



ANIMALS DO TALK

WHAT ANIMALS TELL ME
THEY WANT YOU TO KNOW



Carrie O'Neill
AND HUNDREDS OF ANIMALS

Animals DO Talk

WHAT ANIMALS TELL ME THEY WANT YOU
TO KNOW

CARRIE O'NEILL

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*This book is dedicated to Pattie and Roy Brixen,
my aunt and uncle and bonus set of parents,
who nurtured me and my connection to animals.*

As a child, I spent a month each summer living in their home in San Francisco with an ever-evolving menagerie of dogs, cats, fish, and birds, including an African grey parrot who could carry on meaningful conversations. Pattie and Roy hand-raised and found homes for hundreds of abandoned kittens and puppies who were brought to the veterinary clinic where Pattie worked. Later they moved to a farm and expanded their family to include llamas and goats in need of special care.

Pattie and Roy showed me that unconditional love and a genuine desire to understand the unique perspectives and needs of each individual helps all creatures flourish, including me. This philosophy is the foundation for all of my conversations with animals.

There are no words that could ever be sufficient to express my love and gratitude.

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Introduction

For many of us, animals are an integral part of our everyday lives. We share our hearts and our homes with them, but how well do we really understand our animal family members? This book will help you develop a deeper connection with your animals every step of the way — from the moment you start considering adding an animal to your family, to preparing for end of life, and everything in between. The wisdom shared in these pages comes from the animals themselves. In addition to hundreds of conversations with clients' animals, I also interviewed several animals specifically for this book. I asked one simple question: "what would you like humans to know?" The results are fascinating.

You don't have to be an animal communicator to understand your animal. This book is designed to awaken you to the possibilities that animals are constantly communicating with you, have incredible wisdom to offer, and understand so much more than you think.

The book is organized in seven parts, with several chapters in each part. Each chapter is designed to stand alone,

so you can turn to any chapter that interests you and explore the concepts in it.

The Preface, *My Journey from Lawyer to Animal Communicator*, describes how I discovered that I could converse with animals, and how those conversations actually incorporate many of the skills I developed in my more traditional professional roles.

Part I, *The ABCs of Understanding Animals*, introduces six concepts that animals have identified as important to understanding them. The concepts are simple yet powerful mental shifts that foster communication.

Part II, *Inviting an Animal into Your Family*, describes a process for selecting animal family members and strategies to ease their transition into your family.

Part III, *Understanding Animal “Jobs”*, discusses four common types of jobs animals may assign themselves and how these jobs can influence animal behavior.

Part IV, *Solving “Problems” and Mysteries*, provides processes for assessing and addressing problems you may encounter with your animal. It also includes animals’ unexpected explanations for common challenges. For example, does your dog inexplicably get aggressive around a specific person for a reason you can’t explain? Ask yourself, does that person drain your energy? If so, your dog may be trying to drive that person away because of their effect on you (see chapter 39).

Part V, *End-of-Life Decision-making and Beyond*, explains how animals perceive death, what animals do and do not worry about at the end of life, and the many ways they stay connected with you in spirit form. It also includes advice from the animals about how to approach a beloved animal’s death more peacefully.

Part VI, *Animal Wisdom to Live By*, includes advice from

animals on using our brains better, understanding ourselves, navigating life transitions with grace, and living in joy. It also includes dogs' unique perspectives on dating and relationships.

Part VII contains two Appendices. The first offers Tips for Working with Your Veterinarian. The second includes stories and suggestions for Connecting with Wild Animals.

My Journey From Lawyer to Animal Communicator

BRINGING ALL OF MY SKILLS TOGETHER

Long before I could communicate with animals in full conversations, my beloved first horse Lucky knew how to proactively “call” me — popping into my mind and telling me he needed help. He only called me a few times in our 14 years together but whenever he did it was important, especially the day I found him bleeding and in need of stitches.

