

YOUR PTSD SUPPORT BIRD

**HEALING TRAUMA
WITH UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**

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2016

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Acknowledgments

Thanks to my Friends and Family who supported me in this effort: Jean Gibson, Erin Milam, Jim Gibson, Dawn Williams, Laura Handy, Poppy, Ruffles, all my parakeets, dog, cats, guinea hens, and my husband, Bobby.

*To My Best Friend, Jean, who laughs in
the face of pain and who has always
encouraged me to share my
knowledge with others.*

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Interview with a Veteran

The first thing you notice about Mack Landon (not his real name), besides his pleasant looks, is how impressive he is. 5 inches over six feet, his muscled arms and chest stretch his t-shirt tight, and it's abundantly clear that everyone speaks politely to him. By his own testimony, he can take out six men at one time. But as soon as he opens his mouth, he makes you feel right at home.

After filling our coffee cups and an exchange of small talk, we get to the interview.

Dr. Potter: Would you tell me about your service?

Mack: "I was a U.S. Marine Corps Sargent. I fought in an experimental South American drug war, was shot, blown up, and stabbed in combat. Surgery put my face and other body parts back together, more than once. There were skirmishes, taking and returning fire with cartel members, mostly bloody battles. People were killed and I killed others, some with my bare hands. From a few feet away, I watched my best friend die."

(You can't tell Mack has had surgery on his face, which looks completely natural and unscarred.)

Dr. Potter: "Do you get disability for your injuries or your PTSD?" He blew his knee and shoulder out in the service.

Mack shakes his head: "I refuse to be evaluated because so many others are worse. They've lost arms and legs."

Dr. Potter: "Weren't you injured?"

Mack: "My surgeries were done during my time in the military, but my injured knee got me kicked out of the Marines. I wanted a career there. I'm a mechanic now, but I want to get several certifications in computers. I have some college, a few courses."

"No one outside of the military knew about the action I participated in. I can't talk much about it, because it was a secret operation. If I was captured, I knew I was no longer a U.S. citizen. And no one would help me. That was my fear, that the cartel would know who I was. My military records are high security and I can't talk about the dates and events of the operation. It was the late nineties and I wore unlabeled camo, like many others, to avoid letting the cartel know who I was. Most of the operations were conducted at dawn and dusk."

Dr. Potter: "How has PTSD changed your life?"

Mack: "PTSD took over my life for a while. I looked for fights in bars. My training to fight multiple assailants made me arrogant and I picked fights with other guys. I knew I could put six men on the ground in minutes, but I think I was really trying to get my butt beat. I lost control of my anger,

abused alcohol trying to drown my pain, and finally was ordered to therapy for anger management."

"After that, I lived in a creek bed in San Antonio for 3 months, feeding myself possum and squirrel and using a pocketknife to hunt. A bag of clothes, my only possession, made a pillow for my bed on the ground. A buddy eventually scorned me for not asking for help and I relented, even though I thought I was doing just fine."

Sitting in front of me, I see the large man kissing a small pink and gray cockatoo perched on his shoulder, calling her his baby girl. Moira, a roseate cockatoo, has owned him for four and a half years, and she knows exactly how to handle his issues. She nuzzles his lips with her open beak.

Mack: "PTSD is such a general diagnosis. Every one is different with their triggers. My step-daughter has PTSD and her break outs are emotional, yelling and angry. I lash out to expend energy. The last five years I can't lash out, because when I do, Moira makes a high-pitched noise. It drives me crazy. I can't take it out on her. I have to cope other ways. I tried alcohol but it didn't work, so I work a physically strenuous activity. I have a huge place and I chop up wood. I get scorpion bites all over my arms. But I just ignore them while I do the farm work. Minor annoyances like that just push me to do more. I don't like cockroaches though." He shakes his head with a grimace.

Mack: "The bird controls me [in a good way], she is spoiled rotten. I give her every thing she wants. I am in my third marriage and I have no kids. My wife bought her, but Moira

chose me. I love her. I started getting attached to her, so I now know a lot about birds. I've always had a fascination with birds. I also have a moluccan named Peaches."

Dr. Potter: "Why a bird over a dog or another animal?"

Mack: "Dogs are simple and so are cats. They are loyal, they put up with everything. But if I yell and scream, that's not what I need. I need someone to shun me. She screeches at me, which encourages me to go do something else. I get depressed sometimes so I scratch her neck, pay attention to her. I have anxiety attacks, breathing fast. She can tell when I'm going to have an attack and just before that, she starts screeching. So, I go over to her and she sits on my shoulder. That helps with my depression."

Dr. Potter: "Do you take medication?"

Mack: "No. In my personal beliefs, society is over medicated."

Dr. Potter: "When did your PTSD start?"

Mack: It started before I got out of the corps in 2004. A helicopter's thumping noise would set me off, so I eventually went to sit at an airport to cure my noise sensitivity.

"I don't want to talk to anyone about some of the things. But I can take Moira down to the basement and talk to her about them."

"In Iraq I was comfortable even during mortar attacks. It felt like what it was supposed to be. I sat outside while the mortars were landing. My personal life was terrible. I think I went there to try to commit suicide. A mortar went off right by me. I had amnesia. From that force of a weapon, someone usually doesn't live from the shock wave and the shrapnel. It dumped me on my head."

"If you want to know what it's like being in combat as a Marine, the movie *Full Metal Jacket* is accurate. The sergeants are in your face. I am used to violence, continued fighting. I went to Iraq and got attacked."

"Moirá calms me down. She is smart and knows what I'm saying. Just like a psychologist that lets me talk. I did classified things and she lets me talk about it. I can't talk about it with anyone else. She climbs down to get on my finger when I get tense. She observes everything. I am hypervigilant, but she warns me about visitors. She can sense it when I'm going into a panic attack. She goes crazy then until I get her. In less than 5 minutes after I get the bird, I'm better. There is a connection."

"She is my baby girl," he voices for the fourth or fifth time, cuddling the little bird. He kisses her again as she leans down to kiss him back.

Dr. Potter: "How does your PTSD affect you now?"

Mack: "Different things set people off. The double click of an AK47 and M16 affects one of my veteran friends. I have huge problems with the 4th of July. I get drunk. Last time my

wife found me, the next morning, up under the truck crying, from the fireworks. I was there all night and couldn't leave. Survival instinct. My brother is autistic, but I told him don't touch the bed or me when I sleep. It's a reflex. The first time he did it, I jumped up and was on him with my arm across his throat. He forgave me, though."

Dr. Potter: "How does Moira help you?"

Mack: "Moira reminds me of my brother listening to me. She makes me laugh, relaxes me, and brings clarity, gives me perspective."

Mack: "I have to have responsibility, like in the military. She is my responsibility. Sometimes I have to stay away from her when I'm out of control." But even then, he says she helps limit his distress.

"I have one friend at a time. I have trouble getting close to anyone. I lost my best friend, who was like my brother, in the military when he got killed. I saw it. So I sabotage friendships, I stop talking or create conflict. It's self-destructive. I can bond with the bird. She was my wife's bird but she chose me. She has a high pitch voice but a small presence. Petting her is soothing. To her, I am a big powerful beast, but I respect her and relate to her as a friend, a best friend."

"I'm strong and I once shook my father-in-law's hand too hard. I know what I'm capable of, but Moira doesn't care, she just wants me to pet her. If I am shouting, it frightens her and she shows it and I stop. It's the look she gets and it gets to me."

He holds her very tenderly and turns his face up to speak softly and sweetly to her.

After the interview, Mack told our friend that some of my questions made him uncomfortable, but that he was glad to meet me.

Part I
PTSD and the Therapy Bird

1

BENEFITS of a Bird FOR PTSD

Your PTSD Support Bird aims for two goals. One is to define an exotic bird's role in reducing emotional symptoms seen in veterans with PTSD. The other is to provide a guide to caring for the beloved creatures.

When soldiers engage in battle, they develop deep bonds with their compatriots, feeling their lives depend on each other. With their buddies, they share the horror of battle, death, and destruction. They understand each other. So once separated from their combat group, their fears and memories of horror can take over, leaving them haunted, isolated and anxious.

An estimated 300,000 veterans from the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars have been diagnosed with PTSD, a major mental disorder for which there is no real cure. Mental health therapy is often critical in PTSD to help veterans regain balance in their lives. But while veterans who develop PTSD often benefit from counseling, medication, and relationships with other military veterans, their symptoms typically persist at some level, breaking through during periods of stress or during similar traumatic events. Some don't benefit from therapy, other can't tolerate therapy and either don't try it or leave therapy quickly. They seek other methods. Many veterans find they benefit from a close relationship with a

devoted pet. Animal therapy seems to achieve significant change for these veterans.

Pets positively affect the humans who love them and care for them. They help control stress and anxiety, reduce blood pressure, boost the immune system, and encourage healthy exercise. Animal companions also help control PTSD symptoms. Mounting research evidence shows that bonding with a pet can raise a veteran's levels of oxytocin, the hormone that builds trust and increases social behavior. Enormous improvement in PTSD symptoms with therapy animals has been seen. Emotional Therapy animals include dogs, birds, dolphins, horses, cats and probably many others.

Animals develop PTSD, too. That's true especially for parrots, who typically show high intelligence. Like a veteran, a neglected or surrendered bird also needs considerable attention to recover. He's lost his home and family and he may have been neglected, abused, or nearly starved by his previous caretaker. A traumatized bird may pluck himself bald on the chest, back and wings or he may bite, withdraw, or panic when approached.

Once you are caring for them properly and giving them love, they may re-feather and adapt to healing attention. Likewise, a damaged veteran needs to heal. The bird and the veteran support one another in the healing process. The love you and your bird experience together should make each of you healthier. It's a mutually beneficial relationship. For many veterans just the act of caring for birds at a rescue center is therapeutic.

Birds are real companion and are like humans in many ways. Birds love, they hurt, they show anger, they experience fear, and they are responsive to their parents. Many parrots are like two year-olds socially and 3-5 year old kids mentally. They understand a good part of what you say and they certainly understand tone of voice and behavior. By watching your actions, they can often predict what you are about to do. Going in the kitchen usually means food. Putting on clean clothes and packing a brief case means you are leaving. Some pout, while others will kiss you goodbye before you leave. They are also smart enough to manipulate you and trick you into giving them what they want.

