

Reiki and Structural Integration

How energy work can enhance the practice of SI

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John Latz graduated from the Rolf Institute of Structural Integration® in 1985, and was later certified Advanced. He is the founder of The Institute for Structural Integration (ISI) in Miami, Florida and has been practicing and teaching Reiki for the past 30 years. John utilizes Reiki in his SI practice and teaches Reiki to all SI students in his school, considering it an invaluable tool in the practice of Structural Integration.

Abstract

In this paper, the author offers thoughts and experiences gathered from years of utilizing Reiki in his SI practice, and he suggests that the incorporation of Reiki or similar types of energy work into SI work might bring us closer to working with the energetic finesse and efficacy that were signatures of Ida Rolf's work.

Reiki Initiation and Structural Integration Training

Thirty years ago, I encountered a fascinating system of energy healing called Reiki. Japanese in origin, it is a practice of receiving, channeling, and giving life-force energy to create balance and healing in any living thing.

During my first degree Reiki initiation, I felt myself receiving an infusion of energy from my teacher into my being. It felt as though my crown chakra opened and light poured in. My hands immediately became fiery hot and electric. My mind's eye opened and I perceived memories, visions, and people, like a moving picture, complete with sights and sounds from a distant time and place. Simultaneously, my heart expanded with light and I was filled with joy. The experience changed my life, leading me into healing work and to studying other personal transformational techniques like Structural Integration.

In 1985, I trained at the Rolf Institute®. Because of my prior experience with Reiki, my awareness of my energy body allowed me to readily process and understand the energetic aspects of the Structural Integration training. Each time I received SI sessions from my teacher, I was able to discern and take in his quality of touch, intention, and energetic presence, transforming my mind/body and subsequently my own work. Reiki provided me with an energetic framework through which I was able to receive and learn SI.

It was as if the energetic filter of Reiki granted me a tactile reference for how the structure of the body might change via the application of light energy. Quickly it became easy for me to match my teacher's structural results; the Reiki helped me learn SI at an accelerated rate.

Over years of practicing and teaching SI, I have often wondered about Ida Rolf's mastery of using subtle energy in her own work. There are countless testimonials to this effect, although she rarely spoke about it or taught what she knew. One such testimonial comes from Fritz Smith, who described her touch as having a bolus of energy ahead of her physical pressure, making her contact a painless experience.¹ Another example comes from Al Drucker who relates his experience of an instance during which Ida and her son worked together on his ribcage. He describes how her son's work felt like being attacked by a shark, while Ida's touch felt like making love.² Clearly, her command of the energetics of Structural Integration was one of her many gifts.

I have come to believe that should one desire to work like Ida Rolf, Reiki is the quintessential tool that will help any SI practitioner achieve that goal. At my school, The Institute for Structural Integration, Reiki is taught as part of the curriculum. I teach the concept of the body as a "light energy body." Although no scientific proof yet validates this concept, there exists a mountain of anecdotal evidence confirming Reiki's effects. Similarly, in SI we often speak of our 'core' opening, or of the experience of coming onto our Line, as if 'core' and 'line' had a demonstrable physical reality. Our inner perception becomes our validation that the line and core are more than mere abstractions.

Tracking Structural Change Through Inner Perception

As Structural Integrators, we understand that honoring and attending to inner perception can be a useful way to track and process the changes that are taking place during a Structural Integration session. I want to share in this next section my personal experiences, woven together with the experiences and perceptions of some of my students, so that you can consider perspectives from both givers and receivers of this style of Reiki-infused SI. In so doing, I wish to demonstrate that the practice of Reiki in the context of SI can help facilitate structural change.

The first-hand accounts of five ISI students were recorded from dictation, as they shared orally excerpts from their journals and notes taken in a classroom setting. (Their names appear in the endnotes of this paper.) Subjective experience is often under-valued in a science-infused culture, but as a Structural Integrator and teacher of SI, I place great value in the subjective perception of structural change and energetic shift. Jason Goodbrake and I compiled these students' accounts of their perceptions because we believe they may shed light for other SI practitioners on how energetic work enhances SI. Readers who may be skeptical about the idea of using Reiki in conjunction with SI work may find something within these personal accounts that resonates with the reader's own memory log of profound SI experiences; this collage of perceptions may validate the usefulness of energy work in the context of SI.