Honestly, I didn’t really believe in the ability to have full conversations with animals for most of my life, even though I wished for that skill ever since childhood when I saw my first princess movie. I had no interest in being a princess — I’d rather be in a barn than a ballroom — but I would gladly have done Cinderella’s chores if it meant I could actually have conversations with animals.

From the time I was four years old, I told my parents the world would be a better place if people spent time just being with horses. I don’t know how I knew that since I didn’t have a horse when I was a child, but I was confident bringing horses and humans together would be part of my future.

Unfortunately, the horse career book my parents gave me didn't have any options that resonated with me, other than veterinarian, which I briefly considered. I volunteered at the veterinary hospital where my aunt worked and also at the hospice where my mother worked. These early experiences in healthcare intrigued me, but I knew by the time I was a teenager that I didn't have what it takes for a career involving daily life and death decisions.

I studied Sociology at Northwestern University in a combined degree program which allowed me to earn both a bachelors and masters in four years. During a semester of "field studies," I worked with the in-house legal counsel office in a large academic medical center in Chicago. The general counsel was an incredible mentor who inspired my career path into healthcare regulatory law. One day while teaching a health law class, he was accused by a medical student of being there just to protect the hospital. He immediately answered that the best way to protect the hospital was to take excellent care of the patients, clinically and interpersonally as well. This resonated deeply with me, as I could see the huge difference between the personalized care at the hospice and in the vet clinic where I volunteered, and the more common healthcare model of treating the disease while largely ignoring the patient's individual preferences, goals, and concerns.

The field studies program introduced me to the complex and fascinating healthcare regulatory world and the many ways the law impacts patient care. I continued working at the hospital after my field studies semester ended, diving deeper into legal issues and ethical quandaries. My passion for patient-centered care, in which clinicians work in partnership with patients, families, and the entire healthcare team, was fueled by these experiences.

My mentor inspired me to go to law school and encouraged me to spend a couple of years in litigation gaining a broader perspective before moving into a health care law position. In my brief foray into litigation, I served as a judicial clerk in federal district court and as an associate at a well-known firm where I had the opportunity to participate in a trial involving a high-profile public figure. Those two years provided an invaluable education, not only in the law, but in human behavior, particularly how inaccurate assumptions and misunderstandings of intentions are often the foundation of unnecessary conflict. I joined a firm with a strong healthcare regulatory focus, was hired by a client, and served as a Vice President of two healthcare associations, one state and one international, before becoming a healthcare consultant. In all of these roles I was developing expertise in the emerging field of patient-centered care. In 2009, I was invited by a publisher to write my first book, a guide to the new federal patient experience survey, HCAHPS.

I had not forgotten my childhood dream. Even though I had no idea how horses would fit into my professional life, my first horse Lucky joined my family as soon as I could afford to keep him. Everything started to make sense when I learned that Stanford University was partnering with horses to teach medical students how to be better doctors.

The field of equine-assisted learning didn't yet exist when I was four, but once I found out about it, my childhood vision became a career goal. I studied, got certified, and was delighted to learn that all of the other professional work I had done was relevant to this field. Facilitating transformation with individuals and groups was a core part of my work; with the addition of the horses I now had partners who, through their body language and responses, could quickly

identify moment to moment what was going on with an individual or team.

In 2016, I built Possibilities Farm and began offering equine-assisted learning and wellness programs. My dream had come true. Living with the horses was, and is, an amazing educational experience. My first horse Lucky was always boarded at someone else's barn but Possibilities Farm was at home, so I could observe the horses day and night. Slowly, without me even realizing it, the horses taught me how to hear them. People coming to my farm for programs saw how easily we understood each other and started telling me I was an animal communicator. I dismissed their comments, saying I just spent a lot of time with my herd and understood them well. This went on for a couple of years until a woman with a possibly broken hand and a horse with a mysterious medical issue proved to me that my ability to communicate with animals was more extensive than I believed.

