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Releasing the Martyr Archetype

BY TAYLOR ANN NORRIS, MS

RECENTLY, REIKI revealed to me the untapped power of directly treating the back with Reiki. Until 2021, I did not fully appreciate the value of using the back hand positions in my in-person sessions and holding the specific intention to treat the back in my distance work. I had only received Reiki on my back once and had given Reiki to the back once before to a woman with back pain in a mini-session at a Psychic Fair.

In Fall of 2021, a friend and student of mine mentioned to me about treating the back directly when we were discussing in-person sessions. I echoed my belief that treating a person face-up was the standard of prac-

tice, as the Reiki energy easily goes through the energy field and body of the person to the back side. However, now I can see Reiki was nudging me to uncover the power of directly treating the back.

Just days later, I went to an Ascension Circle gathering on the Big Island of Hawaii, where I have the pleasure of living at the moment. The circle creates a supportive space for healers of all modalities to share healing sessions. Oracle cards, essential oils, crystal bowls, artwork, flowers, crystals, musical instruments, and other rich sensory experiences flourish in these circles. I came to the circle that day needing to receive Reiki myself, as I felt very drained.

Fortunately, an Usui Reiki Master recently attuned to a lineage I was unfamiliar with worked with me. She gave me a powerful session. I had many profound insights and visions while also listening to the music of the harp and crystal bowls being played. About halfway through the session, the Reiki Master asked me to lie face down, and she treated my back.

When I turned onto my stomach, I became aware of a heavy ancestral burden inherited from my ancestral lineage. The sensory image formed with crystal clarity in my awareness to show me I carried the “cross to bear” often mentioned in my lineage of devout Catholics. Pain and suffering of

all kinds were labeled as their cross to bear, worn like a badge of honor with insidiously crippling consequences.

In a flash, I realized this was a deeply embedded layer of the religious trauma I had inherited, passed down by many generations. This cross to bear feeling represented a particular pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving, best represented by the “Martyr Archetype.”

vival: the child, victim, prostitute, and saboteur.⁴ Myss lists over 70 common archetypes, acknowledging they cycle and re-cycle with the changing times.

Caroline Myss explains, “The Martyr archetype is well known in two arenas: as a classic political or religious figure, and in the self-help world of contemporary psychology. Within the self-help field, the shadow Martyr is viewed as a person who has learned

lack of self-worth. I remember taking on childhood roles that were not explicitly asked of me. Still, I embraced them to “heal” the ones I loved of their pain and suffering at my expense. As a result, I often felt lost, directionless, and without a self. This tendency spiraled as my untrained healing and intuitive abilities increased, and I held increased space for everyone except myself.

Experiencing firsthand this function of Reiki at work inspires my trust in Reiki to heal and clear even the deepest, dense, darkest, lowest vibration, oldest, most painful patterns of relating with self and other humans.

According to Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, archetypes are the contents of the collective unconscious.¹ Archetypes are archaic, primordial concepts and universal images that have been with humanity for thousands of years. Jung found evidence of the scholarly use of the concept dating back to the 1st-century writing of Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus, who referred to the God-image, Imago Dei, in humans. Archetypes move from the collective unconscious to the realm of consciousness through the stories, fairy tales, and myths of various traditions and esoteric teachings.²

Jung suggests we contain five central archetypes, the persona (conformity or mask), the shadow (the “animal” side or survival instincts), the anima (masculine aspect), the animus (feminine aspect), and the self (unity of experience).³ Bestselling author, medical intuitive, and spiritual teacher Caroline Myss proposes we each have a set of twelve primary archetypes, four of which are common to us all for sur-

to use a combination of service and suffering for others as the primary means of controlling and manipulating her environment. Ironically, in the social and political world, the martyr is often highly respected for having the courage to represent a cause, even if it requires dying for that cause for the sake of others. Suffering so that others might be redeemed, whether that redemption takes a spiritual or political form, is considered among the most sacred of human acts. While people recognize this archetype in others, particularly when they are directly influenced by the individual sporting this pattern, they often cannot see it in themselves.”⁵

Reiki showed me I had spotted this archetype in my ancestral lineage. Still, I failed to recognize it in myself fully.

As it operated unconsciously within me, the Martyr archetype created patterns of over-giving, over-sharing, and poor boundaries sourced from guilt, shame, and a

Recognizing my heart’s desire to help others, I pursued training. I went to graduate school for clinical psychology to create safe healing containers for myself and others. I became a certified holistic health coach to further my ability to support others’ wellness journeys. I also received the support of therapists and sponsors in 12-Step groups to navigate the inner work necessary to repair unhealthy tendencies. I immersed myself in yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda in ashrams in India. I delved into Buddhist meditation and teachings in three countries, including a temporary monastic residency.