As well, parrots help resolve specific symptoms experienced by the veteran with PTSD:

Comfort Zone: Veterans often lack comfort in new or stressful situations. A parrot will help you expand your comfort zone. *"I have responsibility to take care of him which in turn helps me take care of myself better." Further, the bird will help the veteran expand outside of limited interactions.

Birds draw veterans out of withdrawal by participating in special events. Some birds perform while others talk. Having a bird tends to lead one into relating to other bird parents. She can get you out of the house by making you feel more secure. Since they are well loved by others, they help the veteran connect with people who share a love of birds. Mutual interests, and talking about your "baby", can help you build relationships with others. Schools especially welcome bird contact if the bird is comfortable around children.

Togetherness. Many veterans feel lonely because they can't get close to anyone else. Friends and compatriates have died and veterans have watched it happen. Sometimes many times. Although a bird can die, most are long-lived and healthy with good care. Parrots are flock birds, and get a lot of strength from the flock. The veteran takes the place of and becomes the bird's flock.

The veteran who doesn't trust other humans, can trust a bird. The bird who doesn't tolerate humans can trust his caretaker. The love the parent and the bird experience together should overcome fear and withdrawal. It's a mutually beneficial relationship that involves touching and caring, something that can be threatening to a veteran.

For veterans with PTSD, flock birds may provide the kind of companionship that results in good mental health. Other family members may enter the flock, too, but that creates the need for a pecking order. You, as the bird's "parent", must remain at the highest level of that hierarchy.

Acceptance: Animals are nonjudgmental and don't care if their owner is impaired or handicapped. For a veteran with PTSD and other disabilities, pets give love and comfort. They soften the effects and demands of life when the veteran's memories and resentments threaten to overwhelm them. Birds are open to attention and touching, hugging, and companionship from their owner, no matter how severe the disability.

Relief from Intrusive Thoughts. Your therapy bird helps you start distancing from your traumatic memories, allow you to experience the here and now via their need for your care. Veterans learn to accept that they are not still in battle, but are safe at home. They can feel that they owe it to their pet and themselves to stay in the present instead of the past. Many birds can sense intrusive thinking and negative ideas and intervene by communicating closeness with the veteran.

Healthy routine: Most animals love routine, which is also a benefit to the veteran who has been in the military. Knowing what to expect and when to expect it can reduce fears on both sides. Emotional issues lend themselves to routine and support recovery. The veteran can then learn to face the unexpected from their secure base.

Interaction: Veteran's often withdraw from touch and play. Many birds love to cuddle, crawl under the covers, and play simple games. Some can play Frisbee with plastic container lids. Others will drop a toy, let someone pick it up and drop it again. Cuddling with a living creature restores feelings of closeness and safety. Some parrots love to cuddle, especially cockatoos. They love interaction to play and pull the veteran into the fun. Many love to watch their parents work.

Birds will eat dinner off your plate. Birds generally love to share you meal and they'll eat almost anything they see you eating. Even though they still eat like a bird ☺, if you are worried about the poop factor on the table, birds usually hold it until they are away from the food.

Communication: Communication can be the most gratifying feature of a parrot. Many communicate with appropriate language to their parents and force them to respond by repeating the same phrase over and over until the parent answer.

One of our sanctuary's macaws was exceptionally verbal. During a sunny day, two African greys were talking to each other, their cages on opposite sides of the room. We don't know how it started but one would say, "Yes, it is" and the other would respond, "no it isn't." They went through the argument so many times that one of the macaws obviously became irritated. "Aw, Shuttup," he said generating hysterical laughter from his human audience.

Even for birds with limited language, they can let their parents know what they want. They may raise their claw to ask for attention, or run back and forth on their perches wanting to get out of the cage. They may shriek at bedtime and in the morning to put you to bed or to get you up for the day. You will learn to focus on your pet in order to translate what he is saying. But be careful what you say repeatedly around the bird. They can pick up on any word or phrase especially those you don't want.

Birds recognize that a certain word is forbidden and that is the word he will learn first. Then he will deliberately let it fly when grandmother is visiting. ("Where did he learn that?") One of the sanctuary's Amazons spent 30 years with a sailor, not to vilify sailors. The bird had learned some interesting phrases, most of which were X rated.

When there was company, he opened his little beak and greeted them sweetly, "You stupid x8#)^\$#%&(#_@." Since the visitors were usually there to adopt a bird, we tried to steer them in another direction. He was a permanent resident, being virtually unadoptable due to his special talent.

Physical: Research shows that petting an animal lowers blood pressure, increases physical comfort, and relaxes the veteran. Touching and stroking the bird reduces stress in the veteran, thus preventing additional mental and physical disorders.

A Sounding Board. Veterans can delve into painful memories of the past with an animal companion, without having to reveal their experiences to other humans over and over again. As far as I know, no bird has ever demanded that a veteran describe his traumatic experiences. Many veterans experience a sense of relief, having already told their story many times to many people, usually in the VA. But if the veteran needs to talk, the bird listens with rapt attention, letting the veteran blow off steam.

Diversion: when someone cares for the bird like he would a child, it helps him focus outside of himself and his pain. The bird needs feeding, bathing, cages cleaned, claws trimmed, wings clipped, all factors that grab the parent's concentration and relieve anxiety. Anger, laughter, demands, and funny behavior can hold the attention of this audience of one. These positive behaviors should be rewarded. When the veteran has intrusive thoughts of the horrors in battle or depression from isolation, a devoted animal can alter the veteran's focus away from self and toward caring for that pet.

A therapy bird helps veterans distance from traumatic memories, allowing them to experience the here and now. Veterans learn to accept that they are not still in battle, but are safe at home.

Positive emotions: Joy, ability to love and relaxation are incompatible with anxiety and depression. Birds are funny, probably more so than any other animal. Creating joy and laughter are one of their many talents and they love an audience. If praised for their positive behavior, they will perform even more. Cockatoos especially love to perform for their parents and often break into a dance for no reason at all.

2

Why a Secondhand Bird.

An exotic bird is not a dog (forgive this obvious point). "Man's Best Friend" works well as a companion for many PTSD disabled veterans. Emotional therapy dogs are wonderful, devoted and relatively easy to care for.

Ultimately, some veterans are dog people and some people are bird people. There's no simpler way to put it. Although dogs are devoted wonderful companions, most live only 12 to 15 years and become old at about 10 years of age. PTSD can last a lifetime and losing a companion can increase symptoms.

Unlike dogs, training for therapy purposes is not necessary with a bird. Their innate ability to bond with humans meets the needs for support in the veteran with PTSD. Pet therapy for veterans presents a non-threatening manner of rehabbing themselves for good mental health.

Birds tend to be more mentally complex than other pets, providing a more unique experience for the veteran. The bird's intelligence and specific needs place a somewhat greater responsibility and challenge for the owner. This often leads to greater satisfaction and the experience of emotional intimacy

for the veteran. Birds are closer to humans, than other animals, in their emotions and sharp minds.

We never recommend adopting a baby bird. Instead, secondhand birds can be perfect for a veteran's companion. But why would anyone consider adopting a secondhand parrot rather than a baby?

First, baby birds take a long time to develop the maturity needed for providing therapy and companionship. Veterans with PTSD need help now. Secondhand parrots can be the most loving and grateful of pets. These birds are very bright, often responsive to kindness, and receptive to a family who cares. Secondhand birds appreciate attention and love.

Veterans and secondhand birds share one special feature-- both are damaged. Maybe not always physically, but certainly mentally and emotionally. And just as humans can see the damage in the bird, many birds seem to recognize the hurt in the veteran.

After losing their place as a member of a family (flock), these little creatures can love unconditionally and provide as much comfort to the veteran as the veteran does for them.

Purchased birds create another problem. Store owners rarely teach buyers how to care for an exotic bird, how long it lives, the demands of hygiene and feeding. The owner walks into a unique experience with no caution and no preparation.

This is what happens with many birds. As a result many purchased birds don't receive the proper care and end up

abandoned to a shelter or shuffled around from home to home. They never become the family member they are intended to be. Parrots, like many other pet animals, regrettably have been overbred to the point of almost becoming disposable pets (People keep them until they get tired of them, get rid of them, then go get another one). After all, it's just a bird. Isn't it?

The better alternative is to adopt a bird from a sanctuary. Sanctuaries take in birds that have been neglected, abandoned, or tormented. Adopting a secondhand parrot from a sanctuary is a powerful reflection of compassion and a potential benefit for a veteran with PTSD. Huge numbers of exotic birds end up homeless in sanctuaries due to over breeding and the lack of information provided to buyers at and before purchase.

To make up for this fact, bird sanctuaries present education about the plight of exotic birds to schools, social and business organizations. This builds wide-spread understanding of the needs of these special creatures, potentially reducing the need for shelters and sanctuaries. The sanctuaries primary goal, however, is to find suitable, loving homes for lonely birds who return love and make life worth while for their owners.

3

INTELLIGENCE & EMOTION

A PARROT'S GRIEF.

The Waterbury (Conn.) *American* of Saturday says: "A parrot belonging to Mrs. Theodore Byxbee, of Meriden, perched himself on her breast when she was fatally ill, the other day, and was with difficulty driven away. Since Mrs. Byxbee's death the bird has refused to eat or talk, and seems to realize what has happened, as if he were human."

The New York Times

Published: January 31, 1876

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My bird, Poppy, was reared from an egg. His human parents chose his egg from the nest of a bred Umbrella Cockatoo, then took the newborn home to hand raise him with tenderness and human companionship.

A beloved member of the family for 11 years, Poppy's situation appeared stable; that is, until his elderly mom developed a lung condition requiring clean air and oxygen. Her doctor said Poppy and his birdie dander had to go, and his heartsick parents released him to the Sanctuary. They left in tears.

Poppy didn't cry, he waited for them to return. He waited and he waited and he waited and, after a couple of weeks, he gave up. He stopped talking, he stopped eating, and he sat in his cage lethargic, unable to play, or relate to the other birds.

Birds DO grieve. But unlike tiny humans, parrots can't tell us, "I hurt," "I want my family," or "what happened?" Like young children, their emotions have to be interpreted through their behavior. A parrot's human family easily recognizes whether the bird is happy or sad, fearful or content, just by how he acts.

But although bird lovers know better, many scientists see animals as incapable of feelings and often accuse pet owners of unrealistically attributing typical human characteristics of thought, feeling, and consciousness to their pets. However, even in the scientific world, there is now an increasing acceptance that birds and other animals do have and feel emotions. In fact, the most recent research gives support to this view.