The woman with the injured hand came to my farm for a "horse wisdom circle," which involved meditating in the presence of the horses. When she arrived, she was visibly upset and her hand was swollen. She said she had fallen down the stairs at home on the way to come to the program. I encouraged her to get medical attention, but she begged me to let her stay, telling me that being with the horses that evening was more important to her wellbeing. Reluctantly, I agreed.

She chose to sit right in front of my largest horse, Sweet Potato. As soon as the silent meditation started he put his huge nose on her injured hand. She was thrilled, but I was concerned that if he nuzzled her hand he might cause harm if she already had a broken bone. With a gentle touch on his chest, I asked Potato to step back. He did but then he stared at

me intently. I had the sense he was sternly saying “Let me do my job!” Since this was a silent meditation, I couldn’t explain out loud why this wasn’t safe so I decided to imagine I was having a conversation with him. In my mind I explained I was doing my job because I knew how fragile human hands were and needed to make sure he didn’t inadvertently cause further damage. Then Potato did something amazing — he put his nose in my hands and, without moving his lips, he just breathed on my hands for a couple of minutes and asked if that would be ok. In my mind I said yes, after which he stepped over and did exactly that with the delighted client.

After the event was over, one of my regular clients who attended that night approached me and asked if she had witnessed a silent conversation between me and Sweet Potato about how to safely support that client. She challenged me to finally admit that my ability to communicate went far beyond just knowing my horses well. I couldn’t deny it, as I was amazed myself. I was elated to discover that I had this special relationship with my herd, but still didn’t believe I was an “animal communicator.”

Several months later, a horse named Gratitude changed the course of my life by proving to me that I could talk to any animal and by connecting me with humans who insisted on getting the word out about my skills. I was co-teaching a professional development program at a farm in North Carolina with a friend and colleague who knew I could converse with my horses. After the program I was asked to speak with Gratitude, one of the farm horses who had been experiencing some mysterious health issues that no one had been able to resolve. I did not have any information about what those issues were.

I reluctantly agreed to see Gratitude, but had low expectations. I explained that I believed my ability to

communicate was limited to my own herd. I said I would offer him reiki, a form of energy work, in the hopes it would help. I walked up to Gratitude's stall and said aloud I was there to offer support. He immediately spun around in his stall to face me and I got the intuitive sense he had a problem with his poll (the place where a horse's head connects to its neck). Within moments, Gratitude let me know he had intermittent pain in his neck that felt like an electric shock when he put his head down. He said every day he had to decide whether the pain in his stomach from not eating was greater than the pain he might incur if he put his head down to eat. Eating off the ground is the natural position for horses, but he asked for his hay to be off the ground so he wouldn't risk the pain in his neck. We hung a hay bag high in his stall and he immediately and vigorously began eating. Gratitude's explanation of the positional difficulty with eating was further validated by a barn manager who said she had seen Gratitude reaching up to eat leaves off trees in the pasture. His people explained the problems Gratitude had been experiencing were a huge decrease in appetite and suspected development of ulcers. Both of these problems aligned with Gratitude's explanation.



It is hard to describe everything I felt that day standing in front of Gratitude's stall. I was euphoric that Gratitude was eating and stunned that Gratitude was able to so clearly and

quickly convey a simple solution to a problem that had been plaguing him for months. I also was awed by the idea I now might be able to hear other animals, not just my horses. When Gratitude's people said they wanted to refer me to others, I was terrified. With years of training and experience behind all of my traditional professional work I questioned whether this newfound "skill" was at all reliable or just a "fluke."

I am very thankful to Gratitude for showing me what I could do and to his people for refusing to let me keep denying and hiding this unusual skill. They insisted on making referrals to people who needed help with an animal. I was honest with all of those people. I said I was willing to try but this was a new skill and I needed to first reach out to the animal to see if I could connect with them. On these "pre-calls" with just the animal, I would explain who I was and that we were going to speak with their person. I would ask if there was anything specific the animal wanted to talk about or anything they wanted me to know and I would write it down.