The first quality that Reiki imparts to an SI session is that of making available much more life-force energy. This energy increases the overall vitality of the client and directly flows into the fascial body, helping it to reorganize. It is like opening floodgates of healing light energy. Dr. Rolf told us that bodies need energy to establish a more ordered structure, and Reiki augments the kinetic force and physical energy we apply with our hands, knuckles, or elbows. It allows for faster and more readily integrated changes. When I apply Reiki as a complementary addition of energy into the body, I get more done with better results. One student reported, "As my session began, John's initial touch penetrated with heat which spread through my entire body like a surge of calm electrical energy. This familiar Reiki sensation filled me with vitality and within seconds I felt my fascia changing, allowing space and length to occupy my whole body. It

was as if the Reiki initiated the fascial lengthening in my body and then John's contact and physical force completed the work."³

Using Reiki in an SI session helps me work deeper with less physical effort. The emanation of light energy through my hands flows into and penetrates my client's body. Unlike my physical touch it is neither blocked by fascial restrictions nor perceived as invasive or painful by my client. This enables me to create changes in the core of the body. For example, in a first hour of the ten series, though my physical touch remains appropriately superficial, my energetic contact can go deep into the core with no extra physical effort on my part. Reiki then becomes my intention, but rather than just a thought or visualization, it is a direct current of light energy entering the body. "In spite of where John is in the body, or what he happens to be doing to accomplish structural change (working with palm, knuckles, forearm etc.), I virtually never find his touch painful. The noninvasive presence of Reiki energy precedes, enhances and evolves his physical contact. Rather than jarring or intrusive, as many people have claimed to experience SI, my body seems to interpret even the most intense moments of John's contact as a palpable invitation to open and release. This is particularly true even in areas that most of us would consider particularly edgy to work upon. Think: the lateral edge of the pubic bone, up and into the pelvis, in the throat or mouth, or along the front of the spine."⁴

Reiki light energy emanates out from the body as well, not just the hands, thereby increasing the size and intensity of the practitioner's energy field. The more Reiki flows through a practitioner, the stronger the field becomes. I use specific advanced techniques in Reiki to maximize the current of energy while I am working, consequently enveloping with light the client, table, and occasionally the entire room where I am working. Numerous students observing my sessions have commented on the phenomena. "In class we often talk about 'holding the field'. In this exercise, students and assistants who are observing a session, whether they are sitting or standing, will 'work their line.' We feel that this strengthens the subtle energetic field generated by the practitioner at work, who is in turn ordering the field of the client to the larger field of the earth. In observing John do a 5th hour, I remember feeling the energy, the Reiki, in the field grow suddenly very thick at the edges

of a physical/emotional release. I backed out and away from the intensity of the energy, only to realize moments later that the field, as I perceived it, was expanding to fill what felt like the entire room. Though a subjective experience, it has seemed both repeatable and widely experienced. In discussing this post-session, John explained one of many ways in which he utilizes Reiki while working to strengthen the field.⁵⁵

Seeing is clearly one of the most important skills in SI, and using Reiki expands our abilities in this arena as well. The sensations of heat, light, and increased sensitivity I feel in my hands when touching my client with Reiki gives me an enhanced tactile awareness. I readily sense what is underneath my hands and immediately see it in my mind's eye. My perception becomes an interplay of various perspectives; as Reiki energy flows from my hands into the body of my client, my senses register depth, core/sleeve spatial dimension in the body, and extant fascial/boney rotations. It is like shining a floodlight from my hands deep into the body, revealing it's three-dimensional landscape within the context of our work. When I stand my client up to survey the newly established structural relationship in the gravity field, my eyes retain this tactile sight. I see more clearly with both my hands *and* my eyes.

Additionally, the seeing experience also applies to the fascial planes, tissue layers, and the fascial web in general. My heightened sensitivity to the fascial system via Reiki energy allows me to more accurately and precisely pull upon the fascial web, feel its elasticity, and identify the direction, intensity, and mechanical leverage I need to create ordered length in the body. It is also a tremendous support in cultivating the client's own bodily awareness—directed appropriately, the Reiki energy enables the client to better 'see' within themselves. "Having received work from John numerous times, I have noticed many things about his quality of touch. One aspect that I frequently remark upon is how I feel as though, in preparing for a stroke, he is 'scanning' my body for information. This feels entirely different than simple palpation. When John lays his hands on me, making initial contact, I immediately perceive penetrating warmth and a tangible degree of intelligence in the gesture. As he waits, a matter of seconds, before choosing a manipulation or discerning how he will unravel a particular twist or adhesion, I can sometimes also perceive what seem to be rushes of sensation—electricity, tingling, or soothing coolness—