According to avian research, birds have all the brain parts they need to express a wide range of emotions. Birds, like mammals and humans, possess a specialized brain structure known as the limbic system, from which originates a wide range of emotions like anger, joy, love, fear, attachment, frustration, and grief. Their amygdala, the principal emotional comptroller within their nervous system, connects with their forebrain to analyze situations and respond emotionally much like the human brain does.

Increasing evidence also suggests that birds show the same mental capacities as the great apes, even in their ability to remember events, people, and to solve problems.

Birds are also able to form abstract concepts like perishable and nonperishable, and to recognize differences in shapes and colors and, on their own, put words together to make meaningful phrases. In other words, birds can think, remember, become attached, and respond to situations, all of which are necessary for emotional expression.

But unlike humans, birds can't shed tears, can't smile or frown, and lack facial muscles to show emotional pain. That difference in expression often leads many humans (especially scientists) to believe that birds don't grieve or feel depressed.

Birds can grieve over any kind of loss: family, a favorite toy, a friend or mate, or a pet in the home. Observing a bird's eyes, verbalizations, wings, foot movement, beak, and overall posture can be helpful in determining when a bird is depressed. A grieving parrot may show a blank stare, call endlessly for the lost one, sit mute, refuse to eat or play, or stop the beak crunching sounds that signal contentment. These symptoms represent a cry for help from the suffering creature and this is where the veteran must focus on the bird's emotions.

Emotional support, even in a severe case, can help a grieving bird recover more quickly and may even keep her alive since grief can eventually be fatal to a bird. Giving the bird her favorite foods, intense affection, and frequent attention can help distract her from her sadness and minimize the feelings

of loss. Some owners report good results from placing a former loved ones' photo close to the cage.

Poppy lucked out at the Sanctuary. Sanctuary directors immediately recognized his distress and found volunteers who took the sad little Cockatoo home for a few days to love him like his parents had. After returning him, the volunteers visited him everyday taking him home periodically to help him adjust to his new life, while receiving the love he so desperately needed.

It worked out well for Poppy. He started eating, talking, and playing again, moving through his heartache and learning to relate to other people who loved him. And he found a loving home.

“It is now thought possible that even scientists may be capable of expressing feelings, and showing signs of empathy for other living beings.”

iaain39:thesun.co.uk

4

BIRDS ARE NOT PERFECT

Honestly, there are multiple reasons to NOT adopt a bird. While birds are special, loving, intelligent, emotional, and connective, some people have trouble adapting to the bird's needs. The last thing in the world I want is for a bird to end up in a home where he is unloved or resented. So let's get the bad news on the table.

- 1) Birds can be LOUD. Not all birds are loud, but many are. If you are intolerant of noise, then carefully check out the type of bird you want.
- 2) All Birds are Messy. They have to have clean cages daily so they aren't exposed to dust from excrement. Unless potty trained, they poop indiscriminately on everything and on you. Most birds can be trained to poop in a certain place.
- 3) Some birds produce dander. Cockatoos provide a white powder that floats through the air and onto objects like furniture. Some people are allergic to dander and those who have respiratory disorders should choose another type of bird. A good air filter, like the Bird Dander Purifier, can go a long way to reducing dander, however.

4) Food bills can be expensive for some birds, especially if you supplement the diet with pellets. If you feed your bird properly, he should stay healthy, but a well fed large bird can cost \$1 a day to feed. One way to reduce cost is to feed your bird what you eat, especially fruit, as long as you eat healthily.

5) Avian veterinarians can be few and far between. Avian vets require special training and hundreds of hours of experience to treat birds independently. Find an avian vet *before* you adopt a bird.

6) Birds live a long time, from 7 years for a parakeet and up to 100 years for a macaw. In most cases, that means you should treat your bird like a family member for life. It also means you should arrange a suitable home for your bird after you die. It is not unusual for owners to establish a trust fund for a monthly stipend in the will for the care of the bird once they are gone or unable to care for him due to sickness. If possible, leave your bird to a sanctuary, a loving family member or a friend. Introduce your bird to his future owner many times before time to go to his new home.

7) A second-hand bird may need a little training to become a great pet. Sometimes a bird has developed poor habits from the previous owner. Since your bird will be your companion, he should learn, at the very least, to "step up" and "come here".

8) If you change partners, marry, or add other members to your family, the bird may not adapt to them or the individual may not like the bird. A new family member may insist you get rid of the bird or they may threaten to sever the

relationship. But sending the bird away is likely to damage the bird emotionally. If you adopt a therapy bird, and you discover that the relationship in your home is not mutually beneficial, return the bird to the sanctuary as soon as possible so new owners can be located. Changing families is very stressful for a bird, but the chances of the bird being mistreated or neglected is high if he stays where he is not cherished.

9) Many birds require a high level of contact and time out of the cage. For instance, cockatoos like to sit on their parents most of the day, and they will likely screech loudly if left in their cage too long. Choose your bird according to the amount of contact you are willing to provide.

10) Birds need to chew and they do. If they are out of their cages and unsupervised, they can destroy valuable furniture and/or artwork in minutes while you aren't looking. In the cage, they need several toys and wood to chew on.

11) Exotic birds are generally not appropriate for children. Parakeets, Meyers, Pionus, and Cockatiels do make good companions for older kids. If you have kids in your family, you may have to train your bird to respond positively to them.

12) Birds require a healthy environment: sunshine or full spectrum light, proper humidity, and a setting free of smoke, and other toxins. They can die from exposure to a heated stick-proof coated pan.

13) Secondhand parrots have sometimes gone through several owners and may have trouble trusting at first. They may still be grieving from the loss of their last home and family. Sometimes these parrots just give up and stop eating. Love and understanding go a long way with these birds. Then again, some have been so neglected that they fall in love immediately with a new parent. With love, and a little training, your bird can develop into the perfect pet for you. These creatures have emotions and intelligence. You will discover that once the two of you connect.

14) The behavior of a secondhand bird with humans depends on many factors but mostly on their previous lives. Were they abused, neglected, loved, hurt, appreciated, attended to, or ignored? Some of these birds have been forcibly taken from dirty or toxic homes by animal authorities so that no history is available. When a bird is surrendered by an owner to a sanctuary, most of the time little is known about their habits, their nutritional history, past treatment from other owners, their age, and their breeding status. It's sometimes impossible to know the degree of their suffering. There will be an adjustment period once you take your bird home.

If you find any of these conditions intolerable, please adopt a dog, cat, or iguana instead.

Next, how do you choose the type of exotic birds, and understand the pros and cons of each?

5

Choosing Your Bird

A free evaluation program of the best bird for the veteran's situation can be found at www.all-pet-birds.com. He can learn the size of each bird type, how cuddly, how independent, how loud or quiet, how smart, how trainable, how long he will live. Below, I describe the attributes and negatives of each of the major types of exotic bird.

Once the veteran decides which type of bird is suitable, his first move will be to visit a sanctuary, maybe several times. The veteran should spend some time talking to the creatures. Some birds will come close and try to interact with him in a positive way. He will want to ask about the bird's history before he engage the bird so he will understand anything that sets the bird off.

All types of exotic birds can be intelligent, trainable, beautiful, easily handled, companionable, talkative, destructive, and messy. Some more, some less. All parrots bite under certain conditions. All are somewhat susceptible to respiratory disorders. All need daily exercise. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the specific one you are interested in since members of each species can have specific and often specific features. All must be able to spend significant time out of the

cage, from 1 to 4 hours daily, supervised. All need toys that should be changed weekly.

The following are popular birds, each of which have multiple species within the group. The type of bird is listed, the size, average life span of a well-cared for bird, speech, intelligence, cage requirement, bonding tendencies, noise factor. Then a description of unusual features or difficulties associated with each.

Large Cockatoos. Big birds, some medium. Live up to 70+ years. Speak only a few phrases and words, but have their own gobble-de-gook language. Extremely intelligent and mischievous. Need a very large cage. Establish strong bonds within their human flock. Very loud, usually at dusk and dawn. They are show-offs and love to perform funny tricks. These birds are cuddly, loving, demanding, good companions, and can be sneaky. They sense your mood and if you cry or appear sad, they will try to comfort you, moving close to you, cuddling, and nibbling. They are more like small children. If you yell, they yell, too, trying to make more noise than you do. Their bodies produce dander which can be reduce with a quality air filter. They sometimes chew or pull feathers under stress. My vet told me my cockatoo should be able to learn up to 200 tricks. Teaching the bird to perform can prevent boredom as well.

Goffin cockatoos. Small. Live up to 26 years. Speak only a few phrases, make a few individual sounds. Intelligent. Need a medium sized cage. Establish strong bonds. Usually quiet but can be loud at times during the day. Trainable. Cuddly, can be taught to free fly with good training. Mischievous, they

can unlock their cages and those of other birds. May insist upon being "first bird" in your family and can become aggressive toward anyone or things that tries to usurp their position. Can solve complex mechanical problems. Produce dander. Sensitive to stress. Sometimes chew or pull feathers under stress or neglect.

Macaws. Most are very large, but they come in all sizes. Live up to 80 years. Can speak many phrases and words appropriately. Intelligent. Need an extra large cage for the large variety. Bond well with their owners. Trainable. Not quite as cuddly as smaller birds. Loud voices but not constantly noisy. They have powerful beaks, but are typically gentle giants. Really need owners who have owned large parrots before.

Lovebirds: Small. Live 10-15 years. Somewhat less intelligent than other birds. Need a small to medium sized cage. Very active and beautiful. Fun to watch. Not particularly bonding with humans. Probably not the type of companion a veteran needs.

Lorikeets: Medium. Live up to 20 years. Adequate intelligence. Larger birds are very talkative and imitative while smaller lorikeets are quieter. Need a medium sized cage. They bond strongly. Very active and entertaining. Along with fruit, they require a special diet that is moderately expensive and which must be prepared freshly more than once a day. Affectionate and friendly.

Amazons: Large. Live up to 50 years. High Intelligence. Prolific speech with large vocabulary. Establish strong bonds.

Need a large cage. Loud, can scream at times. Produce dander. Can be difficult at times or be a one-person bird. Assertive and independent. Good performers and are active. Become bored easily so they need lots of toys.

