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ANIMALS AS MIRRORS, ANIMALS AS HEALERS

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Abstract

The human-animal bond offers profound healing for people and their animal companions when the people recognize that their animals' behaviors and illnesses are a reflection of what is going with them. Getting this message across in a way that empowers the people, without it getting distorted into guilt and self-judgment, is a crucial part of this job. In this respect, animal communicators become healing guides, just as therapists, acupuncturists, massage practitioners, etc., are for their clients.

The healing human-animal bond

The human-animal bond is a well-researched phenomenon of healing. Elderly people gain a renewed sense of purpose when they have a pet to care for. Depressed people turn their attention outward. People with emotional disabilities discover – or re-discover – trust and love. People with physical disabilities become more self sufficient and independent. What, you may ask, is new about this?

As an animal communicator with a background in counseling, coaching and soft skills training, I get to see on a daily basis profound healing for people and their animal companions when the people recognize that their animals' behaviors and illnesses are reflections of what is going on with them. While this is not always the case, it has proven true most of the time. It can be a reflection of something obvious, or something that is subtle or even unconscious.

Animals have a lot to teach us about living, dying, loving and relating. Often a translator can markedly enhance the communications of animals, enabling their people to broaden and deepen the relationship. Animals communicate in thought forms, pictures and feelings. They receive communication from us first through our feelings, then the pictures of our thoughts and finally the words we use. The communicator's job is to be as clear a translator as possible for the thoughts and feelings of both the animals and their humans. In fact, most of the communicator's work is with the people. The messages from the animals usually come clearly and quickly.

The communication process is telepathic (sending thoughts and feelings over distance through extrasensory means). The fact that they are participating in a telepathic process begins to expand people – skeptics and believers alike. I regularly tell my clients that I believe this is a capacity encoded in our DNA. As cave people, before we had the physiological structures for speech, we had to have more ways of communicating with our tribe than a few hand signals and grunts. We could not have survived and evolved as a species if we didn't share more complicated thinking.*

Here are some stories that illustrate the profound healing potential of animal communication.

Josie and Ellen: A Matter of Relationship

Josephine, a 5-year-old lab mix, was going blind from retinal atrophy. She told me, "The man is mean to her and makes her sad and cry." When Ellen, her person, called, Josie had just come out of a 6-hour episode where she was frantically bumping into furniture and walls. Josie said Ellen did not see how destructive her 20-year, on again, off again relationship was. Josie temporarily lost her sight immediately after the man literally kicked her off the bed. Ellen told me he didn't mean it; and added that he was a master healer. In telling Ellen what Josie had to say, (and reminding her that true healers are not mean), Ellen reluctantly confirmed Josie's observation.

Josie told me her job was to keep showing Ellen that the relationship was bad for her. And she was determined to keep pointing it out until Ellen got it. Josie was adamant, even though she was suffering physically because of it.

Ellen asked me to tell Josie she got it, and wanted Josie to stop showing it to her. Josie was clear that she had a job to do and would not shirk it.

The shift for Josie happened when I told her she's done her job. "Ellen knows the situation, and now it's hers to handle." Josie had a choice: to continue doing this job and go blind, or to take on another job. Her vision stabilized after she began hanging out in Ellen's studio, telling me her new job was to amplify Ellen's focus in her work. Ellen's shift happened about a year and a half later, when she permanently ended the relationship.

Ellen reported that she didn't know if she would have ever left this relationship if it hadn't been for Josie. It never occurred to her that Josie's going blind was in any way connected to her. She found it very sobering. Ellen says she now "uses" Josie in the best sense of the word. She always asks herself what is going on with her when Josie acts or ails in any unusual way

Pixal and the Meeting: Stop it!

Pixal is a 2 year-old cockatiel rescued by an animal behaviorist. Pixal's talents included whistling Dixie ("Somewhere down in the land of cotton..."), as well as imitating the sound of internet dialup.

There was a fundraising meeting going on in the large office where Pixal and his friends lived, according to Michael, the behaviorist. The meeting got increasingly heated as the people attending got more and more frustrated. Voices were loud, energy was intense – and Pixal chimed in with a cacophony of noise that sounded like a frenzied, off-key version

of Dixie with a few phone line beeps thrown in. He was also picking at his feathers between squawks. He got louder than the people – until someone in the group pointed it out and the people settled down. Pixal did also.

