

Documenting Reiki Sessions

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Documentation is a fundamental component of a professional practice. As our Reiki practices grow and evolve, it is important that we clearly describe in writing the services we are providing our clients. A simple definition of documentation is the “preparation and maintenance of records that describe a patient’s care.” (6, p.2)

Readers of this article will have varying levels of training and years of experience in working with Reiki and will come from different backgrounds. Many people are offering treatments to family and friends in a casual or non-professional manner. They may not feel the need to document their treatments to the extent described in this article. This informa-

Purpose of Documentation

Documentation can be used to evaluate and enhance the services that you provide as a Reiki practitioner. “If you document with attention to detail, you will clearly show the quality of care your clients receive, the outcome of that care and the treatment they still need.” (6, p.2) When writing notes, I include the client’s current health status, physical and emotional stressors, and personal healing intentions. Following the session, the symbols and techniques I used and the client’s impressions are both notated. I also document any other client contacts that I may have by phone or email. When clients return, I have detailed information that helps me provide continuity of care. I am able to

Documentation can also provide evidence of personal growth as a practitioner. In reviewing my own client notes over a period of years, I can see how I have evolved in my own Reiki practice—in gaining confidence, trusting my intuition, using new symbols and other techniques, increasing my sensitivity to working energetically, and improving my writing skills in describing my work.

As practitioners develop new techniques or uses for Reiki symbols, documentation is essential in capturing this process. The practitioner can track clients’ responses over time as the technique is perfected or refined.

Clearly written documentation can also be used as the basis for client case

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tion is intended for those whose Reiki practices are becoming more professional and for those practitioners who are licensed health care providers operating in hospitals and other clinical settings. Practitioners with education in health care professions such as nursing, social work, counseling, chiropractic and physical / occupational therapy will have knowledge of many concepts presented in this article. They will have a greater comfort level in documenting Reiki sessions. For new practitioners and for those without a healthcare background, documentation may be viewed as challenging or intimidating. But this is a skill which can be learned with guidance, practice and persistence.

track and evaluate each client’s progress over time. Documentation is important in a busy Reiki practice. It would be difficult to recall clients’ individual issues and personal health concerns without detailed progress notes.

Documentation is a means of communicating with professionals in the greater health care community. Our clients may request that we send copies of our documentation to other providers. Health care professionals will begin to recognize the validity and efficacy of Reiki through well-written client notes. In my own work with a case management group, I have routinely submitted progress notes for review by the nurse and social worker on the team.

studies. A case study is a form of qualitative research that is primarily non-experimental and descriptive in nature. It offers the opportunity to look closely at individual clients by conducting an in-depth exploration of their specific conditions, thoughts, feelings and actions. Case studies can become a springboard for larger research studies. Detailed client notes are essential in this type of research.

Components of the Client Record

Basic components of a client record include the following: demographic information (name, address, contact information, date of birth), a signed informed consent form, an intake form and documentation for each Reiki session.

An informed consent form should be reviewed and signed by the client on the first visit. Informed consent means that the client understands the proposed therapy and agrees to receive the therapy. This form is important for a number of reasons:

(a) It describes the nature and purpose of a Reiki session, including the benefits and limitations.

(b) It defines the practitioner's scope of practice, e.g., the kinds of services that the practitioner can legally and ethically provide. Practitioners, whether professionally licensed or not, need to have a clear understanding of their scope of practice under the prevailing legal guidelines of states in which they provide services. Each state and locality may have different laws or regulations that might impact a practice. Practitioners may need to consult a local attorney that specializes in health related law (9).

(c) It emphasizes that Reiki practitioners do not diagnose, prescribe or interfere with the care being provided by the client's licensed physician or other health care professional.

(d) It assures that client confidentiality will be maintained. The client's signature on this document implies their full knowledge and understanding of these concepts. If you are providing Reiki services to a minor, the parent or guardian must sign the consent form. Examples of these forms are available through the International Center for Reiki Training and International Association of Reiki Professionals.

An intake form is also completed on the initial visit. It includes more detailed information that clients share about their health history and the symptoms they are currently experiencing that have led them to seek Reiki treatments. It is important for Reiki practitioners to have a basic knowledge of their clients' overall health status, including any treatments or therapies they are receiving and medications

they are taking. This data serves as a reference point for the client's condition prior to receiving Reiki. Based on this information the practitioner and client can determine what kinds of effects the Reiki is having over time. Clients need to know that on-going Reiki treatments can have an affect on medications prescribed for symptoms such as pain, anxiety, depression, or high blood pressure. Reiki practitioners should always advise their clients to consult with their physicians about monitoring and managing their medication regimens (8).

