

## Overstaying Your Welcome

Category: Companion Parrot Behavior

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One of the two most important skills of being a human flock member is knowing when to disengage. Our human emotional drive tends to get in the way of parrot logic and somebody gets bit. Normally us. This is not the bird's fault, nor does it signify the bird is bad. It does mean the human flock member did not slow down and pay attention to all the visual and vocal signals being offered by the parrot.

This happened to me this weekend. This just happened to my husband as he tried to leave this morning. I say try, because Snickers is vehemently against dad leaving the house at times. And Snickers let him know that with a bite. I'll use my experience as an example since I'm the one running around giving advice and calling myself a Companion Parrot Advocate.

Normally bedtime consists of my husband, Snickers, Butters and I going upstairs and spending about 15 minutes in a darkened bedroom on the bed together. A little play, a little baby talk, and few snuggles and such. And then we tuck each into their own bedroom cage. Before that there is shared dinner, shared warm drinks and group playtime on the big Java Tree. The whole process for bed takes about 1.5 hours. This is every day. This is now a lifestyle choice. This is expected. It has never been deviated from, but it has been expanded.

Saturday night we took delivery of new furniture. Two visits were required since the delivery guys "forgot" one piece. That's two doorbells, two times the barking dogs, two times the strange loud stuff coming in. These deliveries took place at 6:30 pm and 7:30 pm. The exact time frame our bedtime ritual happens. You see where things are going into a stress situation.

Bottom line; I tried to jump Butters to the last phase of bedtime. She was giving me body language and vocalization to let me know she wasn't happy, she was stressed from weird sounds, big new things coming in the house, disrupted routines, new smells and Snicker's elevated energy. But I had to push it, because I felt bad about the missed phases and wanted to "say I'm sorry" with extra time snuggling. She, as a companion parrot, exotic in instinct, wanted to roost in her bedroom cage and just call it a day. Butters bit me. Hard. My bad.

What should I have done? Had I slowed down and thought like a parrot, I would have chosen differently. I should have given her and Snickers time to transition between a house full of strangers and strange things, to a house that is normal again. 15 minutes would have done the trick. We could have lowered the lights in the bird room (as usual at this time, it is a signal for bedtime). I could have spent 5 minutes with her on my forearm feeling safe again in the darkened bird room, say "time for bed!" and then go right upstairs to the bedroom cage, with a pause at the bed to offer that phase. All that is called communication. Communicating with Butters is what I did not do.

All this leads to the second most important skill; learning how to communicate with your bird. I say your bird because every parrot is different, every bird communicates in a special way. We may joke that it's manipulation, or I may joke it's training, but it's all communication and a conversation to decide a lifestyle choice between you in the flock setting.

As humans we want quick results to finish a needful exercise. We need to get to bed (or move furniture). We need to get to work. We then break our communication lines, and an agreement we made with our parrots towards a lifestyle choice. And then things go wrong. We stop communicating and we stop thinking like a parrot.

They can not think like us, fully. It is unfair to put the burden of human tendencies onto a companion parrot. We chose to bring a parrot into our human environment, it is our burden to take on their tendencies and learn how to communicate.

Target training, behavior training, positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement are all interesting titles to ideas, but in the end what you are trying to do is communicate. And you don't need a bag of tricks to listen. You need patience, love, and empathy. And you need to understand there will be compromise.

Being a human flock member is challenging, and it can drive a human up a tree. But remember we brought home a lifestyle choice home, not a pet.

***Together we can give every parrot everywhere, a happy home!***

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