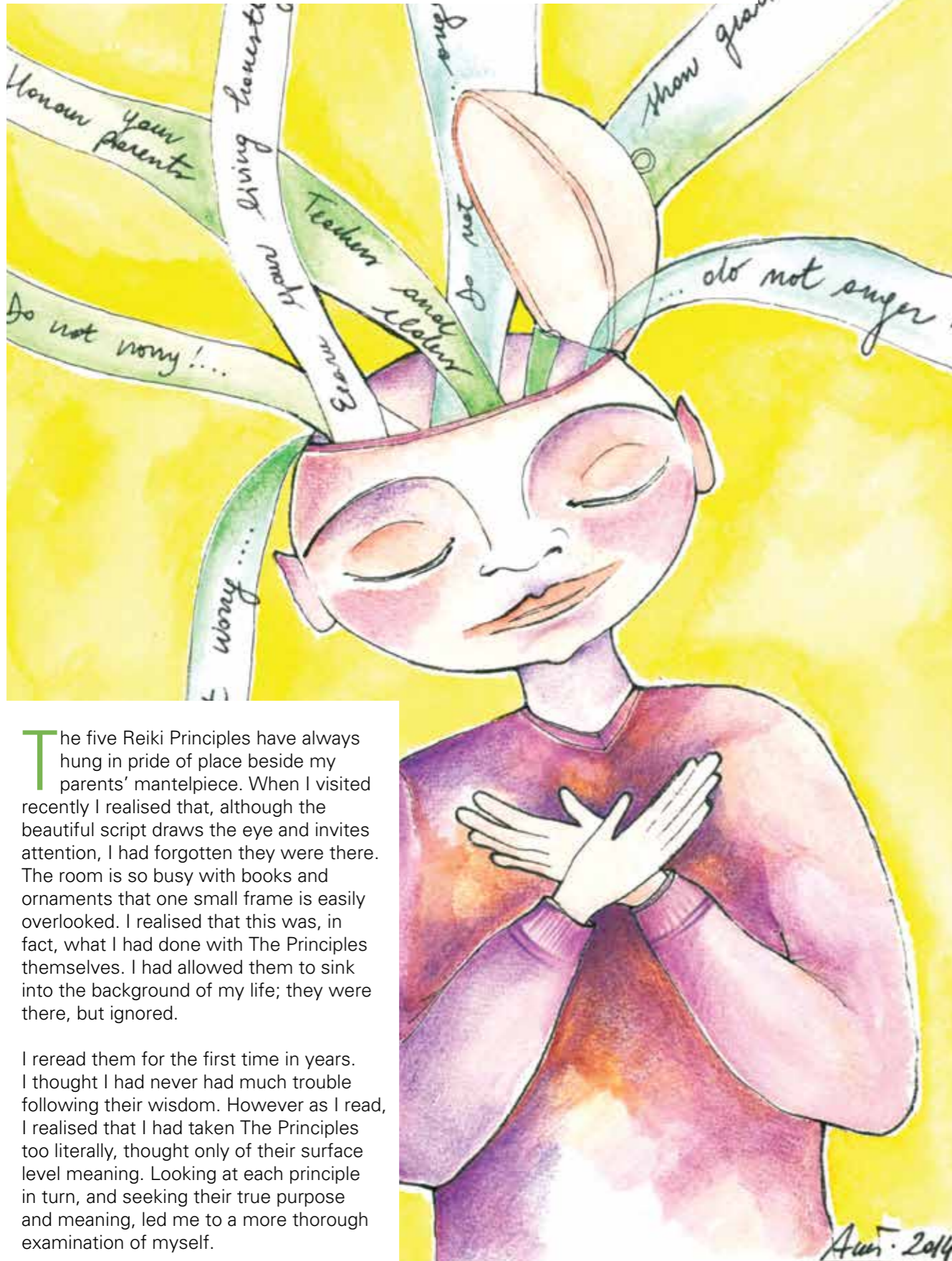


The Reiki Principles

Sarah McNamee gets introspective



The five Reiki Principles have always hung in pride of place beside my parents' mantelpiece. When I visited recently I realised that, although the beautiful script draws the eye and invites attention, I had forgotten they were there. The room is so busy with books and ornaments that one small frame is easily overlooked. I realised that this was, in fact, what I had done with The Principles themselves. I had allowed them to sink into the background of my life; they were there, but ignored.