Client Rights and Confidentiality

All client information must be kept confidential. If you are asked for a copy of your client's record or an opportunity to view it by another health care professional, you cannot release the record without the documented consent of a competent client. (6) The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 protects the privacy of patients. Its goal is to provide safeguards against the inappropriate use and release of Protected Health Information (PHI) which includes all medical records and other billing and insurance information that can be linked to an individual, whether electronically, on paper, or orally." (6) (3)

An authorization for release of PHI must specify certain elements which include a description of the protected health information to be disclosed, the person who is authorized to release the information, the person or entity who will be receiving the information, an expiration date, and the purpose for which the information may be used or disclosed. (4)

Sample PHI authorization for release forms are available on the internet and can be found by entering the phrase "release of protected health information forms" into your search engine. Include in your search the U. S. state in which you practice Reiki because individual states may have specific provisions regarding release of information.

Clients have the right to access their own medical records under HIPPA. They can also request that their medical records be amended for accuracy. This is why it is important that your documentation be factual, objective and clearly stated. I always document Reiki sessions with the thought that someone else may someday read this entry and interpret what occurred during the session.

Client records must be stored securely, preferably in a locked file cabinet. Records should not be available for others to review inadvertently. If you keep electronic files, make certain that the files are password protected and that you routinely back-up your files onto an external device that is securely stored.

For more specific information about HIPPA regulations, go to the Department of Health and Human Services Web site and access "HIPPA—Frequent Questions." (2)

The Basics of Documentation

(*Complete Guide to Documentation*, 2nd ed. 2008)

- Write neatly and legibly using correct spelling and grammar.
- Write in clear, concise sentences.
- Write in ink, preferably black ink, which photocopies better.
- Use accepted or easily understood abbreviations. Include key to abbreviations.
- Chart in chronological order including the date of all entries.
- Chart promptly to ensure that important details are not later forgotten.
- When you record clients' statements, use their exact words.
- Document objectively, recording exactly what you see, hear and do.
- Sign each entry with your first name or initial, full last name and any professional licensure/credentials.
- Never erase, obliterate or alter a client record.

Formats for Charting

Within health care, a number of different formats are used in documentation. One example is SOAPIE, an acronym for subjective-objective-assessment-plan-intervention-evaluation. Other formats include DAR (data-action-response) and PIE (problem-intervention-evaluation). These formats offer us a way to organize our client notes in a meaningful and consistent manner. SOAPIE can be easily adapted for documenting Reiki sessions.

1. Subjective: Begin your sessions by listening to your clients. Why are they coming for Reiki? What is their current health status, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually? Have their health care providers prescribed changes in their medication or treatment regimens since their last treatment? What are their levels of pain and stress? How did they feel after their previous Reiki session? Listen to the kind of language are they using: “I am feeling drained and empty.” “I am feeling scattered.” These statements are often indicative of the client’s energetic state of health. Clients can also formulate affirmations or healing intentions for their session. Write their exact words using quotation marks in this section of your notes.

2. Objective / Assessment: These are the observations you make about your clients, i.e., facial expressions, speech patterns and body language. How do they move their physical bodies as they walk or climb stairs? Do they need assistance onto the bodywork table? Observations continue once the session begins and the practitioner scans and assesses their energy fields. A practitioner may receive intuitive insights or images and will note any areas of blockage or congestion as well as the quality of the energy flow throughout the client’s system. A pendulum or the practitioner’s hand can be used to check the openness of clients’ chakras.

3. Plan / Intervention: Based on the subjective, objective and assessment phas-

es, the practitioner will have a sense as to which areas of the body and energy field are in need of Reiki. The practitioner will determine which symbols and/or techniques are appropriate for the client. This may include a variety of Reiki symbols, affirmations, visualizations, chanting, toning, crystals, healing attunements and aura clearing, as well as other techniques. The Reiki treatment or intervention is then offered.

4. Evaluation: When the session is completed, the practitioner evaluates the effectiveness of the treatment. Clients have the opportunity to describe and discuss any sensations, thoughts, images, emotions or questions that occurred to them during the Reiki session. It is important to note, that sometimes the effects of Reiki are not immediately noticeable and may not be reported until the next session. At this time, the practitioner may also give recommendations for follow-up care to the client, such as referrals to other health care providers, books to read, breathing techniques, journaling. All recommendations should be consistent with the practitioner’s scope of professional practice.

This may seem like a great deal of information to put into writing but good documentation can take time. You will find that some of your client notes will be very detailed while others are not. You may have clients who simply come to experience Reiki with no particular issues that need to be addressed, so your notes will be brief.

If you are solely practicing Reiki, it is important to document only what you observe and do during a session. Reiki treatments are primarily about balancing energy, promoting relaxation and stress reduction. As Reiki practitioners, we do not diagnose or treat disease. Licensed practitioners who incorporate Reiki into their professional practices will function under the guidelines of their scopes of practice (8). Their documentation will differ from Reiki practitioners who are unlicensed.