African Grey: Large. Live up to 50 years. Probably the brightest and most talkative of all the parrots and they understand what they are saying. Can learn well over 1000 words and phrases. Intelligence of a 3-5 year old and often emotionally mature. Also the most popular parrot. Can reason. Bonds strongly. Needs a large cage. Most of their noise is from talking. Devoted.

Conures: Medium. Live from 25 to 30 years. Intelligent. Can say a few words up to several phrases. Need a medium sized cage. Loving and bond well. Shriill call. Playful, social, need attention, togetherness, and regular exercise. Very active and entertaining.

Quakers: Medium. Live up to 30 years. Intelligent. Need a medium sized cage. Very sweet and gentle. Social, need attention and contact. Loud and one of the most talkative birds. Very popular bird. They tend to arrange their cages the way they want them and will fuss if anything is changed. Prolific and destructive if unsupervised outside of cage. Illegal to own in 10 states because of their threat to agriculture.

Pionus: Medium. Live to 40+ years. Adequate intelligence. Need a medium sized cage. Moderate bonding. Quiet, loving, social. Love to be petted but can entertain themselves for a good while with a good supply of toys.

Eclectus, Medium. 30 to 50 years. Intelligent. Talkative. Medium sized cage. Require regular interaction, lovable and bond well. Generally quiet. Require a diet of fruit and vegetables even more than other birds. Sensitive to neglect.

Senegals: Medium. Live up to 50 years. Moderate intelligence. Good speech ability. Need a medium sized cage. Friendly and bond well. Relatively quiet. Friendly little acrobats. Very trainable.

Cockatiels: Small. Live from 15 to 20 years. Only moderately bright. No speech. Need small to medium cage. Bond adequately, very companionable and loving. Can be cuddly and are generally quiet, sweet, and passive. Good listeners and easy to care for. Small alert and active. Easy to care for.

Parakeets (budgerigars): Tiny. Live from 7 to 12 years. Very bright. The best talkers, other than the African Greys. Can learn dozens to hundreds of phrases and words and have been known to construct new meaningful phrases and short sentences on their own. Yes, they can think. Smaller to medium cage but the bird should be able to stretch his wings without difficulty and to play freely. Bond very well. Pleasant singing. Very entertaining, active, responsive, and sweet. Needs to be able to leave cage for several hours a day with supervision. Easy prey for cats and dogs. Does well in aviaries with other parakeets.

Exotic birds are generally not appropriate for young children. Parakeets, Meyers, Pionus, and Cockatiels do make good companions, with supervision, for older kids. If you have kids

in your family, you may have to train your bird to respond positively to them.

The sanctuary will ask you for a contribution when you adopt. Any price up to one-half the cost of a store-bought equivalent bird is fair. Providing shelter and food for these lovely creatures costs much more than you suspect. Plus, you can always ask sanctuary caretakers for help with any future bird issues.

6

The First 48 Hours

If you are still reading, you have likely made a decision to adopt a secondhand bird.

Dr. Potter has written this book to help you handle the questions that will arise over time, as you share your home with your new lifetime companion – the parrot. What I want to do is get you started.

You have decided to adopt a parrot, a great, wonderful, noble decision; but now you are home with this bird. So what do you do next?

First, you set up a cage in a quiet spot out of the main traffic area in your home. Inside the cage place a bowl of water and a bowl half filled with food recommended by the Sanctuary. Place the bird in the cage, latch the door, and then...STOP!

For two days, simply leave the bird alone to adapt to its new surroundings. Keep your hands away from the cage, don't bang on the sides of the cage, and don't try to get the bird to step up on your hand. I promise--you WILL get bitten if you do! You are a stranger to this creature and it needs time to decide if you are friend or foe.

I like the analogy of a foster child. Since your friend has a child and you like everything about your friend's child, you decide you want a child just like your friend's. But you couldn't get a new child, so you got a "used" child. And you naturally expect that, since they are both children and look alike, they will act alike. Unfortunately, this way of thinking is NOT REALISTIC, either with a child or with a "used" parrot.

Every secondhand bird is different and has a different background. You will want to take your time, and give the parrot time, so you can watch each other and learn about each other. If you are unsure about what to do with the parrot, can you even imagine how the parrot feels about what to do with you?

When in doubt, always err on the side of caution. For instance, don't take the bird outside to fly, because it won't come back. Always think about what would happen in nature? Would the parrot take a bubble bath, eat pizza, or chew on electrical cords in the wild? No, so don't do it at your house.

Use common sense when learning the bird's preferences. Feed the bird enough for a single feeding in the morning and again in the evening. Then reduce the next feeding by nearly the amount of uneaten food in its dish. It will not starve while you are learning how to care for it.

You will figure it all out over time and that is what I am asking you to do. Give it time. The first 48 hours need to be

calm, quiet times for the bird to begin adjusting to this HUGE change. It will take a lifetime to learn about each other.

Enjoy your Second-Hand Parrot.

Jean Gibson
President and Founder
Birdlink Sanctuary Inc.
Weatherford Texas

7

Ethical Issues

I hope that, after reading this book, you understand that parrots, like many other animals, and like people, have intelligence and feelings. Even parakeets, the smallest parrot, can put words together to make original sentences and will grieve over a loss. One of my friend sports a bumper sticker that says, "Birds are people, too."

If you adopt a therapy bird, make sure you are physically and emotionally able and willing to care for him appropriately every day. Make sure you plan to keep him and interact with him permanently, until you either die or become unable to care for him. Most of these birds live a long time and will likely have several owners after you.

Once you have had the bird home for several weeks or a few months, if you discover the relationship is not beneficial, return the bird to the sanctuary as soon as possible, so new owners can be located. Changing families is very stressful for a bird that has spent considerable time with an owner,

Once the bird is a part of your family, in your will, you'll want to leave your bird to a sanctuary, a loving family member, or a friend, along with a monthly stipend to feed and house the bird. At this writing, it costs \$1 or more a day to adequately

feed a medium to large bird. By the time you leave this earth, who knows what food prices will be like.

Adopting a secondhand bird rather than buying a baby bird, when so many of the long-lived creatures have been abandoned to sanctuaries, represents a socially conscious means of resolving a serious existing problem. It is the absolute right thing to do, and it discourages irresponsible breeding of parrots.

By adopting a secondhand bird, not only are you saving an emotional, intelligent creature from the possibility of a life of frequent transition, loneliness and fear, you are bringing a supportive companion into your life, one who will share joy and love with you for decades to come.

Part II

Care of Your PTSD Therapy Bird

1

NUTRITION AND SLEEP

Good nutrition can make the difference between a loving, happy bird and a hostile, sickly bird. With secondhand parrots, many times the bird has not been fed an adequate diet and may refuse to eat anything but seeds or pellets. So not only do you have a malnourished bird, you have a diet-resistant malnourished bird.

Depending on how long the bird has been at the sanctuary, the bird may or may not have learned to eat a more balanced diet. You will have to feed him some of the diet he is accustomed to and introduce new foods one or two at a time until your bird is eating better. This could take days or weeks since birds are notoriously suspicious of new foods. If your bird is eating mostly seeds, he needs to be changed to a pellet and fruit diet.

When he finally begins to eat the new food, add another. If the food is a vegetable or fruit, let him see you eat it. Introducing a couple of foods at a time is probably a good technique since parrots will just simply reject some foods.

Most parrots have similar nutritional needs. They tend to be omnivores meaning that they eat both vegetative foods and

meat. Here are the necessary components of a healthy DAILY diet for an exotic bird:

*Nuts - left in the shell preferably; pecans, almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, etc.

*Seeds (use mostly for treats) - seeds by themselves are the equivalent of a bread and water diet

For large birds; large sunflower, safflower seeds, hemp seeds, wheat, oats, canary grass seed and various millets and parrot seed mixtures.

For medium birds; medium to large sunflower seeds, and seed mixes for cockatiel sized birds.

For small birds; small to medium sunflower seeds, canary seeds, white or red proso millet, and small birdseed mixes.

*Vegetables –Orange vegetables like carrots, squash, pumpkin, or sweet potatoes; green vegetables like peppers, green leaf lettuce (not iceberg), broccoli, some grasses (no pesticides), green beans and peas; red vegetables like peppers; any orange, dark green or red vegetable that humans eat. Orange vegetables help protect respiratory systems. However, one avian nutritionist feels that fruits are better for birds than vegetables.

*Fruits – any kind of berries that humans eat, peach, pineapple, pear, apple, banana, or melon slices; dried fruits, raisins and grapes.

*Protein – eggs, little pieces of ham, beef, pork, chicken, cheese, lamb, mashed cooked beans, cooked brown rice.

*Pellets –food pellets along with fresh food can be very beneficial for your bird. You can buy processed whole nutrition pellets for your bird that say they provide a complete diet. However, your bird shouldn't live on a pure pellet diet no matter what the package claims.

*Granola bars – a small piece for a treat; our birds call them “cookies”.

*Millet Sprays – maybe once a week for a treat. They offer some magnesium for the diet but are mostly junk food.

*To add interest to your bird's diet, you can find baking recipes for birdie bread on the Internet. The recipe usually consists of cornbread infused with chopped vegetables, fruit, and nuts. Most birds love it.

One of the best ways to feed your bird while connecting with her at the same time is to allow her to eat from your plate, assuming you eat healthy meals. Many picky eaters will gladly consume the foods you eat, while rejecting them in the cage. Sharing food creates a natural connection since animals who eat together overcome fear and develop positive feelings.

Your bird will like to share mealtime. Even if she doesn't eat with you at the table, allow her to watch you eating your meal. She will probably toddle over to her feed bowl to eat her own food at the same time.

Exceptions

**One parrot in particular cannot be fed the typical parrot diet described above. Lorikeets are nectar eaters. A special nutrient-enriched granulated nectar is available for them but is relatively expensive. A diet primarily of fresh fruits and nectar powder is best.

**An exclusive pellet diet can cause irreversible liver damage in Eclectus parrots. While a few pellets won't hurt, providing a balanced diet of seed, fruit and vegetables, while avoiding pellets all together, seems best. No bird is going to benefit from a complete pellet diet.

