

Pet Birds React To Their Owners

Parrots react toward their owners' energy, including those of aggression and panic.

By Sally Blanchard

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There is one golden rule in understanding our parrot companions; parrots are more comfortable with people who are comfortable with them. This is why I encourage people to take a slow breath and relax before they pick up their parrot, especially if the person is stressed or upset. Parrots have a difficult time with our energy when we are frustrated, depressed, angry or aggressive, and this can cause the parrot, in turn, to be fearful of a person or react to him or her in an aggressive manner.

Aggressive Parrots

Spike is a perfect example of a parrot that can easily go into overload and become aggressive. He is also a very sensitive little guy so when I recently moved, he went to a friend's home who also has a caique and is a member of Spike's fan club.

During his visit with her, Spike occasionally became aggressive and bit her several times. In the beginning, she tried to discipline him. With many parrots, aggression is met with aggression, and the more she tried to discipline him, the more aggressive he became. In a phone conversation, I told her that when he was acting like a little jerk; she should just lower her energy, even to the point of being submissive with him. Once she started doing this, his behavior changed, and he was more Dr. Jekyll than Mr. Hyde for the rest of his visit. It wasn't that he didn't like her; it was that he didn't trust her energy toward him.

Calm Yourself First

Another cause of a rift in the relationship can be a traumatic event. When I lived in California, my parrots and I experienced quite a few earthquakes and good-sized aftershocks. They were quite afraid because they couldn't instinctively fly away, and so they thrashed around in their cages. Compounding matters, I was exhibiting similar panic and fear and, if I had rushed in to see if they were all right, I would have panicked them even more. As soon as the rumble stopped, I would calm myself down and slowly walk into their room and sit on the floor and hum. They would relax, climb back on the perches and start jabbering as if sharing their experiences.

Learn more about what's behind a bird's aggressive behavior toward its owner in "Think Your Bird Hates You?" in the November 2008 issue of BIRD TALK magazine.