Michael called to tell me this “amazing thing Pixal did.” What I discovered is that Pixal, by nature, is a very sensitive bird – more so than is typical for his species and breed. He told me he had been upset all the time when he lived in his other home. It was noisy and there were lots of fights. Where he was now was sounding like where he used to live, and he wanted it to stop. He was yelling at them in the only way he knew.

The bird has now become a permanent fixture at meetings. When he starts to squawk instead of sing, the people start to look at their group process.

Michael found the idea that Pixal matched the energy of a meeting fascinating. He is pleased to have a barometer for what is going on in these meetings. Michael said it was often frustrating because the meetings usually ended up this way. He said they don't need to hire a facilitator now: When Pixal squawks, they stop and figure out what is going on in the group's dynamics. The meetings are much more productive now.

Mae and Sandy - Where am I?

When she was three years old, Mae was adopted from Greyhound rescue by Sandy and her two teenaged sons. Mae was a friendly, happy dog most of the time. The two exceptions were when Sandy's brother came into her house wearing a leather jacket and cap, and when the boys had friends over. She would whine, bark, pant, growl, and sometimes pace.

Mae, it turns out, was experiencing post traumatic stress. She showed me a mental picture of a man in a leather jacket and cap pulling her out of her crate harshly and shoving her into a racing gate, and then a lot of people making a lot of noise, a gun firing – and she was terrified. I told Sandy that her brother's leather jacket and cap, and the noise the boys made, reminded Mae of the track, and then her fear kicked in. She forgot she was with them in a whole other life. She also said that Sandy didn't like the noise either. I recommended Rescue Remedy (a combination of Bach flower essences) for both of them when Mae began to get agitated. I also suggested that, when Mae started to act distressed, they connect to her as we had just done, and to remind her silently that she was with them now; that this is her forever home; this is her house; it is not the track; and she will never have to go back to the track. The boys were a bit skeptical, but agreed to try it. Over a fairly short period of time, Mae's pacing, whining, panting and growling subsided to only rare occasions.

Sandy said that it never occurred to her that a dog could suffer from post traumatic stress. It made perfect sense to her, though. Sandy also had no idea that Mae was picking up on her distress at the noise and chaos in the house. Ever so skeptically, she reported, she gave Mae the Rescue Remedy – and took some herself. She asked her brother to at least take his cap off when he came in. Her boys also agreed, (after rolling their eyes) to remind Mae silently that she was here and not there. To her utter amazement, Sandy said, she felt better, Mae settled down, and the boys really got into talking to her when they saw how much more relaxed and calm she became. Sandy feels the whole process made her boys much more sensitive, which can only help them in adulthood.

Dancer and Mary Lou: We're going to try this

Dancer is a 2-year-old filly with a lot of racing talent. But she was very erratic. Sometimes she would follow commands and sometimes she wouldn't. Sometimes she would let the stable hands near her, and sometimes she wouldn't. At one point, she even threw her rider. She was being labelled a "head case" and a rogue horse, but her person, Mary Lou, didn't think this was so. She called me at a critical point in deciding Dancer's future. Dancer told me her neck and head hurt. In an energy scan of her body, I felt tightness in her neck and a severe headache.

Mary Lou first took Dancer for a nuclear body scan, which showed no physical abnormality. She insisted that Dancer's handlers stop disciplining her. Mary Lou then called in several energy healers – a craniosacral practitioner, an acupuncturist, and an equine massage therapist. The combination of energy treatments loosened the tightness in her neck, and relieved her headaches and TMJ pains.

Dancer has raced three times now. In her first race, she came in third. She ran well and began learning how to partner with her rider. She said she felt fine and loved to run fast. In her second race, she narrowly escaped serious injury when she was pressed against the fence by another horse. In her third race, she came in fourth, but seemed to have lost her edge. Dancer said she didn't know if she wanted to be a racehorse. She wanted to race two more times and then decide. She said her neck and head still felt fine.

