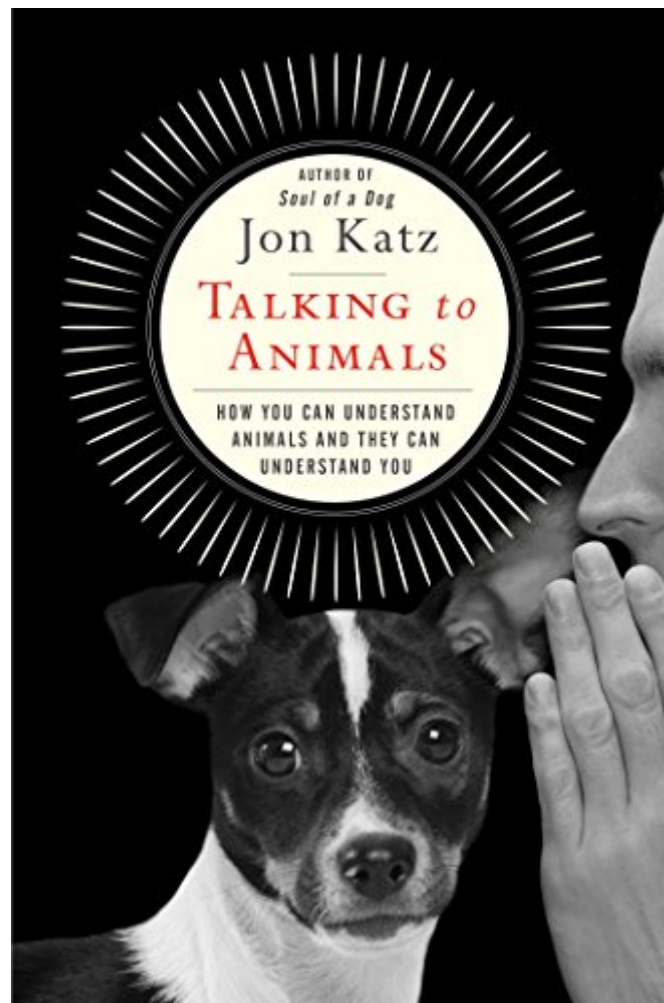




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# **Talking To Animals: How You Can Understand Animals And They Can Understand You**



## Synopsis

There are so many benefits to learning how to communicate with animals. Love, trust, a spiritual connection that goes to the heart of the human-animal bond. Every time I listen to them, I learn about myself. We seem to need animals in our disconnected lives more and more, yet we understand them less and less. In *Talking to Animals*, New York Times bestselling author Jon Katz—who left his Manhattan life behind two decades ago for life on a farm where he is surrounded by dogs, cats, sheep, horses, cows, goats, and chickens—marshals his experience to offer us a deeper insight into animals and the tools needed for effectively communicating with them. By better understanding animal instincts, recognizing they are not mere reflections of our own human emotions and neuroses, we can help them live happily in our shared world. Devoting each chapter to an animal who has played an important role in his life, Katz tells funny and illuminating stories about his profound experiences with them. He shows us how healthy engagement with animals falls into five key areas: Food, Movement, Visualization, Language, and Instincts. Along the way, we meet Simon the donkey who arrives at Katz's farm near death and now serves as his Tai Chi partner. We meet Red the dog who started out antisocial and untrained and is now a therapy dog working with veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. And we meet Winston, the dignified and brave rooster who was injured defending his hens from a hawk and who has better interpersonal skills than most humans. Thoughtful and intelligent, lively and heartwarming, this book will completely change the way you think about and interact with animals, building mutual trust and enduring connections.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have been a huge fan of Katz's earlier books, and have re-read many of them multiple times. His last few books, however have been a let down. Like many modern authors, this book reads more like a composite of blog posts that have been poorly edited into book form. (poor editing seems to be an overall trend in the publishing industry, not just by this author, so he gets a little slack for that) As someone who has read (almost) all of his past work, he seems to be recycling material. Orson has been the subject in many of his books, and a movie, so it's disappointing to see this same material once again, along with a lot of his animals from past books. The new material on the carriage trade industry and the farmer were the most interesting chapters for me. But I have to point out, Katz says that he was thrilled to go back to his journalist and investigative reporter roots. There's a huge difference between investigative journalism and op ed pieces, and he fell into the latter. As a public radio journalist myself, it would NEVER fly to present only one side of an argument, no matter how firmly your personal convictions were that you were right. I think that was the part of the book that put me off the most, the parts where he was so derogatory and condescending to people who didn't share his point of view. That's not the kind of Katz work that I fell in love with in the early books, and I think that attitude will alienate a lot of readers.