Don't feed your bird the following:

Chocolate

Avocado

Too much sugar (some enjoy a little strawberry jam occasionally)

Caffeine

Too many millet sprays

Milk and milk products (although my bird loves a little ice cream for a treat)

Unwashed produce with pesticides

Water

Please change your bird's water every single day. Old water grows germs. Birds need fresh water, not just for drinking, but also for keeping themselves clean and their feathers beautiful. Scrub the bowl well to eliminate the bacterial slime

that collects on the sides during the day. A shallow but large water bowl allows them to wash themselves also.

Sleep

Parrots usually require 10-12 hours of darkness and quiet every night. Most secondhand birds will have adapted to going to bed at dark and waking at daylight in the sanctuary. However, some birds have been allowed to stay up late at their former homes and need help to develop healthy habits. Sadly, your new bird may even be suffering from sleep deprivation and it may be difficult to put him to bed at dark if he's been staying up half the night while owners watch a noisy TV.

Covering the cage with a light blanket or sheet can help your bird feel snug and comfortable. You can also move the bird into a quiet dark room at night. Adequate sleep prevents misbehavior caused by fatigue.

2

HOUSING

No bird should have to stay in a cage alone all day and night. Most cages have flat tops where your birdie can play with toys, perch, and experience some measure of freedom outside the cage. If you teach your bird to stay on top of the cage or on a play center, he may be happy entertaining himself there for several hours a day.

Cages should have toys that are frequently rotated to keep your bird busy. The toys should not be hung in the center of the cage in a way that prevents your bird from stretching his wings. Hang them to the sidebars and from the roof of the cage. Hiding food in little boxes or toys also gives your bird the chance to entertain himself while he searches for treats.

Good cages or aviaries should have powdered coated or steel wire. Aviaries built with post welding galvanized wire may be suitable if painted, since steel is so expensive. This wire can be coated with a couple of coats of non-toxic paints used for baby furniture, but may need a touch up here and there. Although any type of galvanized wire has some zinc, which is harmful to chewing birds, in some cases these types of wire may work if the birds have plenty of wood to chew or if the bird is not a chewer. Additionally, cages can be powder coated by special painters.

Your parrot's cage should be the largest you can afford. At a minimum, the bird should be able to stretching his wings out fully in every direction. If your bird has clipped wings, chewed wings, or if will fall from the air from lack of wing feathers, adjust perches accordingly to a lower position in the cage.

Perches are also an issue. While many owners purchase most cage items for their birds, it may seem an easy task to walk outside and cut a branch off a tree for a perch. However, cutting the wrong wood can lead to serious problems with your bird's health. Many, if not most wood is unsafe and toxic for your bird to chew. While there are extensive lists on the Internet for safe and unsafe woods, here is a short list of safe ones that may be available:

Mesquite

Grapevine

Ash

Aspen

Birch

Beech

Cottonwood

Maple

Hickory

Hackberry

Pecan

Pear

Sycamore

Another issue with these little smarty birds is escape. Parrots are curious and they don't like staying in a small cage all day. This means you may have to provide heavy key locks and plenty of time outside the cage so they don't become escape artists. Intelligent birds can pick locks, untwist wire, and manipulate almost any type of closure on a cage. My bird bounces his cage door up and down until the toggle lock works it's way open. I wouldn't put a combination lock past the abilities of some of these little toots. They can hear the tumblers and learn the sequences. Fortunately, they can't open a lock that requires a key or a lock that opens out of their reach.

One caution about housing birds. Never place a parrot in a cage with a parrot of a different type. Doing so can lead to aggression, territorialism, food hoarding, and fatalities. Even two females of a single type can develop hostility in a tight area. Single cages and aviaries should be restricted to birds that get along.

3

GROOMING & CLEANLINESS

Many birds that come to a sanctuary have poorly groomed claws, beaks, feathers, and are often dirty. Here are some general rules of grooming your bird.

Claws. Should never be neglected. They help the parrot hang onto a branch or perch. If too long, they can break off in a painful manner or prevent your bird from perching adequately. To determine how long your bird's claws should be, ask your vet, look at a bird like yours that is well groomed or ask at the sanctuary you adopted your bird from. The best way to tell if your bird's claws need trimming is if his toe is elevated off the ground when his feet are on a flat surface. Claws that are too long or too sharp should be trimmed gradually to avoid hitting the quick of the nail. Always have styptic powder or cornstarch on hand to stop any bleeding. Restrain the bird in a towel or clip one nail per evening while watching TV and cuddling. Clip, using a nail clipper or claw clipper, in tiny increments until you see white. An alternative is to use a Dremel tool or similar grinding tool to file the claws down. This method requires a second person to hold the bird. Some birds are easy to trim and others require restraint for trimming.

Perches that are somewhat rough in texture, like wood, can help keep claws trimmed. However, avoid sandpaper perches since they can create raw spots on the bottom of the feet. My avian vet once turned my bird upside down to make that point to me. Sure enough, there were sores on his footpads.

Bathing. Most birds will take a bath once a day if a good-sized water container is in their cage. If they don't bathe on their own, try spraying water into the air over their heads so it will fall on them like rain. Or place your bird on a perch in your shower after making sure the water is mildly cool or luke warm. Or place the bird in a small cage and set it under the shower for 2-3 minutes. Once she trusts you, the bird can go in the shower with you. Gently soak her down on the back, the front and under each wing. Then place her in a warm spot to dry. It is best to bathe in the morning to give her time to dry before dark.

Trimming Wings. This is a matter of preference, however, sometimes it is wise to clip a few feathers on the middle of the wings. Then if your bird flies, he won't be able to gain altitude and end up in a tall tree or on the roof. By clipping his wings, you will be able to retrieve him more easily. Either get your bird vet to trim his wings or get instruction from a bird sanctuary expert for trimming. A good way to trim wings is to leave the first five outer feathers, then clip the next 5 to about an inch and a half from their base.

Beaks. Birdies with wood toys in their cages usually keep their beaks trimmed by gnawing. If a bird has been malnourished, however, she may experience misshapen and/or over-grown beaks due to liver damage. In this case, the beak will have to

be observed for abnormal growth and reshaped frequently (one to 2 weeks) to help your bird eat properly. A vet can trim the beak and teach you how to keep it trimmed. These problems don't always remit and usually represent permanent damage. There are videos on YouTube that demonstrate proper beak trimming. It is much the same as claw trimming.

Feathers. A well-nourished parrot should have nice shiny colorful feathers. Occasionally, he will pull one out or break one. Twice a year, fall and spring, your bird will lose many feathers although he shouldn't show bare skin just from this seasonal molting. If he's making bare spots by plucking, see the chapter on behavioral problems. Also, if he chews a blood feather, he may bleed profusely. Learn how to detach the bleeding feather quickly to stop the bleeding.

Skin. A healthy parrot's skin should look clear and dry with no red splotches or wounds. Broken skin may indicate allergies or self-mutilation and should be examined by the vet.

If you see mites or suspect them because your bird is scratching a lot, you can place a large plate or pie pan filled with diatomaceous earth or sand in the bottom of your bird's cage. If he needs it, he will get into the pile, fluff his feathers and bathe in it to rid himself of the mites. If there is ever a serious problem with the bugs, then just keep the plate filled for several weeks and clean the cage thoroughly every day. Avoid pesticides.

Eyes. The eyes of a healthy parrot are clear and bright. Any thing else indicates problems. If your bird has visible pupils, a

sign that your bird is about to bite you is when pupils contract to tiny points.

Cage. The bottoms of cages should be cleaned daily and the entire cage will need to be hosed down at least once a month. Super cleanliness ensures reduced exposure to germs that can make your bird sick or die. Also, birds won't play with toys that have poop on them.

Air. No bird should be subjected to excess airborne chemicals that can kill them or make them sick. You don't want to smoke around your bird, use spray or chemical pesticides, clean with harsh smelly cleaners, or cook with non-stick surfaced pans (*deadly to birds*). Keep your house as chemical-free and clean as possible

4

EXERCISE

Birds that remain in a cage all day every day are generally unhealthy in mind and body. Secondhand birds have sometimes lived their whole life inside a cage and never allowed outside that cage. All cages birds need daily exercise to sleep well, exhibit positive attitudes, and interact in a healthy way with owners. Allowing your bird to exercise enough will help him tolerate his cage time much better, too, when you have to be gone.

It falls to the birdie's parent to insure the bird gets adequate exercise. If your bird has not been exercised recently, then start with very brief periods to avoid exhaustion. Once he starts panting, its time to stop.

This can be accomplished several ways:

- 1) Indoor exercise. Some bird's parents fly their birds across a large living room that has been modified so the bird won't hit the furniture. This may entail launching the bird from one family member to another, or launching your bird toward the couch. One lady stands in the door of her bedroom and launches her cockatoo across the room to the bed several times everyday.

To launch your bird, simply place him on your arm, say a cue word, something like "GO." and slightly toss your arm upward to push him in the direction you prefer. He will eventually anticipate and launch himself when you say the stimulus word. If he resists then place him on a perch close to a bed and tempt him to launch toward you using a treat or favorite toy or the expectation of cuddling.

If he is used to flying indoors, then place him on a perch and tempt him to fly to you by walking away holding his favorite treat.

2) Outdoors. If your bird has clipped wings, launching him outside over the lawn can work well. Make sure there is a clear passage so he doesn't end up in a bush or tree or crash into the lawn furniture or mower. You will need to provide a soft landing area at least until he learns to land softly.

Many secondhand birds don't know what their wings are for. This is sad. However, if launched onto a soft surface like a bed or thick lawn, they will instinctually spread their wings and fly, although somewhat pitifully at first. After a few trials, they will gain some strength and skill and eventually will learn to float to a landing.

Before allowing your bird to fly indoors or outdoors, teach him to step up on your hand so you can retrieve him. Your bird's wings are clipped adequately if your bird can't gain altitude when he flies. If he shows ability to gain altitude he may need his wings clipped more.

Parrots can be trained to free fly and return to their parent. There are training videos on YouTube that demonstrate return and free-fly training.

5

TOGETHERNESS

This section is short, but critical.

Parrots, more than most pets, need cuddling, holding, verbal and emotional communication, and physical contact. They thrive on attention and suffer dismally from the lack of it. A parrot becomes a family member, not just a pet available when you are ready to interact. Parrots should be treated like small children. Most need daily touch and love, or they fail to thrive and can develop neurotic behaviors. Cockatoos are especially needy compared to other parrots. One pet store owner summed it up specifically about Cockatoos, "They need to be with you 24/7. ON YOU." My cockatoo sits on my lap or shoulder several hours a day.