I was astonished to discover that every single animal I contacted was willing to speak with me. Once I confirmed I could connect with the animal, I would set up a call with their person and initially read what the animal said in the pre-call. After that, the 3-way conversations flowed easily. The information from the animals came in different forms — words, images, sensations, or just a sense of knowing.

It turned out the negotiation and facilitation skills I honed as a lawyer, executive, and consultant were unexpectedly relevant to these conversations. In my work with people I seek to understand diverse perspectives, make everyone feel seen, heard, and understood, uncover assumptions and areas of disconnection, and align goals and incentives. These same skills apply to conversations with animals and their families,

especially when we are exploring a “problem” from the animal’s perspective (see Part IV). After every call with an animal and every interaction with a human team, I express gratitude for the participants’ willingness to share their experiences and insights.

I still wasn’t telling anyone I could communicate with animals, but as I helped more people referred by others, word continued to spread around the country. Over time, I gained confidence that the animals would keep talking. I realized something else too — I noticed I felt especially proud any day that I had an animal communication call. I would wake up excited those days and go to bed smiling those nights because I recognized the immediate beneficial impact of these conversations on the animals and their families. Every call filled me with a growing sense of wonder and amazement as I learned to see from the animals’ perspectives.

I also enjoy my long-term career of working to improve the healthcare system, but the results are diffuse and have a longer timeframe. When I give a keynote presentation full of practical ideas for how to improve the healthcare experience for patients, families, and staff, several attendees may act on it but I probably won’t know they did. Speaking with animals, I am able to hear the immediate impact as I help people and animals understand each other better, reveal new perspectives on problems, ease stressful situations (such as end-of-life decision-making), and inspire wonder as people are delighted by the insights their animals offer.

Eventually I set up a website and started charging for my services, but I still kept this skill relatively hidden. I was afraid of being labelled as “crazy” and of losing my professional reputation. The release of this book is an act of courage but a step I had to take to honor all of the animals who have spoken with me. Their wisdom is meant to be

shared much more broadly than just with their individual families.

This book is full of practical advice for how to deepen your relationship with your animals and guidance from the animals about how humans can thrive. It embodies the advice that my mini horse Moon gave when someone asked him how we can save the world. He replied:

“Be your authentic self. Listen to your heart. Share your gifts. The only power you have is to be your best you. If everyone does that — shines their light — the world will be a better place.”

In these pages, I am sharing the gift of being able to converse with animals. It is an honor and a blessing to be able to reflect their light as they graciously continue to offer their love, partnership, and wisdom to humans.

THIRTEEN

Be Aware of Your Tone

ESPECIALLY WITH NAMES



Animals are more deliberate than humans about their vocalizations and different intonations are meaningful to them. Tone is also significant in human communication but we tend to be careless with it, which can easily confuse animals. A person who has a rough day may come home and call their animal in a frustrated voice, even though the person is not frustrated with the animal. Merlin, a German Shepard,

specifically asked his family not to use his name when telling him No, as he didn't like his name spoken in that tone.

Be deliberate in the way you use your animal's name. If your energy is strongly affected by something unrelated to your animal, take a couple of deep breaths before calling their name and imagine your heart reaching out to theirs. This will put love in your voice and avoid confusing your animal.

"We pay attention to nuances. Don't call us angry. Always show love and joy in your voice. I have big and sensitive ears – I catch everything. Your anger, frustration or impatience may have nothing to do with me but I'll hear it and wonder if it does. Try to put all that on pause and call with love."

— WILLY (DONKEY)



FOURTEEN

Lead with Love

As noted in Part I, animals are very sensitive to humans' attitudes and energy. You may be experiencing a roller coaster of emotions as a new animal joins your family — excitement, fear, joy, and possibly grief related to a prior animal who died. As you work through your own emotions, be sure to show your new animal lots of love and patience. They are also likely experiencing a range of emotions as they adjust to a new family and home.

"Lead with love. We can tell the difference between unconditional love and qualified love.

When your young child does something 'bad', you teach, guide, and seek to understand. Do the same with your animals.

