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Original Medicine



The Healing Power of Bach Flower Essences for Our Animals (And Ourselves)

Animals can take us to places we can't get to by ourselves...

(Barbaro, an American Thoroughbred)

It's so true. If you have furry friends as members of your family then you know this is true. They manage to settle into our hearts in ways we can't imagine nor describe because when we experience unconditional loving of this nature, when we are touched with this kind of raw joy and playfulness, words never suffice. And because of this, when we know our pets are challenged with emotions and behaviors that limit this exuberance, we are open to finding, investigating, and trying anything to restore their inner peace so their outer play can return to the wondrous elixir that it is.

Pets are People Too -

Not really, even though we love them as if they were. For years it has been debated whether our animals actually experience emotions. Are they happy or sad? Are they smiling? What's really going on for them when they cower in the corner or lunge when on a leash? Just witnessing these living expressions demonstrates that they respond to their environment with a richness of feeling and a depth of personality with uncanny similarity to human behavior. Neuroscientists and animal behaviorists have confirmed this and have indeed found that animal brains have corresponding hotspots that light up when emotions are triggered in the same fashion that occurs in humans. I witness this truth as I watch my 4 dogs (Emma, Oliver, Margot and Parker) interact amongst themselves, with my clients in my Original Medicine practice, and with me.



Neuroscientist Antonio R. Damasio from the University of Iowa postulates different levels of animal emotion. Primary emotions which are common to both humans and animals include fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness and joy. Social emotions take place as we define our place within our group and include sympathy, embarrassment, shame, guilt, pride, envy, jealousy, gratitude, admiration, contempt and indignation. These are also shared between humans and animals. For example, dominant gorillas swagger to demand respect from peers, while low-ranking wolves in packs make gestures of abasement. And dogs will show signs of embarrassment when reprimanded by their owners. Parker, my youngest shepherd/lab mix is a tender hearted being in a furry body. When I correct his behavior, his ears flatten a bit and he slinks away. Margot, the blond bombshell of the family handles her embarrassment a bit differently; she shimmies her tush and tries to come ever closer in an attempt to reroute the direction of my emotion. And in case you are wondering, she often wins – she reminds me that I have 2 choices – I'm either in love with her or I'm in love with her! And alas, she makes the perfect argument that I may be the one who needs flower essences instead – mostly she is right, so we'll both take them.

The wonderful thing about flower essences is that not only do they gently shift the emotional and

behavioral challenges of our beloveds, but they will work for us as well, the person who is in relationship with them. Our pets come into our lives with a vast array of backgrounds, so whether they were in an abusive/traumatic situation before landing on our doorstep, or they simply haven't learned how to handle new situations, or thunder and other loud noises (voices included) cause them to hide under the bed, squeeze themselves behind the dryer, or chew on their stalls - whatever the behavior or discord, we as their guardians are also having our own set of emotions in managing these dynamics. Maybe we are experienced pet owners or maybe this is our first go around and we shy away because we're unsure of what to do. No matter the scenario, using the essences is as good for us as it is for them and the success rate skyrockets for all parties involved, because none of us, pets included, lives this life in isolation. We may try, but the attempt always falls short of the truth.

And let's not ignore the elephant in the room. As pet guardians and parents we have our own emotions about how this life works - we are no strangers to stress and our pets feel and respond to that. As we discover the harmony within ourselves through the use of flower essences, the trickledown effect for our animals can be motivation enough to take care of ourselves as a way of taking care of them!

Clearly we love our animals and they love us; this is why incorporating flower essences into how we care for our beloveds and ourselves is worth doing! Achieving a successful outcome does require some basic knowledge and an understanding that the process of choosing essences for humans is a bit different than choosing them for our animals. With humans we can communicate by asking questions and listening to someone's story.

Although there are a wide variety of ways to communicate with our animals, most of us do not hold a conversation and ask them to describe what's going on for them. If we do, we might be a living example of the very popular cartoon 'we talk and our pets hear "blah, blah, blah..."' We have to observe them, look at their environment and witness how they move within it. Plus our choice must also take into account differing species and breeds (cats, dogs, horses, rabbits, fish, prey or predator.) Once we understand the nature of the problem, the uniqueness of our animal, and how the flowers work, we can partner that knowledge with the perfect essence. A little education goes a long way in assisting our animals to be their best.

A few fun facts:

- 62% of U.S. households own a pet
- 47% of all households in the U.S. own more than one type of pet
- In Europe, 55 million households own one or more pets, totaling 47 million cats and 41 million dogs
- 4 of 5 pet owners give their pets birthday presents
- 5 of 10 owners prefer pet to human companionship
- 7 of 10 owners view pets as children

With a gentleness that no pharmaceutical can promise, flower essences will harmonize the emotions that challenge us and our furry family members, and within moments and days, the intensity of a situation or behavior dissolves and play resumes. Separation anxiety, nervousness, timidity, anger or dominance patterns, grief or longing - there is an essence that can help you help them. Whether you begin with the Crisis Formula, commonly known as Rescue Remedy or you have determined a more specific essence from the 38 remedies Dr. Bach discovered and developed, just know that the use of flower essences is becoming more widely known and often recommended by holistic vets, animal behaviorists and professional trainers, animal communicators and animal shelters. And if you notice that your pet is mirroring your own challenges, well, you can help yourself too. It's the perfect system of healing.

We must strive to learn love of others, beginning perhaps with one individual or even an animal, and let this love develop and extend over a wider and wider range, until its opposing defects will automatically disappear.

Dr. Edward Bach, Heal Thyself.

Dr. Lauren Nappen has been in private practice for over 20 years. She has used the Bach Flower Essences both personally and professionally for nearly 35 years and has been a team teacher for the Bach International Education Program for 10 years. She offers group classes, one to one classes, as well as consultations in her healing sanctuary in Mechanicsville, PA. Upcoming trainings, including the Level I: Bach Flower for Pets and Their People, are available on her website www.drLaurenNappen.com.