A bird's need for connection with a human works nicely with the plight of veterans who can't tolerate closeness with other humans, but who welcome touch and love from their pet.

Most birds that end up in a sanctuary have been neglected in one way or another, but not because their parents were mean. Rather, they never recognized how much togetherness the parrot needed and/or they had too little time in their busy lives to give to their bird.

6

BITING

ALL BIRDS BITE.

Even birds who are very tame will bite when severely stressed, fearful or startled. Secondhand birds tend to be biters because they are stressed and scared. It takes time for them to feel safe and secure with their new parents. One has to remember that exotic birds are only one or two generations from the wild.

Secondhand parrots may have well-established fears. They may be adverse to beards, hats, gloves, or other objects. Like the veteran with PTSD the bird must be observed to learn those fears and help protect the bird from unnecessary stress.

Know why your bird bites and what stresses your bird. If the bird starts biting, you must either retrain or reestablish trust with him. Use gloves for protection until the bird attaches to you or exhibits restraint from biting.

For instance, does the bird bite when someone tries to pet him on the head.

Another time your bird may bite you is when you get in between them and the toy they are playing with. They don't

intend to injure, it's part of the game and sometimes they get a little too enthusiastic.

If your bird bites you, make a big deal of it. Display disappointment (You bite me!) and pain (Ow! and show him your finger, but not too close). Once your bird knows you are in his corner emotionally, he will learn to control his aggression. This may take time, cuddling, and training.

A bird that bites a beloved owner may even experience regret. Some birds will make a gesture of “I’m sorry” when a parent complains about the bite, by nibbling softly on the bitten area.

Other birds bite hard enough to bring blood as a matter of habit. Secondhand birds typically, but not always, bite due to abuse, fear, neglect, or difficulty achieving stability because of changes in living conditions and when being surrendered. You will want to use gloves until you retrain your bird but not any longer than necessary.

Your bird may eventually respond to kindness, feeding, and a quiet calm voice. She must learn to trust you. Biting is a fear response and once your bird has no reason to fear you, she will bite less frequently. However, some birds bite no matter what the treatment or attachment. They may be too damaged to control their fear.

Know why birds bite and what conditions stress your bird. If your bird starts biting you must either retrain him and/or reestablish trust. An experienced bird trainer can help retrain your bird to use responses other than biting and are usually

reasonable in their fees. Also, there are inexpensive and even free videos on the internet that demonstrate training for biting behavior.

7

SCREECHING

Once again, wild parrots are flock birds who live in groups of a few to many thousands. Parakeets, for instance come from areas in Australia where huge flock have no limits. Flock birds become fearful and panic when separated from the flock since they are more vulnerable to predators.

When left alone, parrots can get loud enough to be incredibly annoying. Some birds are noisier than others, but almost all of them will make noise when they don't get enough attention. They are in a cage separated from you, the flock and they have no way to get to you. So they yell.

Most parrots screech in the morning and evening as a matter of instinct. In the wild, they call to their mates and friends to keep the flock together and safe. In your home, it can seem like they are making a lot of noise with the express purpose of driving you nuts.

Any change in your bird's mood can cause screeching, as well as hearing loud noises or talking or sometimes for no obvious reason. Although your parrot will always screech some because it is a natural behavior, you can reduce a habit of continual screeching.

Before doing anything, make sure your bird isn't ill and that his needs are being met. Is his cage large enough, is he getting enough attention and sleep, adequate food and toys. Get your vet to check him out.

There are several approaches to reduce excessive screeching during the day.

1) Ignore the screeching every time while rewarding the quiet calls, calling for you, or being silent. You have to do this very consistently.

Totally and completely ignore your parrot when she screeches and pay immediate attention when she is quiet. Wait a few minutes before giving attention, in case your bird is just drawing another breath to screech more. You don't want to reinforce the screeching. As you first ignore the screeching, the parrot will screech louder and louder to try to get your attention. Don't let that work or you'll be starting over.

Reward the bird's quiet behavior by speaking to him, praising, getting your bird out of the cage, or paying attention to your bird in any way. You can give him a treat if you like. Ignore him by not looking at him, speaking to him, or indicating in any manner that you even know he is there. Walking out of the room for a few minutes is very effective.

Do reward any other behavior you want the parrot to keep doing. Talking quietly, playing with a toy are some behaviors you will want to reward and if you attend to him when he does something positive, he will learn that it works to get the attention he wants.

2) Get up and walk out of the room. Shut the door behind you for added emphasis. Return after he stops screeching. He'll eventually get the message.

3) Another way to extinguish screeching is to (only if it is warm outside) place your bird in an outside cage or another room by himself for a few minutes. Then bring him back when he has quieted.

4) Some parents will lightly spray the bird with water to discourage screeching. However, this can undermine your relationship with your bird as well as precluding giving your bird a bath by spraying.

In general, punishment works poorly to change your bird's habits and may scare him. And screaming at your bird means simply that you are joining in with him. He'll love that, it's more fun.

Distraction can work if its done before your bird is screeching. Give him some chewable toys or something else, like music, that will prevent the screeching. Some parents leave the TV on a nature channel while they go to work.

Retraining your bird can be tiring and sometimes you need a little peace. Leaving his cage cover on for a few minutes while you eat your dinner is okay occasionally. Letting your bird help you eat your meal will solve both problems.

If your bird screeches occasionally, just continue to ignore it and reward his positive behavior. Realize that some birds

screech more than others. Some of the larger birds with screech at dawn and dark as in the wild they are calling the flock together. Allow your bird to screech at these times. Always speak quietly to your bird when he is behaving himself.

However, the final and likely most effective approach for cockatoos especially relates to what one avian expert states, "Cockatoos screech unless they are with you 24/7. And I mean ON YOU." They are flock birds and you are their flock.

8

FEATHER PLUCKING

Many secondhand parrots at the Sanctuary have arrived having plucked out many or most of their feathers for many years. Since plucking can damage the root of the feather, prolonged plucking can mean the feathers will never grow back.

Barbering is another form of feather damage in birds. Instead of plucking the feather out, they chew the ends of the feathers off, often up to the skin. A barbered bird may regrow the feathers if they can stop the chewing.

Plucking is not the same as molting. Parrots molt some of their feathers twice a year, spring and fall, and then new feathers come in to replace them. Molting, however, does not leave patches of bare skin like plucking does. Plucking is abnormal and, if a parrot begins plucking, the specific reason for the bird's behavior should be explored and addressed promptly.

There are multiple reasons a bird plucks. Here are some causes of plucking:

Puberty. Just like teenagers, parrots experience wild hormone imbalances.

Abuse/Neglect. Many birds are surrendered because of the owner's busy schedule or lack of interest in the bird. This can cause plucking or The bird will have to learn trust.

Lack of Baths and/or low humidity. A bird needs spraying with mist once a day and a good bath or heavy shower at least once a week. Showering with your bird can be a wonderful bonding experience. Keep the water only mildly warm. If he resists get under the showerhead, hold his little feet with the fingers of the hand he perches on and shield his eyes from the water. Or use a standing perch in the shower. He won't itch if he stays clean.

Your bird will benefit from a humidity level of at least 55%. This will help to prevent feather picking. A bird's skin can become dry from the lack of humidity, causing scratching and plucking. Aloe Vera juice mixed 50% with water for spraying or bathing your bird can reduce irritation on the skin and help remove dander.

Encourage your bird to bathe in a bowl of clean water everyday or spray your bird lightly from above the cage to simulate rainfall. Or take your parrot into the shower with you and make it a pleasurable shared experience. Twice a week is optimal, while once a week should be the minimum. You can also, and should, use a humidifier in dry climates.

Inside Lighting : Birds require full spectrum lighting unless they are outdoors several hours a day. Florescent lights are the best. Being by a window does not provide full spectrum

light. Lights should be arranged about two feet above the bird and the manufacturers instructions should be followed.

Poor Diet. Parrots require a diet strong in nutrition. Low levels of protein or fat in the diet may result in the bird eating his feathers for the missing nutrients and stripping his whole body bare. Sometimes birds will chew off the ends of their claws for protein. A bird who gets no more than a diet of seed is like a prisoner getting no more than bread and water. Seeds are mostly carbohydrates. Pellets are good, but fruits should make up a large part of the diet. Seeds cause a carbohydrate high, but can be supplied in a small percentage.

Cramped Quarters. A parrot's housing should be at least large enough for them to spread their wings without touching anything, play with their toys, and move around easily. Bigger is generally better.

Boredom. Lack of stimulation causes plucking more frequently than any other reason. Parrots need plenty of toys, pieces of wood to chew, and a radio or TV left on when they are left alone. Toys should be rotated every few days and new toys supplied frequently. Chew toys like wood, hard plastic, or acrylics. Activity, puzzle, and destroy toys are the best. A bird also needs out of the cage for at least a couple of hours a day. But maintain control by supervising him. Auditory stimulation helps, too. Radio, TV, running water reduce stress and boredom.

Upsets or Broken Routines. Most parrots like and feel secure with a routine. If the routine is abruptly changed, birds can begin plucking out of frustration.

Mate Grooming. Sometimes a mate can become too enthusiastic in their grooming efforts and pluck a bird's head and neck bald. Separation of one bird into another, closely positioned cage can allow the plucked feathers to grow back.

Smoking/Chemicals: Second hand smoke is damaging to your second hand bird. Since handling your bird after smoking can lead to feather destruction, wash any nicotine off your hands before touching the bird. Avoid using toxic chemicals like pesticides and cleaning fluids around your bird. Vinegar and baking soda are good.

Habit. Plucking and barbering can become a habit, like nail biting in humans. The bird may need training or treatment to remedy the behavior. Making a vest for the parrot can help stop the behavior while the feathers grow back on the bird's chest. The vest should be a rectangle that covers the bird's chest down to his vent, with three sets of ties, one around the neck, one under the wings to be tied on his back, and the last between his legs and then tied up around the tail. Cut a V around the vent to prevent excrement buildup. A stiff wide V collar around the bird's neck that prevents plucking may help temporarily, but can also create additional frustration in the bird. Expect your bird to throw himself on the floor and flail like a banshee while getting accustomed to the collar. After that he will sit on his perch perfectly still for several hours or even a day. Then he'll likely settle down by trying to chew off the collar.