When we feel safe enough to express ourselves with you, our behavior may 'say' things you don't want. You can help us understand your rules and boundaries.

Lead with love, guide with love, teach with love, correct with love. We learn best with love. Recognize we are doing

our best to understand, adapt, and live in harmony with you."

— ELENA (DOG)



Another dog succinctly summed up what a new animal needs as:

"I need a steady diet of love —
I don't need anything else."

TWENTY-TWO

Energy Balancers/Emotional Guardians

Emotional guardians/energy balancers give themselves the job of managing your energy level and emotional state.

“It is my job to watch over absolutely everything. No detail is too small. I take responsibility for our home and all beings in it. I am very sensitive to changes in energy. If there is a ‘disturbance’ of some kind, I try to correct it. I like the lines to be smooth and straight. When there are spikes or escalations, I try to bring everything back flat and peaceful.”

— BLUEY (DOG)



Emotional guardians use many different techniques to regulate their humans' energy, including by creating opportunities for relaxation and play, protecting people from objects and humans that drain their energy, and shifting energy.

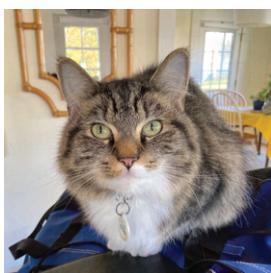
Inspiring Relaxation and Play

"My mission is two-fold. I bring peace and relaxation and I bring fun. My person has high energy and is often using all of that energy in service of others. I remind her how to relax and play without purpose. It's a special skill that many animals have – in taking care of us and giving us what 'we' need, we are able to guide our humans into taking better care of themselves too. I am a guardian of well-being."

— MARLI (DOG)

Protecting You from Energy Draining Objects

Marli also protects his person from objects that drain her energy. She said that when "she goes down the rabbit hole of her phone" Marli interrupts her and reminds her to put it down.



Similarly Roo, a cat, likes to lie on the computer keyboard, especially when her person is on work zoom calls. Roo explained the computer is clearly stressful for her human and she is protecting her from it.

Protecting You from Energy-Draining People

Saylor, a dog, explained to her person: "I am very protective of you, especially of your energy. I've seen people drain it and I step in when I can to stop that flow." Another dog, Keeper, told his person, "I charge your golden aura so nothing sticks to it. When you have been splattered by energetic 'mud', I wash it off." Viton, a horse, protects his person from "people who try to take from her emotionally by setting a boundary and being her backup."

Shifting Your Energy

Animals describe several ways they shift energy, including by adding fun and lightness and by taking on energy from their people and then wringing it out.

"I try to absorb energy things and then wring them out. I'm like a sponge. To wring out, I sometimes run or jump or bounce, then everything just goes out my paws. Rolling is good too. Maybe I could teach you to 'bounce'! I pay close attention to how you feel — watching, listening, and just sensing your energy. Whenever I can lighten what weighs on you, even a little bit, I am proud and happy.

— SOOKIE (DOG)

Some animals even try to force their people to rest, as Willow, a dog, explained:

“I am worried about you. You must take me seriously. I need to ‘talk’ sternly to you sometimes because you are not taking care of yourself and I’m trying to get you to stop, sit down, and rest your body and your mind too.”

Other dogs describe releasing energy by letting it all roll off like water or, as Copper said, by “beaming sunshine” to their person to “lift away clouds.” Just looking at this picture Copper’s person sent of him beaming makes me smile.



Elliott, a cat, poetically explained to his person “I am the guardian of the wellspring of you. I need to make sure you don’t run dry.” Like physical guardians, emotional guardians like to be recognized for the important work they do. Elliott was delighted that his person recognized his important role by incorporating his name into a computer password.

How You Can Support Energy Balancers/Emotional Guardians

Emotional guardians routinely process and release energy they pick up from their humans, but may become overwhelmed in certain circumstances and less able to do so. You can help emotional guardians to regulate their own energy by regularly reminding them to clear anything they don't need using one or more of the techniques in chapter 42. This is particularly important for animals who not only care for their family but also have the responsibility for supporting other people, such as therapy dogs or horses involved in equine-assisted learning or therapeutic riding programs.