I reread them for the first time in years. I thought I had never had much trouble following their wisdom. However as I read, I realised that I had taken The Principles too literally, thought only of their surface level meaning. Looking at each principle in turn, and seeking their true purpose and meaning, led me to a more thorough examination of myself.

Just for today do not worry

Most of us worry every day. I worry that I'm not good enough, smart enough, brave enough; I worry about my family's health and happiness; I worry about the future and worry over past events. Worries are inhibitive, not allowing us to take risks that could lead to happiness. Following this principle is made easier when we stop trying to completely eradicate our fears, and instead focus on not worrying 'just for today', just for a little while. I have begun to take 10 minutes before bed to think through all the worries of the day and sort them into two categories: things I can fix and things I cannot. If any of them have practical solutions (90% of them do not), then I plan how I can alleviate the worry. If there's really nothing I can do about a situation then I try and cast it aside. By allowing myself to think through my anxieties, making a realistic plan of action and trying to accept that there are things I cannot change, I am able to calm my mind and trust that whatever choices I make will lead to the right path.

Just for today do not anger

Being pregnant is supposed to fill you with the warm glow of impending motherhood, the knowledge that you are creating life making you feel like a goddess. Instead, I felt constantly nauseous and immensely tired. During my pregnancy I planned a wedding and moved house, two of the most stressful events in a woman's life. Usually the calmest person in the room, my physical incapability made me incredibly frustrated. Of course I took it out on my husband, sister and parents; it's always those closest to you whom you can hurt the most. One particularly loud screaming match between sisters (over something incredibly inconsequential) made me realise that I had to calm down. I began by practising breathing exercises once a day, incorporating sounds and songs. There is something very uplifting about singing – perhaps it is the vibrations flowing through the body. I usually only sing when I am happy, so by singing I was fooling my mind into believing it was contented. Towards the end of my pregnancy, I tried to have a singing session once a day, and when I felt myself becoming frustrated I would take a deep breath and let the irritation go as I breathed out. My husband was incredibly relieved!

Honour your parents, teachers and elders

As a child I never felt the need for rebellion. As I grew up I realised and accepted that adults are flawed and fallible, but came to respect my parents even more, knowing

them as adults and equals. I always go to them for advice, acknowledging their extra years' experience and understanding of the world. However, I am fairly unusual amongst my friends. The emphasis of today's society seems to be on glorifying youth, and not on respecting age and experience. It saddens me to think that the wisdom of previous generations is being disregarded instead of consulted. There is a difference between honouring and respecting one's elders and trusting and obeying them simply because of their perceived authority. Trust needs to be earned, but I think respect is universal.

Earn your living honestly

In 2009, right at the start of the recession, I was made redundant from my comfortable office job. I hadn't seen it coming, and I panicked. I had never meant for administration to become my career, but the easy path had led me there. It was the perfect moment to reassess what I wanted out of a job and out of life, but I was scared to make such a massive decision. After much reflection, I applied to university – only one institution and one course – trusting that I would get in if I was meant to, and I did. Four difficult years later, I am finally building up my perfect career and I am happy. It can be easy to earn a living honestly, but more difficult to be honest to yourself.

Show gratitude to every living thing

It is difficult to genuinely feel gratitude; showing gratitude is even trickier. My baby son brings me so much laughter and joy, but I can feel quite isolated and exhausted. One particularly harrowing day, he had not slept at all and would not feed because of awful teething pains. My husband came home to an emotional wife. He took the baby, ran me a bath, and told me that I was an amazing mum. I was incredibly grateful for his understanding and constant support, and so I thanked him. Such a simple thing, the 'thank you' is often said off-hand to the stranger in the shop, but is not always used to tell those close to me how precious they are. I have become more aware of this, and am seeking to show my gratitude more often, through little gestures, and gifts, of thanks.

I am finding that following the Reiki Principles requires deliberate effort and conscious reflection. After taking the time to re-examine their meaning within my life I feel more content and more connected to the world through performing Reiki and by practising calmness and consideration. □