Another potentially useful tool is the pipe cushion tubing. Cutting a piece to fit your bird's neck is simple process.

However, the bird is likely to resume the plucking once the tubing is removed.

Breaking the habit, once the cause has been corrected, may involve spraying your parrots feathers with a distasteful solution like mustard and water. However, make sure the spray isn't painful for your bird's bare skin.

Medical Issues. Fungus and mold in your bird's area can cause infections that irritate skin or lungs. Fungal infections can be treated effectively with anti-fungal medications or natural substances. Remove the source of the moisture if it isn't needed for moisture.

Lack of Exercise. All birds need exercise like humans and other animals do. Remaining passive with minimal movement during the day can contribute to anxiety. Birds can be flown inside the home, taken outside with a harness, wings clipped and allowed to fly in the yard. Cover or tape an X on the windows for safety.

(Sources: petparrot.com and aviancollar.com)

Each of these techniques will improve conditions for your bird. However, some experts report that many birds don't respond to anything less than medication.

Medication for Plucking

Feather plucking is often a progressive disorder. A feather plucking bird may pluck larger and larger areas and eventually begin to chew and tear skin causing bleeding and sometimes

death as they open up veins just under the surface of the chest. It doesn't take more than minutes for a bird that gets this far to bleed out and die. The lesson here is that sometimes alternative treatments rare stop plucking and require psychiatric medication.

Dr. Jeffrey R. Jenkins of the Avian and Exotic Animal Hospital in San Diego currently uses a Haldol protocol to help cockatoos and other parrots re-feather. The associated Chloe Sanctuary Founder, Father Don Scott, reports a near 100% recovery rate from Dr. Jenkins' scientific treatment. The only exceptions are birds that have plucked for many years who lack healthy follicles needed to completely recover their bodies. The birds shown on this video are fully re-feathered and playful after treatment. The video is low on the page.

<http://chloesanctuary.org/feather-picking/>

Haldol has gained a bad reputation in the avian business. Bird owners complained that their birdies were persistently apathetic from the Haldol and eventually it passed out of favor. Also, humans can have serious side effects from Haldol, but since birds have very different endocrine systems, the medication presents no such problems for the birds. So, at present very few veterinarians are willing to use the drug with parrots.

Dr. Jenkins appears has resolved the problem by titrating the medication. Most veterinarians are not trained in psychiatric drugs, which require special techniques in dosing. But since

haldol is a major tranquilizer, it requires a special approach to administration.

Dr. Jenkins starts the bird on lower initial dosing than would be expected for the birds weight and gradually raises the dosage, as is appropriate with many psychiatric drugs. At the optimal dose, the bird should become sleepy for about an hour and then bounce back to normal behavior. Dosages must be adjusted for various conditions such as molting and breeding.

Another medication, hydroxyzine, also named Atarax or Vistaril, has also been used to help birds re-feather. It is a milder drug for milder cases and perhaps not as scary to bird owners as Haldol. You should always have a vet's help to deal with psychiatric medications.

The theory behind the need for psychiatric medications falls to birds being reared by humans rather than bird parents. Just as skipping the crawling phase of human infant development can cause reading difficulty, and bird experts theorize that the young birds are missing out on some important facet of development only the parents can provide.

Additionally, as we have noted previously, these birds are flock creatures and being away from their flock, their human owners, causes panic and screeching which leads to more fear-based behavior like plucking and barbering. Not only are they separated from their flock but they are locked in a cage that prevents them from searching for their flock. Birds out of contact in the wild become panicked and screech loudly in an attempt to find his family. Humans under similar anxiety

conditions may chew their nails, pick their skin, or pop their knuckles.

Resolving the bird's anxiety with the appropriate medications can resolve both issues, plucking and persistent screeching, with medication. Togetherness and attention from owners may not work well enough.

9

SEXUAL FRUSTRATION

If the bird you adopt is 5 years or older, up to 12, he can indulge in hormonal attacks like biting and charging. One of the primary reasons people surrender their birds is hormonal behavior. The attacks usually pass once the bird becomes accustomed to the hormones and matures somewhat.

The hormonal bird is focused on mating, a totally natural state of being in the wild or the cage. Watch out for sexual behavior between you and your bird. A female bird may be friendly with a male and aggressive with a human female.

Make sure you know at what age your parrot will become sexually mature. Know when mating season occurs during the year. You can recognize a hormonal bird by the following signs:

- *Plucking his chest or inside legs due to sexual frustration.
- *Bobbing head, regurgitating food, or trying to eat what you are chewing.
- *Shredding paper or other materials, more than usual, to build a nest. And searching for nest spots.
- *Aggressive behavior to protect his favorite human or nest.
- *Even more, and louder, screeching or talking.
- *Masturbating on you or on objects.

Remedies:

Reduce sexual energy. Most experts will advise you not to allow the bird to engage in mating behavior toward you. When your birdie starts to wiggle his underside on you, or tries to feed you mush from his crop, immediately distract him by putting him on a perch, giving him a favorite toy, or redirecting his sexual energy.

Increase the bird's exercise. If wings are clipped, take him outside to fly and play, if not, put an old sheet on the bed, throw some toys down, and turn on the TV while he plays beside you. In the cage, provide climbing or shredding toys. Gently holding his feet so he can fly in place works, too.

Redirect his sexual energy. Fill the bottom of the cage with safe sticks, branches, wood, paperback books, and chewable wood toys, so that the bird has to chew his way through. Hide some bird goodies or nuts underneath so he can forage. Leave him free access to food and water.

To avoid sexual stimulation, don't pet your bird on his back, tail or under the wings. This is sexual behavior expected from a mate. Just pet his head. If the bird responds to his opposite sex owner as his mate, he may become aggressive, possessive, and bite the other members of the family. Male birds may be particularly vulnerable to hormonal aggression.

Don't feed him from your mouth. Mouth to mouth feeding is mating behavior. Don't let him feed you (unless you love partially digested bird gook).

Reduce the length of daylight to that typical of winter, 8-10 hours. Use a cage cover if necessary. Make sure he gets at least 12 hours of darkness.

Feed hemp seed and wheat germ and lots of fruits and vegetables while he is hormonal.

Remove potential nesting sites.

In extreme cases, when nothing else works, there are prescription drugs that your avian veterinarian may use.

Be consistent in your approach so you don't send mixed messages to your bird. Never punish for natural behaviors.

Adapted from AvianWeb's BeautyofBirds.com. Source: Dr. Jill Pratt, Arizona Veterinarian 2014.

10

WANTON SHAMELESS DESTRUCTION

Birds don't just bite fingers; they bite furniture, electrical cords, clothing and anything else they can get a beak on. Left outside their cages, unsupervised, a parrot can demolish valuable wooden furniture by turning it into splinters in minutes with their powerful beaks.

Loni, a hyacinth macaw we know, spends most of his time on a play stand in his parent's house. He talks and laughs, harasses everyone, and plays with his wooden toys.

Recently, his parents went outside to greet some visitors for several minutes, not more than 10 minutes is what I was told. When his parents returned, Loni had chewed two dining room chairs into splinters and taken huge bites out of the antique dining table. He obviously threw a one-bird party while they were out.

Parrots can't be trusted unsupervised around your valuable possessions.

They chew. Everything.

If you aren't watching your out-of-cage parrot, your good clothes will have holes in them, your computer cords will be

chewed in half, your jewelry will have the gems plucked out and swallowed, and your furniture will be ruined. You'll be poking through birdie poop for those diamonds for several days.

And that says nothing about the danger to your birdie. Chewing electrical cords can kill them in milliseconds and chomping up your medications, after popping the top off the bottle, can result in a torturous death for your pet.

If you are too busy or distracted to keep your eye on your bird, then place him in his cage or ask a family member to watch him. Wear old clothes when playing with your bird. Some parrots will wait until you are not looking and take a big bite out of your favorite shirt while sitting innocently in your lap. Keep your medications in a tightly fastened cabinet and don't let your bird remain out of his cage unsupervised. And recognize that parrots are sneaky. They will leave an object when you say "no" but will innocently work their way back to the desired object and chomp it as soon as you become distracted.

Once your bird established a bond with you, he will slow down on the chewing and learn to obey you about avoiding certain objects.

At least while you're looking.

11

HEALTH CARE

In most good-sized cities, avian vets are available and should play a role in your bird's life. Regular check-ups for disease, pests, and routine care provided by a good veterinarian keeps your bird healthy and happy. Emergency care cannot be undervalued, birds get hurt and sick just like everyone else and once they appear sick, it is often too late to help them. Once a veteran adopts a bird, he should become aware of emergency veterinarians in the area well before the need exists.

If you provide good nutrition, exercise, and cleanliness for your bird, he will rarely need a vet visit. But you must be alert to signs of illness because, in the wild they instinctively hide symptoms for survival purposes. A predator notices sick prey.

There are several diseases that affect parrots. Secondhand parrots must be initially isolated at a sanctuary and observed for any disorder that could be contagious or deadly. The birds coming into a sanctuary will be, in most cases, lab tested for common disease. A good sanctuary will never knowingly allow a sick bird to be adopted or to expose other birds.

The secondhand parrot may have a chronic physical problem that requires medication and/or special care. If you adopt

from a sanctuary, the caretakers should already be aware of any problems. The bird may be inactive and obese so that increasing the bird's fitness level may fall to you after adoption (See chapter on Exercise).

Veterinarian bills for parrots can be expensive. And often finding an avian vet is difficult. Not all vets will treat birds and not all vets are qualified to treat birds. When you adopt a secondhand bird, ask the sanctuary for the name of their avian vet and others they recommend.

Birds are harder than other animals to keep healthy. They hide their illnesses as a survival measure and by the time you notice they are ill, it is often too late. They often get respiratory disorders. Their respiratory systems are channeled into their legs, which means a respiratory disorder involves pretty much the whole bird. Vitamin A containing fruits or additives can support the bird's immune system against respiratory conditions.

Caring for a parrot requires that you be alert and watch for illness. Here are some symptoms that must not be ignored:

1. Sneezing
2. Runny nose
3. Clicking sound with breathing or difficulty breathing
4. Diarrhea that lasts more than a day or two
5. Crusty buildup on the cere or beak
6. Broken bone
7. Head wound
8. Deep cuts
9. Straining to defecate or lay an egg

10. Persistent or heavy bleeding
11. Blood in droppings
12. Eye injury
13. Unusual swellings
14. Refusing to eat or difficulty swallowing
15. Object caught firmly in mouth or beak
16. Unusual odors

To determine if your bird's symptoms require a vet's care, look in the Appendix for sites that address problems in parrots. One good site is Goodbird.com.