moving through both tissue and bone, and 'shining a light' on its various twists and turns. When John is working at deep layers of my structure I often feel him pause and send this same warmth, questing, out into my structure ahead of his decision to move—discerning the pathway which will give him the greatest amount of change or openness, or the precise angle of contact which will enable him to take any number of 'handles' by which to effect transformation. We call this the "sonar". John has explained that Reiki is a constant and quintessential tool of our touch—that when he is palpating, he is really using Reiki to "see" and gather information about the client's body. This makes his touch exponentially more comprehensive. I feel as though the Reiki is allowing him to access so much more than the small amount of tissue under his hands. I feel as though he is, each time he applies this energy, accessing the completeness of a pattern, and often continually gathering information pertaining to the whole of my structure."⁵⁶

"Reiki as a tool for body awareness is an invaluable gift to the receiver. I have felt varying degrees of its use during SI. Sometimes I have perceived specific intentions of clarity as John worked, dissolving blockages and enlivening obstructive tissues. At other times the light energy simply seems to define my body from the inside out in a much broader way that allows me to see inside of myself. I imagine the experience as something akin to lying in a magician's magic box—where vectors of Reiki light pierce my structure and refract off of my body's internal mirrors. This light illuminates my structure and clearly reveals the myriad ways in which I might constructively meet John's touch and achieve varying degrees of length and space within myself. It helps me participate fully in the work."⁵⁷

"I remember my first experience receiving Structural Integration with John. Having found SI work very intense in the past, I was somewhat apprehensive—yet as the session began, John placed his hands upon my ribcage and my concerns were gracefully put to rest. Upon contact I perceived an all-encompassing warmth and presence. To my delighted surprise, my tissue actually seemed to welcome his touch. In fact, it felt as though my whole body was slowly melting and reshaping around his fingers. There was little discomfort and almost no palpable resistance in my body. What's more, I found myself able to meet the powerful contact from within myself and participate very fully in the session—a very

energetically rich experience. I remember feeling as though John had some sort of 'spotlight' turned on that was capable of searching out and illuminating deeply buried, tangled tissue. I now know that each of these sensations, and particularly that amazing 'spotlight', are John's highly refined use of Reiki.¹⁸

The "Reiki sight" also can be utilized to see or create energetic/structural lines in the body. When I want to instill the Line in the body, I direct the light energy specifically as a pinpoint laser, channeling that luminous line along the front of the spine and through the top of the head. Another example of this particular function of Reiki is in the seventh hour, during which I instill the laser light energy from the top of the head down through the body. While working the upper palate of the mouth, I can also direct the line through the top of the head, or change my vector and direct the Reiki energy to any part of the cranium to create structural change. "In a 2nd Hour, John was working with my foot, ankle, and heel. As the work started, I felt the initial pressure of his contact abruptly suffused with enveloping heat. This graceful trickle of Reiki energy rapidly saturated the heavy, sleeve musculature of my leg during the course of the manipulation. As it did so, I noticed the tension in my leg dissolving as the limb took on new order and found a more integrated relationship to my pelvis. When John cued me to intend length I suddenly felt, with remarkable clarity and precision, the physical sensation of a hot, laser-like line of light shooting right up through the core interosseous space of my leg, from foot into ileum, enlivening the innermost tissues. The limb subsequently melted into compliance with the deep suggestion and began to order itself deeply around this line."⁹

Up to now, I have described Reiki as light-energy, a kind of highly refined electricity. It also behaves as an electromagnetic force. My experience with using it indicates that the stronger the flow of Reiki, the more I feel a magnetic charge through my hands. I make use of this magnetism while evoking the body's openness from the core, which has its own magnetic resonance. I use Reiki magnetic energy to literally pull on the core space and structure of the body, expanding it into a more open state. Another significant result of this magnetic opening is the virtual elimination of any compressive force from my hands. That is, Reiki enables me to sink into the body without compressing it or making it

smaller in dimension. The result of this dynamic magnetic touch is a longer, more open structure that can more easily take up space. "A demonstrably repeatable phenomenon: While I am lying in side position, John evokes span, space, and integration in and around the 12th rib. It is a puzzling, amazing sensation. As John makes contact the strong pressure enters the body and his fingers twine into the fascial matrix, hooking deeply. Then things palpably shift. As John's physical pressure appears to rapidly leave the body, I experience the warm, powerful pull of Reiki energy. This pull spreads throughout my surrounding structure and it feels as though my core space inside of my ribs and along the front of my spine has been caught up in a strong magnet. This powerfully energetic contact seems to tangibly magnetize my core and draw it out to meet John's intent—the 12th rib mysteriously and dramatically breathes back and fills out with tremendous ease. Span and length manifest with the rushing sensation of air filling a vacuum. My body vibrates with quiet joy."¹⁰