However, the Martyr archetype persisted, reinforcing dynamics of self-sabotage and over-responsibility, principally in my relationships. This archetype set me up, repeatedly, to struggle to fill my cup first before filling another’s cup. It had become increasingly subtle as I diligently tended my path of committed holistic self-care. Still, the archetype drained me of my energy and snaked its way through the dearest

parts of my life, crippling my growth in ever-stealthier ways.

Laying on my stomach during the session, I realized that since my first Holy Fire® Reiki training in September 2019, Reiki had healed countless layers of religious trauma and other deep wounds to prepare me to release this burden. It was that deep. Reiki presented me with the opportunity to receive relief from the religious trauma of the Martyr archetype encapsulated by the energetic image of the cross-to-bear pattern. Reiki was giving me a choice to let go and to heal.

A voice said, “Look, you know from your training that when an energetic object has such a clear shape, form, weight, and sensory image, it is ready to be released. Do you let go of it?” I gave a resounding inner, “YES, I let go. You have my full permission! Please remove it now and take it to the light to be healed. Please clear this from my entire ancestral lineage and beyond for the highest good of all. Thank you so much for showing me this object I had gotten so used to carrying, though unaware of it. Thank you for releasing me from this burden I never consciously accepted, but unconsciously inherited and took on to be my own. Thank you for healing this for my ancestors. Thank you for showing me this, so I can choose to co-create a new way of being.”

Waves of healing energy overtook me in an experience of bliss. The session eventually closed, and I felt ecstatically light, free, and more grateful than I had ever felt before. I have since dived deeply into ancestral healing work to cultivate good relations with all my ancestors and help them heal

so they may help from the other side at the highest possible level. Having the Martyr archetype fall away from my psyche has resulted in greater feelings of liberation and empowerment than ever before.

Reiki continues to teach me to receive goodness and manage my energy with love and care. Reiki reminds me I am a sovereign being, and I really do have the power to slow down, breathe, and manage my energy, even in these most challenging times. To be effective during these times, Reiki released me from this burden. I can see this now as a great offering of support and encouragement to carry on with greater grace, ease, and centeredness for a sustainable fulfillment of my mission on Earth.

Since experiencing this profound healing, I have treated clients’ backs in every Reiki session in person and online and discovered what is carried there. Repeatedly, I am being shown horrific images of trauma and abuse, often physically violent. Reiki suggests this often stems from painful childhood experiences and echoes throughout the ancestral lineage for many generations. Clients have confirmed receiving early abuse and trauma, particularly in the area of their “angel wings” on their backs between the shoulder blades.

In my latest Usui/Holy Fire® III Reiki I & II online class, I guided my students through all the hand positions, including the back positions, for treating others at a distance using their surrogate teddy bears. Reiki guided me to assign the Distant Symbol to the back positions. Again, Reiki revealed how useful it is to treat the back, to heal patterns of trauma and

abuse that are internalized and passed down through many generations. Reiki showed me the Distant symbol stretches back across time and space to heal the source of the trauma and abuse. The Distant symbol heals every soul involved as perpetrators and victims, like a chain of white Christmas lights turning on, one after the other, and the chain itself lighting up along the way as Reiki flows.

My students shared that the practice time felt as deep and even deeper for some as the Placement experience! Chronic feelings of being ungrounded, discomfort, and lack of safety in their physical bodies were replaced with feelings of safety, peace, love, and blissful embodiment. One student suffering from chronic illness remarked, “I have been at war with my body for so long that I never thought I could feel peace this quickly. I always hoped it would one day happen for me, but it was extremely far off. Now I see Reiki brings me peace, and I finally feel safe in my body.”

Experiencing firsthand this function of Reiki at work inspires my trust in Reiki to heal and clear even the deepest, dense, darkest, lowest vibration, oldest, most painful patterns of relating with self and other humans. These same patterns and troublesome archetypes have shaped how humans relate to the earth and its life forms, enacting a traumatic and abusive war relationship with the abundant, beautiful, and great ecosystem we are a part of. By healing and clearing these relational patterns and transmuting the archetypes, we receive even more empowerment and liberation to allow the power of love to guide the forma-

tion and creation of a physically manifested New Earth filled with loving frequencies of the Third Heaven.

Reiki's release of these ancestral wounds provides such an immediate feeling of peace and safety here and now. I feel it in myself and see it reflected in my clients and students. Once again, I am humbled and thankful for the beautiful, mysterious unfoldment of continuous surrender to the pure light of Reiki. ■

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Endnotes

- ¹ Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969).
- ² "Jungian Archetypes," Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungian_archetypes.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ "Archetypes," Caroline Myss, June 13, 2015, <https://www.myss.com/free-resources/sacred-contracts-and-your-archetypes/archetypes>.
- ⁵ "Appendix: A Gallery of Archetypes," Caroline Myss, August 17, 2015, <https://www.myss.com/free-resources/sacred-contracts-and-your-archetypes/appendix-a-gallery-of-archetypes>.