

Parrot Afraid of New Furniture

How do I handle my African grey's fear of new furniture?

Q: I bought new furniture over the weekend (bookcases, two lamps, an end table and chair). I put them in the living room with Rocky's (my African grey) cage, and he is freaking out! I moved the lamps, but the rest has to stay in there because it's the only sitting room. He's cowering in his cage and growling at it. I moved him into my room for now. He was better, but still scared when I tried to have him sit in the new chair (he hid under my sweatshirt). He also won't play or get on his stand in the living room. I thought in a short amount of time he would get used to it. What should I do? Thanks.

Jean Pattison, also known as "The African Queen," explains:

If you have a cover for Rocky's cage, you could cover the part of the cage that "sees" all the new furniture. After a time, open more and more of the cover exposing more furniture to be viewed by your grey. Working the other direction, you could cover the furniture with something Rocky is less afraid of and, over time, progressively remove the covering exposing more of the furniture.

If at all possible, visit with your bird in a room he is comfortable in. Place his play stand in there temporarily. When you have your bird on your arm you may be able to occasionally stroll through the sitting room with all the new furniture, while reassuring Rocky that this is friendly furniture. As absurd as some may think, it does help if you talk out loud and explain what happened and why.