“Our person is helping us stay in balance. As a helper, it can become draining if your own needs are not being met. Our person is focused on meeting our needs, hearing our voices, giving us choices, and preventing burnout.”

— ODIN (HORSE)



As with physical guardians, you can narrow the responsibility of emotional guardians by limiting the number of people they take responsibility for as well as the degree of responsibility they feel. Sometimes an animal will actually request a more narrow job:

“I am very sensitive to the energy around me. I take it ALL in. I may need help releasing it and maybe a more narrow job — if you tell me what to do, I’ll do it.”

— DUKE (DOG)

His person told him that being a happy dog enjoying life was the best way to love and support her, rather than taking on the energy of and worrying about everyone in the family.

THIRTY

Choose Your Words Carefully

Some animals are very sensitive to the words their people use. Being aware of the words you use in the presence of or about your animal can help prevent confusion or misunderstandings and avoid problems before they start.



“Be careful what you say because I hear everything and sometimes misunderstand, get alarmed, and do the wrong thing. I’m always watching and listening.”

— ROCKY (CAT)

When I first spoke with a dog named Mia, she immediately told me:

“I’m very worried. There is trouble and I may have caused some of it. I’m not sure what to do now. I’m anxiously awaiting a decision and next steps. . . . I hear what is said so be careful with your words around me. I understand more than you think but know less than you think.”



Mia understood that she was going to be separated from her beloved person but she had no idea why and wanted to “fix it.” It turned out that Mia’s person was going to leave soon on an unexpected international business trip, which he knew might evolve into a permanent job relocation. He was worried about the strain of such a long journey on her. Once we explained to Mia what was happening, she expressed a strong desire to go with him and emphasized she would willingly endure long flights so they could stay together.

They eventually did make the daunting journey together and are currently enjoying their new home.

Olive, a dog, was very excited to tell me on our pre-call about a new baby joining the family. In fact, that's all she really wanted to talk about. Her family confirmed they had recently started discussing having a baby and shared how they planned to involve Olive in caring for the baby. Olive was thrilled.



The conversation took an unexpected turn when Olive asked when the baby would be coming. We told her the baby hadn't been conceived yet so we didn't know exactly when. Olive insisted she had already met the baby, the baby already loved her, and her family had told her the baby would be coming home soon. It turned out there was a new baby in the extended family. Olive had met the baby a few times and every time her family left they joked with each other that they "were going to steal the baby and bring her home." That is the baby that Olive thought would be joining the family.

Eventually Olive's family did have their own baby and Olive adores her (see chapter 28).

Doc, a horse, is also very attentive to anything that is said around him by his person or other people. Once he heard his person say to the owner of the barn where Doc was living that "she would be leaving the barn" and he asked if that meant he was leaving too because he did not want to be separated from his person. He also told us that although he knew his person would never sell him, when she brought a friend with two young girls to meet him who said they wanted to "take him home" he was slightly alarmed. Doc doesn't just listen to words said about him. He once expressed dismay about what was being said about another horse that was involved in an accident. Doc is very wise and experienced. He takes all the words in, as well as the energy behind the words, but sometimes needs clarification to interpret them correctly.



FORTY-SIX

Animals' Ideas to Put Children's Minds at Ease

I am often asked by clients to participate in end-of-life conversations. Although this is a sad time for the family, these conversations are typically filled with a new sense of peace and joy as the animals express gratitude and reassure their family that love never dies. Sometimes the animals offer unique suggestions for how to make the transition more comfortable for their family members, especially when the family includes children.

