

Bonding with Your Parrot

Category: Companion Parrot Behavior

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Some companions like to be the first to make a move in a relationship. Seriously. The parrots that bring the most email to me for help are the Indian Ringneck, followed by the Cockatoo and then Amazons. IRNs particularly like to make the first move. They are independent, strong willed, fearless and territorial. Male or female, you have your hands full with an IRN in one way or the other. Creating a touchy feely relationship with an IRN can be challenging. Some will tell you that if you should adopt or foster an IRN past 3 years of age you can just forget all hope of a cuddly IRN.

Not so, says I. Not at all. In fact, the process of cuddlfying an IRN can be applied to all parrots, except maybe Amazons. And if you have a Zon, I know you know what I mean. You can have a cuddly IRN, and personally I do not care how old this companion is, nor his background in general. Because the best part of an IRN is that they do not transfer their grudges to the next guy outside of the flock. Oh sure, you'll be on probation for sure. Because we are ALL on probation after bringing a new companion home. That's just the name of the companion parrot game. But what is different with an IRN, and what only requires time investment and understanding is that they will start from zero with a new home and location. They can and will reset their attitudes. But it takes time, and you acting in the opposite of your expectations and wants.

Playing hard to get with an IRN, makes getting the attention of an IRN pretty easy. Because they can't understand why you would ever not want to admire them. They are, after all, amazing. Sometimes the best route to retooling a companion parrot requires literally not requiring them to be super social and physically attentive. Give a parrot enough freedom, location and privacy and they will reject half of it for your attention. It's the flocking instinct.

I'll use the IRN as an example, but you can apply this to any companion. Parrots work in regions geographically. In human terms; House, rooms, room, tree stand, cage. Those are all regions inside regions. When you're hoping to establish a trust and physicality with a companion shrink their regions, to limit their alternatives, BUT leave enough alternatives for them to have choice. For example; limit an IRN to one room, or one story of a house until you've established that relationship you are looking for in that relationship. Enter that region with items of interest, but with no expectation of interaction. If your parrot flock calls, call back for sure. But don't go hunting them out. Sit down with your book, food, toy etc and make yourself available but hard to get. This availability without confrontation or expectation is the path to an IRN and their companionship becoming physical. Limiting their region helps shorten the time investment because they do have choices to ignore you, but those choices are smack dab in front of you. Their differing choice does not remove you from sight or consideration. You are still right there. It won't take long for an IRN to just become down right insulted you are not chasing them down. Sooner or later, they will light next to you and your whatever-it-is that seems more interesting than them. Sooner or later, they will become accustomed to sharing these whatever-it-is you have that is more interesting than them, and at the end of the regional transitioning your IRN will seek you out, because they have chosen to bond with you, because you chose to let them go first.

I've had successes with feral cockatiels, abused cockatiels, a foster grey and Felix with this technique as well. Felix seeks out kisses from me now. Two years ago I would have laughed at that prospect calling it absurd.

It can be painstakingly long in time for the switches and gears to turn. But you'll know when things change with an IRN, because a bonded or bonding companion IRN will look to you for suggestions after flying over. It's a balanced dance. And every parrot, IRN or other, has their own temperament and time frame for making the first move. But for those that really need it, and use it as a way to measure our sincerity, commitment and value, well you have no choice to but let them have the first move.

Playing hard to get isn't hard, it's probably the easiest route to take.

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

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