Mary Lou over-rode the advice of the "experts" and fought for what she intuitively knew to be the correct intervention. She also saw how Dancer mirrored her. They both have tough, confident, strong facades, which cover sensitive and sometimes fragile natures. "Actually knowing what was wrong with Dancer, instead of guessing, gave me what I needed to advocate for her," Mary Lou said. "I knew she wasn't a rogue. She's feisty and full of herself, but not a rogue. I couldn't let her be sacrificed that way. She said she doesn't know if she wants to be a racehorse, and I will honor her wishes. I took a stand for her and for all of my horses. This process has brought me closer to all of them, and has changed the way I make career decisions for them. They deserve a say in their futures. "

Yofey, Tiger and Judy: You're not making him stop

Judy and her 9-year-old son lived with Yofey, an adorable, lovable, if somewhat neurotic mixed breed dog. When Yofey was 10, Tiger joined the household. Tiger was an 8-week-old kitten. Yofey loved Tiger and acted as his mom in the first couple of months. She liked it a lot. Judy, her person, commented that Yofey and she now really shared a life experience.

About 6 months later, Yofey started peeing on Judy's down comforter. Judy invited me to communicate with her dog. Yofey's story was that Tiger was being mean to her and no one was stopping him. Indeed, Tiger said he enjoyed jumping out of bushes and bouncing off of Yofey's back when she went for a walk.

Tiger thought it was great fun and couldn't understand why Yofey didn't like it. It took a few conversations to sort it out and encourage the animals to find their place of harmony. Judy and her son, Ben, agreed to spend time with each animal individually, telling each one, using both mental pictures and words, how he or she was special. When the animals got into a tiff, Judy or Ben would tell them to work out their differences quickly, because harmony was required in the house. Tiger stopped ambushing Yofey, and settled into the role of top cat; Yofey stopped peeing on the comforter.

Judy comments: "This really resulted in a family intervention. I am a therapist and a single mom, and I am delighted that my son is learning the complexity of all relationships. These animals are his siblings, and he has learned through them about patience, focus and compassion. He talks to them all the time. This has given us a more complex family, and as we adjust for the reality of the animals, we grow and expand ourselves."

Terri and Mayan – You are suffocating

My own cat, Mayan, is a very sensitive being. His curiosity has gotten him into trouble on more than one occasion. Three times over an 8-month period he put his head through the handles of a plastic bag to explore what was inside. When he was done rummaging and wanted to go on to the next thing, the bag got stuck on his collar as he withdrew his head. He couldn't get away from it. He'd panic, run all over the house, poop behind a sofa, and on one occasion even bit me when I tried to get the bag off.

I was the only one who could go near him, and it took an average of 5 hours before he stopped hissing at me. Because it happened so many times, always with the same result, I knew it was a reflection of something going on in my life. I was clueless, however, as to what it was.

Despite many unsuccessful attempts to get from Mayan what he was trying to tell me, I realized that my emotional state prevented my getting any really useful information from him. So I consulted my animal communication teacher. Mayan told her that I was choking on something and it was squeezing the life out of me. It didn't take long for me to realize who it was: a friend who would call almost daily and spend an hour chattering on about inane things. For many reasons, I wouldn't set a boundary with her. Mayan was showing me the real effect of this relationship. Once I set some boundaries, Mayan never again got a bag stuck around his throat.

Rocky, Don and Arlene – I will make you better

Rocky, a 6-year-old Maltese, was in severe pain. He would wince and cry whenever he walked. He couldn't go up or down steps, or jump. He was losing his balance, acting lethargic, and tiring easily. Four vets checked him over and found nothing. They saw an active, alert dog in their office. They gave him high doses of steroids and pain medication, and started talking about an MRI and exploratory surgery because his person, Arlene, insisted something was wrong with him. Feeling that conventional medicine was failing him, Arlene, a nurse, began exploring alternative approaches.

Tuning in to Rocky, I found a sad, confused and anxious dog. He insisted he wasn't doing his job, which was to make his two people, Arlene and her husband, Don, better. Don had renal cancer and was dying. He survived a series of medical crises through experimental procedures, but was getting weaker and wobblier with each treatment.

Rocky also told me that Don was talking to him about dying and how afraid he was, and that Arlene was sad and nervous. Rocky was overwhelmed and didn't know what to do to make it better.

I suggested to Arlene to explain to Rocky that she was sad and nervous because "Daddy" was dying. She was handling it, and it was not necessary for Rocky to take on Don's dizziness and fatigue, plus her anxiety.