Energizing Plush Dogs

I spoke with Momo and his family shortly after he had been diagnosed with an aggressive cancer. He was scheduled to be euthanized in a few days. One of the questions Momo's family asked was why he climbed into bed with their sleeping 4-year old daughter after his diagnosis since he had never climbed into her bed before. He explained that she would feel him snuggling with her after he was gone and that

he would visit her in dreams. Later, Momo gave more specific details. He said the young girl would be asking for a stuffed animal of him to snuggle with after he was gone and that he was "leaving his essence" in her bed.

Unbeknownst to me, the parents had previously given their 2-year old a plush dog that looked like Momo and had purchased a second one to give to their 4-year old after Momo crossed the rainbow bridge. After speaking with Momo, they brought out the second dog and magic happened. While watching the girls play, Momo leaned on one dog and put his paw over the second. After he died, Momo said the plush dogs would be extra warm because he had infused them with love.



Coming Back in a Story

Another dog, Sadie, who had been newly diagnosed with a serious illness kept telling me that we needed to talk about "stories" with her family. I learned the young son had originally learned to read by reading to Sadie. She said that she would always be present at reading time, even as a spirit. After further conversation guided by Sadie, I learned the son

liked to write stories and had recently written one about a child whose friend died but returned as a spirit. Sadie got very excited and invited him to write a similar story after Sadie died. Sadie also shared her views on the superpowers of each member of the family, turning a challenging time into a more uplifting one.

SEVENTY-ONE

Take a Bliss Break

Many species of animals, including horses, cats, and dogs, spend much of their time simply resting in each other's presence without doing anything in particular. Lingering with your animal without any particular objective and without trying to assess, fix, or change anything, is relaxing for you and your animal.



“One of the things older animals can teach is how to pause and deeply rest without feeling guilty or an obsessive need

to be productive, just being in the moment. Stand with your horse, lie down with your dog or cat, linger in the moment. Breathe together, tune in to all of your senses, take in the environment with your whole body. Relish and savor this moment – the here and now. Start doing this once a day, then add more times. You'll notice how much better you feel after a whole body/brain mini-vacation."

— PRECISION (HORSE)

Another senior horse, Doc, described how he thoroughly enjoys trail rides with his beloved human. He often stops right at the beginning of the ride because he wants to "take it all in and is completely blissed out." He says "just ambling along, enjoying time together, being blissful in the moment, is the horse form of daydreaming."

Activity: Take a Bliss Break

Schedule time for a bliss break with your animal. If you don't have an animal of your own, you can spend time with a friend's animal or watch a wild animal in your backyard, on a trail, or in a local park.



Let the animal become your sensory tour guide. Notice

what they are looking at and follow their gaze. Imagine that you have their sense of smell and see if you can get a whiff of what scents they might pick up. Pay attention to the sounds they are reacting to. Move your body in sync with theirs by falling into step with them or imitating their movements. Lose yourself in the moment.

SEVENTY-THREE

Dating Advice from a Dog



Flo, a New York City dog, told me that she understood her female person's desire to find a human partner, even though she said that dogs were better. She wasn't worried that she would be replaced by any human because her relationship with her person was so strong.

I found out that Flo has been accompanying her person on first dates in the city. Flo had some thoughts on the men she had met so far, none of whom had gotten second dates. She said the men fell into three categories:

1. **Men who think they are “all that”:** These men want you to know how amazing they are. They don't care about you at all, they want you to know that they are better than you. Flo would like to run them off in the first 10 minutes.
2. **Men who want you to take care of them:** These men want a strong woman because they want someone they can rely on to care for them in every way. They have no intention of supporting you. Flo

figures this out in less than half an hour and her person usually does too.

3. **Men who want to play psychological games:** As she described these men to me, Flo showed me DNA strands with their interlocking pairs of genes. When I asked her what this meant, she said these men are trying to figure you out because they want you to think they are a good match but really they just want to play psychological games. They are not who they pretend to be. In Flo's opinion these are the worst kind and should ideally be growled at and then bitten if they don't get the hint.

Flo's person confirmed that she had, indeed, encountered these three types of men on her first dates. She asked Flo to let her know when a man felt right.

