress. Traditionally, you receive Shiatsu while lying on a mat on the floor wearing comfortable, non-restrictive clothing.

Energetic Healing has its roots in ancient India and modern physics. Your body has seven main energy centers called **chakras**. Chakra means *wheel* in Sanskrit, symbolizing the circular, spinning nature of these unseen pathways – much like the petals of a flower. The chakra centers communicate with the endocrine glands, organs, and nervous system. When the chakras are closed or blocked, due to physical trauma or emotional/environmental stress, the vibrancy and vitality are lost. There is deterioration of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health over time. Through hands-on healing, the chakra pathways are able to clear and open, reducing symptoms such as chronic pain, increasing energy and restoring good health.

Reiki, meaning *universal life energy*, is an ancient Japanese folk-art. It is another type of energetic healing that is a chakra-based system. The essence of this method is the focused placement of the hands on the body. The system of Reiki provides a means for channeling energy from the universe through the practitioner to the receiver, creating harmony and balance. Reiki is a gentle, meditative treatment that compliments any health care regime.

The term **bodywork** has become popular due to the varied styles of healing available today. As you can see, many of these modalities have a different focus than the well-known western styles of massage. This work focuses on the body's energy to create smooth flow and balance. There are no oils used because direct contact with the skin is not required. As with Shiatsu, comfortable clothing is worn but work is done with you lying on a massage table.

Often, deep healing will occur from these powerful restorative arts based on sound and ancient principles of health. Many people experience relief of physical discomfort or pain while others are affected emotionally and spiritually. In any case, changes are achieved with lasting effects resulting in an increase in the quality of life. Of course, the best way for you to know is to experience the benefits for yourself.

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