

Bad For You, Bad For Them

Protect your bird from your own bad habits

By Barbara Nefer

Many of us are aware that we've fallen into unhealthy habits like working too much, consuming an excess of fat, carbohydrates and caffeine and getting too little sleep. For example, one out of every two people in the United States works more than eight hours a day, according to a 2008 study by the Sleep Foundation. This spills over into limited time to prepare a healthy dinner; it's so much easier to grab fast food or simply to survive on snacks. We might even add a cigarette into the mix as a way of calming our frayed nerves.

This hectic schedule also means staying up into the wee hours to fit in a little more work or to grab some precious wind-down time before bed. People who are caught in this cycle pay the price with effects such as stress, anxiety, lowered immunity and obesity.

We might not realize that we often impose our own bad habits on our birds, and the results can be just as disastrous for them. Because pet birds live so closely with their human flock, our behaviors directly affect them. They adapt to our sleeping schedule, they often share bits of our not-so-healthy snack food, and some birds have no choice but to inhale their owner's cigarette smoke. Our birds also absorb our stress, since they are intelligent and sensitive creatures.

*For the full article, pick up the July 2008 issue of BIRD TALK**

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