Flo gave very clear advice about what her person should be looking for in a man. According to Flo, the man must: (1) admire you; (2) be confident in himself; and (3) be looking for a mutually beneficial partnership. Flo said she had a man in mind that they pass on their walks. Will she be a matchmaker? As of publication it remains to be seen, but I'd bet on Flo.

SEVENTY-FOUR

Dogs' Views on Relationships



Dogs routinely notice energy shifts and are astute observers of the effect other people have on your energy. This includes whether the other person charges or drains your energetic battery.

When a client asked Pip what she thought about the client's new human partner, Pip offered an overview of the three types of relationships she has seen based on how humans' energy relates. Pip sees each person's energy starting out as a unique color, but as the relationship develops:

1. One of the colors overtakes the other completely and one person becomes the other one's color; or
2. The colors blend together and both people become the new blended color; or
3. Each person maintains their own initial color but the colors swirl together in evolving patterns, dynamic and ever-changing. Pip described it as a "beautiful dancing energy."

In a type 1 relationship one person's needs matter more than the other person. A type 2 relationship occurs when each person loses their individual identity to be part of the couple. Fortunately Pip indicated that her person was in a type 3 relationship at the time. She noted that her person was learning "how to care for others with appropriate boundaries" by "taking care of herself and prioritizing her own mission, vision, and purpose instead of prioritizing other people and caretaking roles."

Ginger Spice, a puppy, described a new relationship in her person's life as a "power loop where you are raising each other's energy."



Chooch, a 17 year old dog, similarly described a new relationship in his person's life as one in which the "energy was positive" and "did not drain" his person. Chooch said he appreciated the new partner's "open-heartedness" and knew that he would "be there to support his person" in the future when Chooch could not be. When Chooch's person spoke with her new boyfriend, he confirmed that he actually had a conversation with Chooch during which Chooch had told him exactly the same thing.

These descriptions apply to friendships as well as to romantic relationships. Keeper, a standard poodle, described

an interaction between his person and a close friend who, along with her two dogs, routinely came to walk with them. He said he loved those walks because he could see the beautiful swirling colors of energy between his person and her friend and said they “sparked each other” during the walk.



Afterword



I hope you find this book to be a valuable resource in understanding your animals. I would love to hear from you!

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There is a secondary purpose for this book, which is to encourage you to share your gifts instead of downplaying or hiding them as I did for many years. I recently facilitated a retreat at the Nokota Horse Conservancy® and I asked the herd if there was anything I should add to the book. A wise mare named Fairy Wren stepped forward and told me:

“Believe in your magic!”

You have unique magic of your own. Everyone does. I hope this book inspires you to share your magic, whatever it may be.

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Other Species: Amber (snake), Angel (parakeet), Borris (pig), Dinky (donkey), Evangeline (bearded dragon), Footloose (rooster), Lex (hamster), Mila (guinea pig), Nala (guinea pig), Ozzy (rabbit), Pepper Pepino (parrot), Pickles (parrot), Pistachio (turtle), Ricochet/Super Bunny, Willy (donkey), plus a wild bobcat, owl, seagull, and swan

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About the Author



Carrie O'Neill shared a special bond with animals as a child, which grew even stronger as an adult when her small herd of horses taught her how to converse with them. The deep listening and problem-solving skills she developed as a lawyer, executive, and healthcare consultant, combined with the gift of animal communication, lead to surprising insights.

Carrie builds thriving relationships with animals and the people who love them in interactive phone conversations. She also offers unique horse experiences at her farm (Possibilities Farm in Connecticut) and at the Nokota Horse Conservancy®, where she serves as a member of the board. She is a frequent keynote speaker on horse wisdom and on improving healthcare. This is her third book.

In addition to her beloved human daughter, over her lifetime Carrie's family has included horses, dogs, cats, parakeets, love birds, chameleons, a gerbil, and fish. She once staged a late-night animal rescue at her corporate office, relocating a seahorse that was being bullied by fish who were eating its tail.