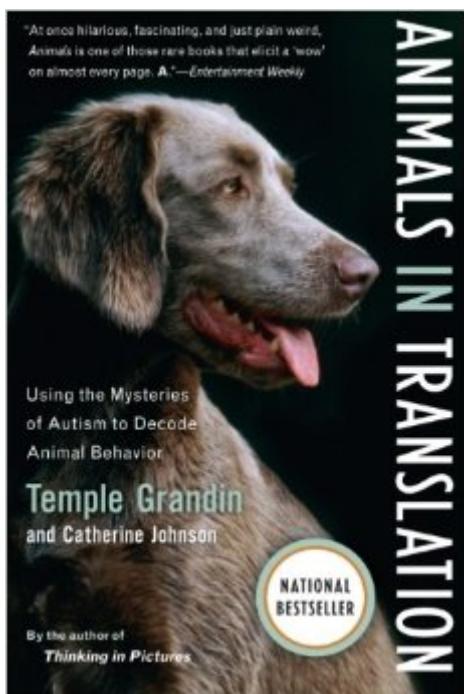


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Animals In Translation: Using The Mysteries Of Autism To Decode Animal Behavior (A Harvest Book)



Synopsis

I don't know if people will ever be able to talk to animals the way Doctor Doolittle could, or whether animals will be able to talk back. Maybe science will have something to say about that. But I do know people can learn to "talk" to animals, and to hear what animals have to say, better than they do now. --From Animals in TranslationWhy would a cow lick a tractor? Why are collies getting dumber? Why do dolphins sometimes kill for fun? How can a parrot learn to spell? How did wolves teach man to evolve? Temple Grandin draws upon a long, distinguished career as an animal scientist and her own experiences with autism to deliver an extraordinary message about how animals act, think, and feel. She has a perspective like that of no other expert in the field, which allows her to offer unparalleled observations and groundbreaking ideas. People with autism can often think the way animals think, putting them in the perfect position to translate "animal talk." Grandin is a faithful guide into their world, exploring animal pain, fear, aggression, love, friendship, communication, learning, and, yes, even animal genius. The sweep of Animals in Translation is immense and will forever change the way we think about animals. *includes a Behavior and Training Troubleshooting GuideÂ Among its provocative ideas, the book: argues that language is not a requirement for consciousness--and that animals do have consciousness applies the autism theory of "hyper-specificity" to animals, showing that animals and autistic people are so sensitive to detail that they "can't see the forest for the trees"--a talent as well as a "deficit" explores the "interpreter" in the normal human brain that filters out detail, leaving people blind to much of the reality that surrounds them--a reality animals and autistic people see, sometimes all too clearlyexplains how animals have "superhuman" skills: animals have animal geniuscompares animals to autistic savants, declaring that animals may in fact be autistic savants, with special forms of genius that normal people do not possess and sometimes cannot even see examines how humans and animals use their emotions to think, to decide, and even to predict the futureÂ reveals the remarkable abilities of handicapped people and animalsÂ maintains that the single worst thing you can do to an animal is to make it feel afraid

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Customer Reviews

What author Temple Grandin has attempted to do here is to use her own experiences as an autistic person to gain insight into the way animals perceive and react to the world around them. She explains that autism seems to impair the ability of the neocortex, or frontal lobes of the brain, to obtain and process information, and that animals likewise have less well-developed frontal lobes than normal humans do. Her theory is that the impairment of an autistic person's brain, in essence, makes them far closer to other animals than to non-autistic humans in how they view the world. As a result, Grandin has largely been able to help people better relate to their pets, and also to design more humane slaughterhouse equipment and more effective auditing procedures for slaughter facilities. The book starts off well, with Grandin offering many insights that show that, in some ways, she really does have a better understanding of animal perception and thought than "normal" humans. Her principle examples revolve around the fact that animals, like autistic people, are detail-oriented. Their inability to generalize and see the "big picture" often leads to fixations on small things that the average person would not notice. Grandin illustrates this with stories from her inspections of meat plants, where something as simple as an abrupt change in lighting, or a reflection on a puddle - things which have entirely escaped the plant operators' notice - have been causing cattle to balk and refuse to go where they are being directed. She goes on to explain exactly why these details, which don't seem like much of a reason to be afraid, are so disturbing to the animals. Her observations, while not things that would immediately jump out at most people, make a lot of sense once she has explained them.

Animals in Translation: Using the mysteries of autism to decode animal behavior. I will never think about animals, and about autism, and about "normal" people quite the same way again. This is a landmark book. The book is badly organized. You will have to read every page. You may not be interested in the long pages where she talks about slaughter houses, but then right in the middle of a paragraph you suddenly come across a bit of wisdom that you would not want to have missed.

Right then you must underline it or you will never find it back again. The upshot of this book is that animals do not have a fully functioning frontal lobe, nor do autistic people, and she tells us throughout the book what that is like, over and over again until you start to get a deep understanding of what it is like. We get a better understanding of ourselves too. The frontal lobe "puts it all together", and having put it all together, we race over the details like a speed boat over water. We do not see the details. An autistic person on the other hand, can not help but see them. He sees all the details, and only the details. He is overwhelmed by them. He sees all forty shades of brown. He can not see the forest for the trees, and more trees, and more trees. He hears every tone. He smells every odor. His life is a jumble of details. As you might expect, her book is rich in details about her own life and about all the animals she knows and when you emerge at the other end of the book, you feel immersed. Being a "normal" person you can not remember all the details, but you "know" something about these people's lives, and about animals' lives in a way you could never get from a text book. And yet, at the same time, she also has a doctorate and she does her own research.

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