She also carefully told Don that Rocky was trying to save him. and it was crucial for Rocky's well-being that Don tell him what a great companion he was, and that that was an important job in and of itself. His job did not include taking on Don's pain.

Using flower essences, coupled with several conversations, Rocky came to understand that his job was to be Don's companion and buddy. It was not necessary to take on his symptoms. In fact, taking on Don's symptoms was making things much worse, because his beloved humans were then afraid he was really sick.

According to Arlene, Rocky "miraculously" perked up, started playing with his toys, and insisted on long walks. Arlene's anxiety and stress was much more manageable once she only had one invalid to care for.

Arlene said: "When Rocky snapped out of whatever it was, I can't describe my relief. It was nothing short of amazing. One day he was at death's door, and the next he was acting like a puppy. I had a partner in taking care of Don instead of my having to take care of both of them. We all loved each other so much, and were suffering with this in our own private worlds. Then Rocky "told" on us. Don and I began talking about what was really important to us. It let Rocky and me fully share Don's life and death. I started something then that I continue today – talking to Rocky, telling him what was going to happen, telling him my feelings, thanking him for listening and for just being with me. Whenever I try to cover my feelings and tell him something I think will make him feel better, he acts confused and anxious. I have learned a lot about honesty and intimacy from this experience."

Conclusions – and a personal note:

These stories are typical of the work I've done over the past seven years. My focus is healing – both the animals and their people. In that context, weaving the thread of reflection can be tricky. It must be relayed with great care, so the impetus for the person to change doesn't get distorted into guilt and self-judgment. That is why so much of my work is with the people.

My journey with this work has been profound. I have learned that animals want what we want: to be respected; to be deeply seen and heard; to be celebrated for who they are; to have their life purposes recognized; and to have their wishes considered when their future is at stake. To be able to facilitate that, and to witness the growth on the part of the humans, is very satisfying work.

I have learned so many things about animals and about myself. I am more able to shift out of preconceived ideas and judgments into a mindset of curiosity and wondering what needs attention. Because animals respond most intensely to our feelings, I have become more congruent with my thoughts and feelings, and, as a result, more clear about who I am. I have learned to strip through complex rationalizations and overlays to get to the simple truths of what is important to whomever I am engaging. My creative problem-solving skills are much sharper as I come up with effective strategies for resolving issues between people and their animal companions. I have learned gracious ways to say "no," and compassionate ways to deliver sensitive and highly charged messages.

I have spent most of my adult life finding my voice and learning how to communicate from my heart. Animals, too, are silent. We hear them through our hearts, not our heads. They need interpreters and advocates to give them their voice.

As I see my reflection in their mirror, I realize just how much animals have to teach us about living, healing, relating, adapting, and even dying.

Terri Diener is an animal communicator working and living in Maryland. She has been studying and practicing in this field since 1995. She brings to her practice a background in individual and corporate coaching, counseling, and soft skills training (team building, communication skills, stress management, creative problem solving) in organizations of all sizes. She holds a Master's degree in social sciences, and practitioner's certifications in Organizational Energetics and Neurolinguistic Programming. She also has a Black Belt in Kenpo Karate. Terri is also the founder of The Animal Kinship Alliance, an association of like-minded animals lovers, service providers, and animal-friendly businesses, dedicated to educating people about who animals really are. Terri works closely with veterinarians and trainers as well as with animals and their human companions.

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*Modern science is demonstrating the reality of telepathic communication. The Schumann resonance describes the electromagnetic waves in the space between the earth's surface and the ionosphere 55 miles up. These electromagnetic waves have been documented to occur at frequencies between 6 and 50 cycles per second (cps). They have been specifically recorded at frequencies of 7.8, 14, 20, 26, 33, 39, and 45 cps. (<http://image.gsfc.nasa.gov/poetry/ask/q768.html>) (www.innerx.net/personal/tsmith/schumann.html)

Human brain waves have been recorded from 3 to 40+ cps. These brainwaves correspond to different states of awareness. In the theta state, brain waves occur at 6-8 cps. In this state, thoughts and ideas flow freely, unencumbered by censorship or guilt. This correspondence of frequencies suggests that human thought can travel from place to place. (<http://brain.web-us.com/binaural.htm>) (<http://brain.web-us.com/brainfunction.htm>)

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