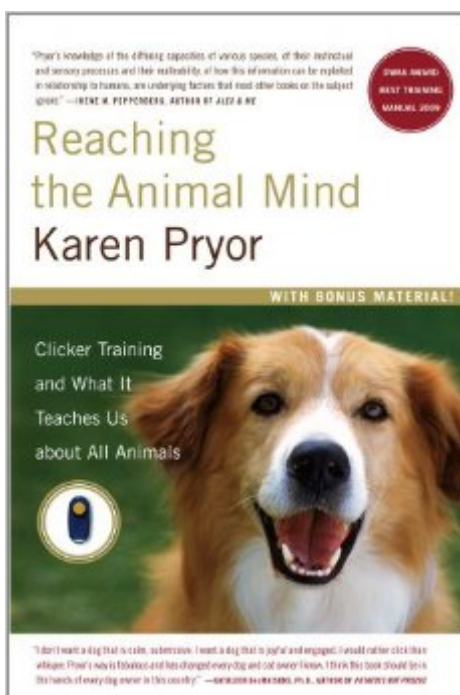


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Reaching The Animal Mind: Clicker Training And What It Teaches Us About All Animals



Synopsis

From the founder of the clicker training, the widely praised humane approach to shaping animal behavior, comes a fascinating book—part memoir, part insight into how animals and people think and behave. A celebrated pioneer in the field of no-punishment animal training, Karen Pryor is responsible for developing clicker training—an all-positive, safe, effective way to modify and shape animal behavior—and she has changed the lives of millions of animals. Practical, engrossing, and full of fascinating stories about Pryor's interactions with animals of all sorts, *Reaching the Animal Mind* presents the sum total of her life's work. She explains the science behind clicker training, how and why it works, and offers step-by-step instructions on how you can clicker-train any animal in your life. For bonus video clips, slide shows, articles, downloadable exercises, and links expanding on the contents of the book, go to ReachingtheAnimalMind.com.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At least that's how I feel after reading this wonderful book! To be honest, I had no idea as to what this book might be about - I thought it might be about finding a way to communicate better with your pet (in my case, a very BIG cat, who is the one that really runs my home). I also thought that it might be one of those cutesy animal books that are often fun to read but lack any substance. Boy, was I wrong! Instead, I discovered what a tremendously exciting and wonderful world that the study of animal behavior (include humans) can be through the eyes of an expert in behaviorism, and the study of how behaviors can be developed, learned, and altered that goes back to the work of Pavlov

and later Skinner. I digress, however, as I don't want this review to focus on the hard science behind this book as it is wonderful reading for anyone who is interested in animals (of any kind) and how they may be trained. This book will also greatly appeal to those who like fascinating (sometimes even a bit bizarre) and hilarious stories about how humans are learning to interact with animals and each other. The author, Karen Pryor, is an expert on using behavioral techniques to train dolphins and began practicing these principles when she was unexpectedly recruited to train the dolphins at Sea Life Park (Hawaii) back in 1961. At that time, her only qualifications were that she happened to be married to one of the people who ran the park and no one else could get the dolphins to perform (remember, this was in 1961 when very, very little was known about training animals in the manner which is now used all over the world today).

Karen Pryor does a superb job of describing the "how" and "why" clicker training reaches the animal mind and gets results. She takes classical conditioning (that involuntary or automatic response to a stimulus such as a clicker) and turns it into operant conditioning whereby the animal learns to actively respond to that stimulus. During training you use a primary reinforcer (food, play) which is something the animal wants and is encouraged to work for to elicit the behavior. Also during operant conditioning a cue (such as a word or hand signal) is paired with the stimulus (clicker) and acts as a reinforcer as long as the recipient (animal or human) knows what it means and what to do. Over a period of time you use the clicker (and eventually the cue) and primary reinforcer to shape the behavior into what you want. If the conditioned response is not received, then withhold the primary reinforcer (for example, treat) until the expected behavior is repeated. However, you must remember never to cruelly punish non-behavior or force the desired behavior because you risk getting a fear response to your stimulus that can last forever. This explains why so many trainers and people fail in their training methods; it only takes one bad response on the trainers part. The author provides many examples of where this training has worked and tells of how she has trained fish, a hermit crab, and other animals. She also gives a good example of horses that were impossible to load in a horse trailer becoming horses who loaded themselves. The trainer used the above techniques along with successive approximation which meant modifying the environment repeatedly to sequentially increase the difficulty of the task until it was similar to the environment the horses were afraid of.

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