This energetic/magnetic quality of touch assists me in using the two-way operator in my sessions. A staple of Structural Integration work, the two-way operator demands an acute awareness of the energetic connection *between my hands* as I work. Reiki intensifies that awareness for me, allowing my physical contact to easily access the core of my client's body. Since I use the two-way operator in every session virtually everywhere in the body, Reiki gives me a distinct advantage in creating dynamic core changes throughout the body. "John is working on my lower leg while I lie face up. One hand begins to sink into the calf while the other rests atop my shin, cradling the tibia and guiding the leg into the hand beneath. As the top hand makes this contact, a relationship begins to form between the two hands – there is a palpable sense of Reiki energetic connection. Though John's hands work with apparent ease on the outer aspect of my leg, creating a template for order, the dynamic energetic relationship between his hands seems to rapidly intensify and contact straight into my core. This feeling is wholly enjoyable and fascinating. Rather than feel any particular motion, I simply feel as though the innermost space of my leg is being warmed through and saturated with light, and then as if drinking of that warmth, it expands outward to meet the physical contact—my core expands outward to fill the framework created by the two-way operator. When I stand for assess-

ment, the leg feels light, strong and radiantly supple.”¹¹

The Reiki magnetic resonance also helps me ground very effectively. As I direct the Reiki energy through my own core structure, the current I thereby generate connects me unshakably into the earth’s core energy. This energetic merging between my core and the earth’s core reinforce one other, helping to create a stronger self-sustaining energy field. When this occurs I notice the force and power of my touch are amplified, allowing me to create more substantial changes for my clients. Dr. Rolf spoke about this phenomenon as being a primary goal of Structural integration, “Here we must see man as an energy field, rather than as a mass of matter; a field which lives within a greater energy field, the field of the earth.”¹²

“I am giving a 1st Hour. Settled comfortably into my body mechanics, I contact the client’s ribcage. They report feeling my contact spreading into their ribs along the front of their body and down into their abdomen, gentle and sure. Taking a breath, I begin the intentional practice of running Reiki through the core of my own structure, warming and relaxing it—spanning throughout—and immediately the power and quality of my contact exponentially improves. As the Reiki opens and grounds my structure, my feet and heels feel magnetically pulled into the floor towards the earth and I become filled with a thrilling sense of being peacefully suspended within gravity. I become a field contacting another field, all suspended within the larger field of the Earth. This takes no more time than it takes to breathe and shift my intention, and the client immediately reports to me that they feel as though I have just painlessly ramped up to full power. They rapidly perceive my same contact now coursing throughout their structure, feeling it penetrating as warmth and structural shift throughout their back and even trickling out into their arms.”¹³

Reiki energy utilized in an SI session can also be felt as a transmission of peace. Reiki, like meditation, is deeply relaxing. Without any effort or concentration, the light energy flowing through my hands soothes and disarms my client’s tension and defenses throughout the session. Reiki has a way of “taking the edge off” of an intense SI release and engendering client trust. This is exactly what Ida Rolf was capable of during her work. “Most recently, while John was picking at the fascia along my mandible, beneath

my chin, I noticed that while a great deal of structural change was taking place I nonetheless felt no discomfort. This is a very small, vulnerable area that can easily become nervy or frightening. John’s contact simply seemed to cradle the area, and subsequently caused the residual tension in my jaw, neck and cranium to melt away. How unexpected a place! Amidst powerful, spreading sensations of reorganization, the rest of my structure swiftly fell into line and it soon felt as though the whole right side of my body was widening from cranium to pelvis. Also recently, when working a particularly dense and restricted layer in my arm with his own forearm and elbow, potentially compressive contact, I noted that though I was certain I might perceive discomfort from so much pressure near the elbow, his touch seemed to nestle right into a secret door. The contact very suddenly reminded me of being very gently taken by the shoulder and asked to ‘wake up’. In spite of his being suddenly quite deeply within my forearm between the bones, the layer itself responded to this ‘dialogue’ by promptly doing just that and letting go. I experienced spreading warmth and the feeling of my arm “breathing” wide as space occurred between the bones. Easy as that. This quality of enveloping gentleness, attributed to Reiki in his contact, makes it the most powerful and effective bodywork I’ve ever received.”¹⁴