The Language of Energy Work

As energy workers, it can be challenging for us to find words that accurately describe what we are sensing and observing. Most commonly, practitioners have kinesthetic, visual and auditory sensations when working with Reiki. But the senses of taste and smell can also be stimulated. One approach in documenting is to use words linked to your five senses. Think in terms of what you see (client’s facial expressions), hear (client’s tone of voice) and feel (warmth in areas of client’s energy field). Think creatively. Tap into inner guidance when documenting. Develop your own list of descriptors. Use a thesaurus to find new words. Review your documentation with a more experienced Reiki practitioner to learn about the language they use in describing their work.

Reiki can enhance the practitioner and client’s intuitive capabilities. These experiences are described as clairvoyance (inner seeing), clairaudience (inner hearing), clairsentience (inner feeling) and claircognizance (inner knowing). It is appropriate to document intuitive impressions, keeping your descriptions of these experiences simple and straightforward. Also make note of your clients’ responses to impressions that you share with them. Always allow your clients to interpret the meanings of these impressions for themselves.

Common Descriptors of the Energy Field

(*Healing Touch Level 2 Notebook*, 2007)

Movement—congested, heavy, flowing, pulsating, dense

Temperature—hot, warm, burning, cool, cold.

Disruptions—empty, blocked, bumpy, prickly, irregular

Sensation—tingling, full, buzzing, hard, smooth

Visual—colors, lights, images, symbols

Auditory—words, phrases, tones, sounds

Streamlining Documentation

Simple formats: You can develop your own documentation form that includes basic categories of information so you can simply fill in the blanks for each session. I first started documenting Reiki sessions in a spiral notebook using a brief narrative style. As my practice grew, I needed individual client files, so I have developed my own forms, which can be completed more quickly.

Abbreviations: Abbreviations can streamline charting but must be used judiciously so as not to confuse the reader. A “key” to your abbreviations should be available in your documentation. For example, the names of Reiki symbols can be abbreviated. The Mental/Emotional symbol becomes SHK, the Power symbol becomes CKR and the Usui Master symbol becomes UDKM. Sentence fragments or phrases can also be used in charting.

Checklists: Symbols and treatments can be listed on a form in a checklist format to save writing time.

Scales: Scales are a simple tool that can be used to assess various symptoms such as pain, stress or worry. Scales provide both the practitioner and client a visual and numerical indication of progress towards healing goals. Scales are commonly set up in increments of 0-10, with “zero” indicating the absence of the symptom and “ten” being the highest possible manifestation of the symptom as perceived by the client. When using scales, it is important to assess the client both before and after the session to determine the client’s response to the Reiki treatment. (7)

Diagrams and figures: Many practitioners use simple human figure diagrams to depict the differences in a client’s energy field such as areas of congestion, warmth, coolness, tingling, or emptiness. Before and after assessment of chakras can also be noted on such diagrams.

Sample Documentation using SOAPIE format

Reiki client Ms. A. was dealing with long-term family issues and was planning

to move out of state. She was receiving twice-monthly Reiki sessions as well as personal counseling. She expressed a desire to heal and shift her life.

12-2-08. Third session. Sixty minutes.


S: Client shared feelings about moving away from her elderly mother. “I felt tied to my mother.” Healing intention: “To be able to talk to my mother about my plans without fear.” Denies any physical problems.

O / A: Client tearful and appeared fatigued. Hand scan of energy field revealed heat over throat and heart chakras, density over sacral and root chakras. Pendulum reveals root / sacral / throat chakras closed. Solar plexus / heart / 3rd eye / crown with small circular swings.

P / I: Series of sweeps to clear / open energy field. Symbols: TFS, UDKM, TDKM, SHK, CKR. Reiki offered to all major chakras, lower extremities and feet. Intuited image of concrete block over lower abdomen. Energy flow towards client sluggish at first but increased throughout session. Focused energy to sacral / root areas with CKR and additional sweeps. Chakra balancing technique performed. Client rested quietly during session.

E: Pendulum: all chakras open and spinning post Reiki. Energy field smooth. Client stated, “I could feel warmth over my heart.” Described a release of energy through the soles of her feet. “My body feels much lighter.” Encouraged client to continue work with therapist. Suggested journaling her feelings about her mother. Return appointment in two weeks. Call with questions / concerns. Jane Van De Velde, RN, Reiki Practitioner

Clearly written documentation that is illustrative of the positive outcomes we are experiencing with Reiki clients is vital to our acceptance by the health care industry. I encourage Reiki practitioners to document their client sessions on a reg-

ular basis, set up basic systems for maintaining client records and seek to constantly improve their writing skills. It is important that we in the Reiki community support and mentor each other in developing these essential skills. 

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