

## Ridgefield woman turns to ancient art of Reiki to help son, patients

By Susan Tuz  
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RIDGEFIELD -- JoAnn Duncan started her career in medicine traditionally, earning a master's degree in human genetics. She did counseling and worked in hospitals.

But when her son was born and suffered from asthma, Duncan turned to a friend trained in the ancient art of Reiki, a laying of hands on the patient's body to dislodge blocked energy flow and bring relaxation.

"I didn't want my son to be on more and more drugs to treat his asthma," Duncan said. "I started doing natural medicine treatments with a naturopathic doctor and had my friend practice Reiki on him and on me. I saw the improvements that came about."

Duncan said her son would calm down and his breathing would improve during the sessions.

"If you can calm someone down during an asthma attack, they can regain better breathing faster," Duncan said.

She was sold on the practice.

That was nine years ago. Today Duncan practices and teaches Reiki at the master level. She recently completed an 18-month contract with Norwalk Hospital, where she practiced Reiki on cancer patients.

She also performs Reiki in private sessions through her practice, Turning Point Reiki, in Ridgefield and part time at Naturopathic Medical in Danbury.

Reiki is an ancient Asian practice. It's supposed to ease discomfort, restore balance and sustain health through a hands-on healing technique.

The name derives from "Rei," which means "God's wisdom or the higher power," and "Ki," which is "life force energy," Duncan said. So Reiki means "spiritually guided life-force energy."

While performing Reiki on a patient, Duncan often engages in conversation.

"I might ask the person, 'Is there something you are angry about? Something you are not able to let go of?' And that will start a dialogue," she said.

Duncan asks questions based on the energy she senses moving through the patient's body as she places her hands over its different energy centers.

Reiki is based on a belief in seven chakras, or energy centers, that the life-force energy travels in the human body.



"There's a lot of National Institute of Health field studies on Reiki," Duncan said. "They try to determine if the effects are simply deep relaxation response or if there is more to it."

She said the movement in medicine today is toward an integrative approach, utilizing traditional western medicine and alternative Asian approaches.

"Reiki seems to be getting into hospitals first of all the alternative medicines," she said. "Today there are even more nurses trained in therapeutic touch."

- For more information on Duncan's practice, call (203) 438-3050.