Recognizing and releasing trauma from the body are crucial components of our Structural Integration work. Much creative attention has been focused on this topic within our profession. Reiki adds an important dimension to that process. I utilize Reiki to help me feel and identify blockages of energy in the body, which sometimes indicate trauma. The Reiki often helps the clients feel, remember, and identify past physical or emotional traumas. Reiki also uniquely releases and transmutes the energy of the trauma without any effort on my part. The Reiki energy seems to have an innate intelligence to it, always bringing people back to balance and wholeness. “In my 4th Hour, I recall experiencing a good deal of apprehension each time John’s contact came near to my pelvis. I was certain that the work would be painfully intense and memories from childhood were stirring in the background – it seemed certain to be a loaded area. Before I had the time to unravel the skein of my thoughts, John was working right up into my pelvis and it all came to the fore. I remember being shocked at the power of the initial contact, and

even as I became afraid within the context of the mounting intensity, I became simultaneously aware of the unique nature of John's touch. I felt as though a tremendous amount of energy was vigorously being added to the trauma at my pelvis, and contained within that energy was the vibration of love. This touched me through my fear and the intensity, and I swiftly experienced the beginnings of fascial release of a large amount of tension. Within the powerful flood of energy, the intensity smoothly receded and I felt with increasing certainty that I was quite safe. Though tears were leaking from my eyes as the memories integrated with the release occurring in my body, they were tears of relief and gratitude. I carry the results of that session with me even today. Having experienced many kinds of energy work in varying contexts, I feel strongly that the marriage of intentional energy work with the deeply nourishing practice of Structural Integration is an unmistakable match."¹⁵

Over the years, experiences related to me by students, clients, and friends alike have served to validate the evolution of my practice in this direction. In this article I have spoken singularly of Reiki—yet in my continued search to access more healing light energy and develop personal wholeness, I have been led to experience many different methods of energy-based healing. Primarily, I have been led to Joao de Deus, affectio-

nately known as "John of God," a Brazilian full-trance medium who channels healing spirits. Multiple times in the last seven years, I have traveled to Brazil and received his spiritual guidance and intervention. He and the spiritual entities he channels performed physical surgeries on my body, at one time cutting into me with a scalpel, and on another occasion inserting surgical scissors deep into my nose, without anesthetic, but causing no pain. The channeled light energy entering into my being was extraordinary. I have received numerous other surgeries, 'invisible' or energetic surgeries where no physical contact was involved. During these experiences I felt the light enter into me, transmuting my body and altering my consciousness.

These experiences with John of God continue to evolve and increase my capacity to work with Reiki, further transforming my SI practice. This nourishing light deeply guides and empowers my work. It is therefore my conclusion that the conscious use and direction of life-force energy during our Structural Integration sessions suggests a tremendous potential. Perhaps harnessing this Reiki energy, or integrating other energetic techniques, could enable many SI practitioners to more closely approximate the powerful and gentle efficacy of Ida Rolf's work, thus helping to carry forth her legacy.

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Notes

¹ Feitis, R. and Schultz R. L., eds. *Remembering Ida Rolf*, Berkley, CA, North Atlantic Books, 1996, p.68.

² Feitis, R. and Schultz R. L., eds. *Remembering Ida Rolf*, Berkley, CA, North Atlantic Books, 1996, p.56.

³ Prince, B. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

⁴ Rush, C. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

⁵ Ritter, S. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

⁶ Goodbrake, J. (transcribed from personal notes or journals)

⁷ Pinela, I. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

⁸ Felder, M.A. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

⁹ Goodbrake, J. (transcribed from personal notes or journals)

¹⁰ Prince, B. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

¹¹ Goodbrake, J. (transcribed from personal notes or journals)

¹² Rolf, I.P. "Structure—A New Factor in Understanding the Human Condition," presented at "Explorers of Humankind" conference, June 10, 1978, p. 5.

¹³ Pinela, I. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

¹⁴ Rush, C. (as dictated from the student's notes or journals to J. Goodbrake)

¹⁵ Goodbrake, J. (transcribed from personal notes or journals)