

# Reiki and Biofield Therapies Reduce Stress in Young Adults

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## Introduction

In the modern world, young adults face unprecedented levels of psychological stress due to academic pressure, career uncertainty, social dynamics, digital overload and identity development. This stress often manifests as anxiety, sleep disturbances, fatigue and reduced emotional regulation, with long-term consequences for both mental and physical health. Traditional therapeutic models such as cognitive behavioral therapy, pharmacological interventions and lifestyle modifications are often effective, but not universally accessible, acceptable, or sufficient. In this context, energy-based healing modalities like Reiki and other biofield therapies have gained popularity for their non-invasive, holistic approach to stress reduction. These therapies aim to balance the body's subtle energy fields to promote relaxation, mental clarity and emotional stability. Emerging evidence and integrative healthcare frameworks increasingly recognize their role in supporting stress resilience among young adults. This review explores the efficacy of Reiki and biofield therapies in reducing stress, highlighting clinical findings, theoretical underpinnings and experiential outcomes within this age group.

## Description

Reiki is a Japanese energy healing technique that involves the transfer of universal life force energy through the practitioner's hands, either through light touch or hovering gestures. It is grounded in the belief that imbalances or blockages in the body's energy field often referred to as the biofield can contribute to physical and emotional distress. Other biofield therapies, such as Therapeutic Touch and Healing Touch, follow similar principles but may employ different methodologies or theoretical bases. All of these modalities aim to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, enhance energy flow and restore harmony between the mind and body. The stress response is mediated by the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system, which trigger the release of cortisol and other stress hormones. Chronic stress leads to a sustained state of sympathetic overactivity, compromising immune function, disrupting sleep, impairing memory and exacerbating mood disorders. Biofield therapies are thought to interrupt this cycle by inducing the relaxation response, characterized by reduced heart rate, lower blood pressure, slower respiratory rate and increased vagal tone. These physiological changes mirror those seen in meditation and other mindfulness practices and help re-establish autonomic balance.

Several studies have explored the effects of Reiki and similar therapies on stress biomarkers and self-reported anxiety levels. A randomized controlled trial conducted at the University of Arizona examined college students undergoing

academic stress. Participants who received four 30-minute Reiki sessions over two weeks exhibited significant reductions in perceived stress, anxiety and blood pressure compared to the control group. Another study published in Journal of Evidence-Based Complementary & Alternative Medicine reported that young adult participants who received Healing Touch therapy had significantly reduced salivary cortisol levels and improved emotional resilience after just three sessions. Mechanistically, although biofield therapies lack a universally accepted physiological explanation, some hypotheses suggest they work through bioelectromagnetic interactions. The human body emits low-level electromagnetic fields, particularly around the heart and brain and practitioners may influence these fields via coherent heart rhythms, focused intention and electromagnetic resonance. Additionally, theories of quantum coherence and subtle energy dynamics propose that biofield therapies may operate at levels not yet fully measurable by conventional instrumentation but still capable of eliciting psychophysiological responses [1].

Qualitative data also support the impact of Reiki on young adults' stress and mental well-being. Participants in university-based integrative wellness programs often describe Reiki sessions as deeply calming, emotionally grounding and mentally clarifying. Many report improved sleep, reduced nervous tension, better focus and a greater sense of inner peace following regular sessions. These subjective outcomes, though difficult to quantify, are important indicators of a therapy's holistic efficacy and have contributed to the rising demand for Reiki in campus counseling centers, wellness retreats and community health settings. One notable advantage of Reiki and biofield therapies is their accessibility and low risk. Sessions typically require minimal equipment, cause no side effects and can be conducted in-person or at a distance, making them ideal for time-constrained or digitally oriented young adults. Unlike pharmaceutical options, there is no risk of dependency and unlike talk therapies, the interventions do not require verbal articulation of emotions, which may be especially appealing to those experiencing emotional overwhelm or introversion. These characteristics position biofield therapies as especially adaptable within integrative and preventive mental health care models for young populations.

Despite their potential, Reiki and other energy therapies face skepticism due to a lack of conventional mechanistic validation and the difficulty of placebo control in studies involving touch and intention. Some researchers argue that benefits may be attributable to relaxation and interpersonal connection rather than specific energetic mechanisms. However, even critics acknowledge the value of patient-centered outcomes and many clinical trials report statistically and clinically significant benefits even when compared to sham treatments. In fact, sham-controlled Reiki studies have still shown marked reductions in anxiety, suggesting that the therapeutic environment and client-practitioner interaction alone may play a healing role, regardless of underlying energy theory. Academic institutions are beginning to respond to student stress with a wider array of therapeutic options. Universities in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia now offer Reiki sessions through health services, with some incorporating energy healing into courses on integrative medicine. Feedback from students indicates strong appreciation for the opportunity to explore non-traditional therapies in a supportive, low-pressure environment. These programs often pair Reiki with other complementary practices such as aromatherapy, breathwork, or yoga to create a multi-modal stress relief approach [2].

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## Conclusion

Reiki and biofield therapies offer promising, low-risk solutions for managing stress among young adults navigating the emotional and cognitive demands of modern life. By inducing deep relaxation, modulating the stress response and enhancing subjective well-being, these therapies support autonomic balance and psychological resilience. While debates over mechanistic validity continue, the growing body of empirical and experiential evidence supports their integration into comprehensive, youth-centered mental health programs. As stress-related disorders continue to rise in young populations, Reiki and other energy-based therapies stand as meaningful, accessible options in the broader framework of integrative and preventive mental healthcare.

## Acknowledgment

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## Conflict of Interest

None.

## References

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