Call your veterinarian before leaving your home and ask what you should do on the way to the office. At the very least, keep the bird warm.

Take a bird with serious symptoms to the vet as soon as possible. Don't wait. If your bird is showing symptoms, it may already be too late. Even so, you want to prevent suffering by getting your bird seen quickly. A sick bird needs heat on the way to the vet. If the bird needs to be restrained, use the least, gentlest restraint appropriate.

How to Administer Meds to a Bird.

If the vet prescribes medication, learn how to administer it properly. Administering medication requires skill. Not many birds will automatically open their mouths and suck down a squirt of pink stuff from a dropper. Some experts recommend the following approaches.

Draw up medication in a small syringe. Wrap your bird completely in a towel with just his head exposed, unless he is willing to take the medication. Avoid pressing on his chest. Place the tip of the oral syringe to his beak. Most birds will bite at the tip. Once the tip is inside the beak under the tongue, squeeze the syringe slowly, allowing the bird to swallow several times. Then give him a treat.

If the medication is in pill form, crush the pill and add it to a soft food that your parrot loves. A tiny bit of peanut butter can work and will disguise the taste of the medication.

Cold and Heat Tolerance

Birds tend to be more sensitive to heat more than cold. However, for them to adapt to even moderate cold, they must have a period over a couple of weeks of gradual exposure to temperatures under 40 degrees. Outside birds should be blocked from cold winds by covering the cage or aviary with wood or plastic along with a little heat in very cold conditions. Never place an indoor bird outside, even for short periods, when the weather is very cold.

At 95 degrees outside, birds need fans and, at 98 and up, they need a misting system and plenty of shade. Watch your bird to notice if he holds his wings out from his body or if he opens his beak and breathes through his mouth. He can die if he gets too hot even though his type comes from originated in the tropics.

12

TRAINING

Every parrot should be taught to "step up" and "come here" even if she learns nothing else. This ensures that you can catch her, clean and trim her, and get her back into her cage.

A good method is to hold a treat in one hand and place the other hand between the treat and the bird. The bird will have to use the closer hand as a stepping-stone to reach the treat.

Once she has learned to step up and come here, you may want to start teaching her other tricks. Using internet resources, your bird can accomplish some amazing feats. There are multiple videos on YouTube demonstrating how to train your bird for various tricks.

Then, there are many expert bird trainers who have sophisticated sites with training instructions and videos available.

13

LOST BIRD

Birds can become confused in new situations, so clipping wings or using a harness is crucial to avoid losing the bird if he is taken outside.

A lost bird can feel like the end of the world to a loving parent. It's usually an accident. Somehow, a door gets left open or your bird is sitting so quietly on your shoulder that you walk outside without thinking and she flies into the sky. At the Sanctuary, one smart little cockatoo breaks out of his cage to pick the cage door locks for all the other little birds.

Most of the time, once your bird flies, she heads for a tree that is close by, and sits there until the wind or a storm knocks her down. She flies to another tree then another then another until she is hungry and thirsty and ready to come home. In good weather, this will probably be three days. In very hot or very cold weather, it could be less.

A typical problem with domesticated parrots is that they don't know how to launch from their perch. This makes it hard to get them to fly to you from the top of a tree after their escape. So, you need to prepare for this. Once your bird is used to you and likes to sit on you, place her perch close to

the bed while you are on it and call for her to fly to the bed. Keep doing this from increased distances until she launches comfortably.

Setting her cage out where she can see it from her perch in the tree works many times. Place food and water in the cage and wait. Often she will fly down to the cage and go in to eat and drink. If she doesn't, or if you can't see where she is, try waiting until twilight and calling her. You may hear a squawk and be able to spot her.

What usually doesn't work is going after the bird with a long perch or stick that may scare her off to another even taller tree. Climbing up in the tree can result in you falling out of the tree or the bird flying to another tree. But occasionally, depending on the bird, you can get your bird to step up and climb gently down.

If your bird flies too far for you to find her, start calling neighbors and knocking on doors in the direction she flew. Post signs at nearby street intersections, within a mile or two, describing your bird and listing your phone number. Your bird will eventually seek out a human for food.

Most parrots are retrievable within a few days, since much of the time they are sitting in a tree listening to you cry and call for them. Then they get hungry and there you are with food. One of our green parrots hid for days in the Sanctuary's tree filled back yard. Being green, we couldn't even see him and he wasn't talking. He finally screeched for food and flew down to his cage.

Some birds even show up after months away from home. If you lose your bird, call your local shelter or sanctuary to let them know to watch for your bird. Putting a sign up on a main street often works well.

14

Appendix I

The PTSD Pattern

Since this is a book on PTSD, familiarity of the symptoms of this admittedly broad diagnosis helps provide an understanding of the disorder. Most of my readers already know the symptoms and live with them every day. If you are familiar with the symptoms, you can skip this section.

Every case is different and the severity of symptoms differs. Where one veteran will experience major sleep disorder, another will have violent outbursts or withdrawal. The following is a list of symptoms, groups of which determine a diagnosis of PTSD. This description is quoted from the DSM 5, 2015, the psychiatric manual of mental disorders. A through H conditions must be met for PTSD. Mental health evaluators judge level of dysfunction by this measure.

"A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in at least one of the following ways:

- 1) Directly experiencing the traumatic event.*
- 2) Witnessing in person the event as it occurred to others.*

- 3) *Learning that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend. (the event must have been violent or accidental)*
- 4) *Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive detail of the traumatic event (first responders collecting human remains, police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).*

B. Presence of one or more of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event, and beginning after the event.

- 1) *Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event.*
- 2) *Recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or emotions of the dream are related to the traumatic event.*
- 3) *Dissociative reaction (flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic events were recurring. The most extreme expression being a complete loss of awareness of present surroundings.*
- 4) *Intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.*
- 5) *Marked physiological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.*

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic events, beginning after the traumatic event occurred as evidenced by one or both of the following:

- 1) *Avoidance of or efforts to avoid distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely related with the traumatic event.*
- 2) *Avoidance of or efforts to avoid external reminders that arouse distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely related to the traumatic events (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) that arouse distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic events.*

D. Negative alterations in cognition and mood associated with the traumatic event beginning or worsening after the traumatic event occurred as evidence by two or more of the following:

- 1) Inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event (typically due to dissociative amnesia and not to other factors such as head injury, alcohol, or drugs)*
- 2) Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others or the world ("I am bad", "the world is completely dangerous", "no one can be trusted").*
- 3) Persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause of or the consequences of the traumatic event that lead the individual to blame himself or others.*
- 4) Persistent negative emotional state (fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame)*
- 5) Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities.*
- 6) Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others*
- 7) Persistent inability to experience positive emotions (happiness, love, satisfaction)*

E. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event beginning or worsening after the traumatic event occurred as evidence by two or more of the following:

Difficulty falling or staying asleep

Irritability or outbursts of anger

Reckless behavior

Difficulty concentrating

Hyper-vigilance

Exaggerated startle response

F. Duration of the disturbance is more than 1 month.

G. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of function.

H. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effect of a substance such as alcohol, medications, or another medical condition."

15

Associated Symptoms of PTSD

Along with the typical symptoms of PTSD, Other symptoms often accompany the disorder.

Depression: "I have nothing to live for."

Aggression: "I just want to hurt someone."

Depersonalization: "I often feel like I am outside of my body watching myself" or "nothing feels real to me."

Disillusionment: "This war is just a sham."

Demoralization: "I have no confidence in myself."

Numbness: "Most of the time I can't feel anything."

Lack of empathy: "People think their little troubles are important until they live with death and horror like I have."

Rapid emotional fluctuations: "One minute I'm furious and the next I'm scared."

Spacey, confused as if in a daze: "My mind wanders constantly and I can't focus."

Self-destructive and impulsive: "I can't seem to control my behavior."

Weak, nauseated, achy (somatic/bodily complaints): "I never feel good."

A sense of ineffectiveness, shame, despair, or hopelessness: "Nothing will ever be right again."

A sense of being permanently damaged. "I'll never be who I was before."

A loss of previous beliefs: "I've lost my faith." "I can't believe in anything anymore."

Changes in personality: "My wife says she doesn't recognize me as the person I used to be."

16

APPENDIX II

There are many good websites for parrot concerns and care including:

All-pet-birds.com (can help you choose a bird)

Birdtricks.com - Parrot Training Courses

YouTube.com (search for specific training videos)

Birdcage.net

Goodbird.com

Parrotcarecenter.com

Parrotcare.tropicalpets.com

Parrothouse.com

Parrotmag.org

Parrots.org

Parrotparrot.com

Petbirdpage.com

Petmd.com

Pricelessparrots.com

Mytoos.com

Thank you for purchasing and reading this book. It shows your sincere desire to provide your adopted secondhand bird the best possible conditions. I sincerely hope you and your bird will share unconditional love for the rest of your life.

Please post an honest review on the market from which you purchased the book. This helps others know what to expect and it helps my books show value.

Visit me and let me know what you think at DrMel.com. You'll find free articles with more information on life strategies.

Melody Milam Potter, PhD

Dr. Melody Milam Potter has been a Licensed Psychologist in North Central Texas since 1986. She completed her doctorate at the University of North Texas and her undergraduate degree at Texas Christian University.

Dr. Potter has spent several thousand hours with veterans, performing evaluations for PTSD and treating extreme cases of PTSD.

She has been associated with BirdLink Sanctuary, a rescue for neglected, abused and abandoned exotic birds for several years. While occupying a position on their Board, she has adopted two cockatoos, an Umbrella and a Goffin, for her own family, and she also acts as the sanctuary's caretaker arm for an aviary full of surrendered singing budgi

Other books by Dr. Potter include:

[Nurturing the Fetal Brain: Protecting Your Baby From Developmental Disorders](#)

[PowerDive: Mental Muscle for Skydivers](#)

[How To Inspire Your Mate To Adore You: Without Buying Them a Mercedes](#)

[Your Rebellious Teen: Turn Trouble into Talent With The WrapAround Method.](#)

Coming:

Prevent Breast Cancer Recurrence Naturally: The Secret of the Stem Cell

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