I wasn't familiar with Katz's work before picking up this book, but I was only able to stomach the first third of it. To summarize, Katz had a very lonely and troubled childhood that I can completely sympathize with. Which is where he picked up his fascination with animals. Problem is, he actually thinks that he can communicate with them on a psychic level. He starts off by trying to explain this as his (and his dogs') brains building intuitive visualizations from subconsciously observed body language, etc. He almost had me convinced. But by the end of the "Orson" episode, he's gone completely irrational. Talking to psychics, and clearly claiming to communicate with, and feel the

presence of his dead dog. How did the "shaman", who just "showed up" at his farm know X, Y, and Z about he and Orson? They probably read your blog idiot. It's called researching your mark. And the events leading up to Orson's death? Katz basically abandon's a 35 year marriage in order to spend a clearly excessive (mid-life crisis level) amount of time and money trying to rehabilitate a neurologically damaged dog that cannot be controlled in any practical way. At no point does he even seem to care what his wife thinks about the dog, or his overnight trips to various places he takes Orson to for "treatment". But it's supposedly OK, because the dog told him so. Even before his retreat to a farm, Orson was clearly a menace, and was dangerous to everyone in his neighborhood. How many then-children are now completely terrified of dogs due to Orson's "nipping" rampages? Which were so bad that Katz and Orson had to "hide out" with the dog once in a friend's garage to avoid the police. That were so bad that he had to walk his dog in the wee hours of the morning to avoid meeting other humans that Orson might decide to aggressively "herd". Allowing this situation to continue for any longer than a few days was a TERRIBLE and unforgivable lapse of responsibility on Katz's part. Orson should either have been put down immediately, or at least adopted out to someone who had a better idea of how to work with a troubled dog of that breed. But no, Katz moved to a farm where Orson continued to bite other humans. Culminating in Orson ripping out a young boy's throat. My vet and I have had this conversation before, and his test is simple. Do you trust this dog? Do you believe that he/she will hurt someone? If yes, then there is only one responsible course of action to take. Because anything else just puts other people at risk somewhere down the line.

A DISAPPOINTMENT... I have listen to many of Katz's books as audiobooks and found them to be generally entertaining if one is willing to excuse his tendency to go off topic in directions unforeseen, for example, when he felt the need to describe running naked on his first Bedlam Farm to "impress" his future wife Marie. Not sure we needed that image to enhance the story line about training his future wife's dog Frieda. Hmmm? His latest book Talking to Animals is no exception to his artistic discretion to write about topics/causes that interest him but in reality have nothing to do with his premise one can talk (visually communicate) with animals. Specifically, Katz's devotes a whole chapter on a NY Upstate Farmer who was accused on animal abuse but was rightfully acquitted except this particular chapter had absolutely nothing to do with talking to animals. There are also some examples of writing for the sake of making a point while leaving out the "full story" for proper context/transparency, For example, he devotes a chapter on his wife's horse Chloe and the deep connection they (Marie & the author & Chloe) have formed. What he fails to mentioned is that

they decided to give the horse away since the horse required too much attention -- I guess "connections with animals are disposable" and we never hear if Chloe was agreeable to this new arrangement as he claims he can communicate with animals. Net/net: The stories offered in this book appeared to be embellishments from his bedlamfarm.com blog entries and offer only sketchy evidence that the author is able to communicate with his animals. His blog entries suggested the author did some intensive hours of writing to finish the book as promised to his publisher but I am afraid the potential richness of the stories got left behind. The title of the book raised my hopes for an insightful book about connecting with animals but I am afraid those hopes were not fulfilled.

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