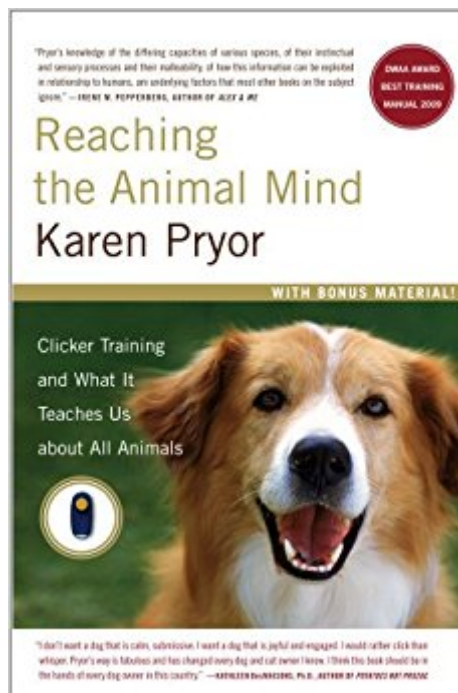




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# Reaching The Animal Mind: Clicker Training And What It Teaches Us About All Animals



## Synopsis

From the founder of the “clicker” training, the widely praised humane approach to shaping animal behavior, comes a fascinating book – a part memoir, part insight into how animals and people think and behave. A celebrated pioneer in the field of no-punishment animal training, Karen Pryor is responsible for developing clicker training – an all-positive, safe, effective way to modify and shape animal behavior – and she has changed the lives of millions of animals. Practical, engrossing, and full of fascinating stories about Pryor’s interactions with animals of all sorts, *Reaching the Animal Mind* presents the sum total of her life’s work. She explains the science behind clicker training, how and why it works, and offers step-by-step instructions on how you can clicker-train any animal in your life. For bonus video clips, slide shows, articles, downloadable exercises, and links expanding on the contents of the book, go to [ReachingtheAnimalMind.com](http://ReachingtheAnimalMind.com).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A wonderful book that is approachable and user-friendly. A definite must-read for behaviorists, trainers and the general populace.” --Marilyn Krieger, Certified Cat Behavior Consultant, The Cat Coach, LLC  
“Karen has dedicated her life’s work to humane and scientifically based animal training and this book provides insights that she is uniquely positioned to supply. Karen’s courage, willingness to share, talents as a writer and communicator (and let’s face it - downright stubbornness) has changed the lives of millions of animals and hundreds of thousands

of humans for the better. This book is a unique gift to the world, with its balance of accessible science and intriguing story telling. –Joan Orr, President of Doggone Safe

Karen Pryor is a behavioral biologist with an international reputation in marine mammal biology and behavioral psychology. She is a founder and leading proponent of “clicker training,” a training system based on operant conditioning and the all-positive methods developed by marine mammal trainers. In addition to her bestselling *Don’t Shoot the Dog!*, Pryor is the author of *Nursing Your Baby*, as well as several other books and many scientific papers and articles on learning and behavior. Karen has three grown children and lives in Boston with two clicker-trained dogs and a clicker-trained cat.

It seems strange to give five stars to a clicker-training book which contains relatively little practical advice. But if you are practicing (or tempted to try) clicker training, this book will be a revelation. Mostly through the telling of her own fascinating story, beginning with her almost accidental introduction to the concepts behind CT, Karen Pryor goes on a search for the deep reasons why CT is so effective across the animal kingdom and, increasingly, with human beings in all kinds of sports and activities. Once you have read this book, you will understand her passionate opposition to the use of aversives in training - not least because they make an intelligent animal behave like a dumb one. This is a book about building a successful relationship with animals, respecting their individuality and giving them space to offer their most creative behaviours in the search for that.... click.

Seems kind of dated now that clicker training and behavioral ‘shaping’ with positive reinforcement is kind of commonplace. At one time, I sure these training ideas were more innovative than they seem now. More relevant to dolphin training than dogs, which she seems to assume are simple and less intelligent. I liked the parts where she notes that animals can enjoy the challenge and accomplishments of training, find it stimulating and fun

Karen Pryor’s “Don’t Shoot the Dog” helped revolutionize dog training with her methodical approach to behavior and her lucid, accessible explanations of the underlying science. Before that, she was a pioneer in behavioral and training research with marine mammals. This book, “Reaching the Animal Mind,” feels almost like a farewell reminiscence of her career(s). Even so, it highlights new (well, new to me at least) information of value to students of dogology (R+ events processed in the amygdala); and even anecdotes from decades ago are fresh, humorous, and useful across a broad

spectrum of situations (commercial fishermen unload \*faster\* when they slow down; in the right circumstances, ponies love to go body-surfing; even animals as unlike us as horseshoe crabs can be trained; etc.). One thought-provoking observation -- scientists traditionally have balked at ascribing to non-humans emotions like "love" regardless of the evidence (though MRI scans are changing this), considering it to be unfounded anthropomorphism; yet many are willing to stipulate that animals have "base", negative emotions like anger or rage. Another -- a surprisingly large variety of species are tool users. The difference between homo sapiens and the rest of the animal kingdom is simply smaller than many of us want to admit. I enjoyed this book so much that I read it three times, and I'll probably read it again in a year or so. Get it for yourself, or for your animal-loving friend.

I've actually been hard pressed not to share what I've read in this book with everyone that I meet and/or find some new application for the techniques discussed in the pages. This is not a book just about dog training. The broad spectrum and anecdotal stories actually give the content a more robust feel without being overly technical or self promoting. Now I need to start practicing.

This book is about far more than reaching the "animal mind", even if you include the human animal. Karen Pryor is one of those rare writers who can take information from several scientific fields, see how they interact and make the whole thing fascinating to the non-technical reader. She starts out by saying that she won't regurgitate what is found elsewhere or rephrase other people's experiences, instead she uses her own very wide experience to illustrate how she became a pioneer of a new way of teaching dolphins, dogs, zoo animals and finally people. Here you will meet a wolf named D'Artagnan who had learned that he could make people back away by rushing his fence and showing what big teeth he had. With a coffee can full of kibble and a dolphin-trainer's whistle, she convinces him that it is much more fun to show off how fast he can run to a tree and back. And for that the no-longer-scared humans give him kibble. Good deal. There are videos taken during some of the experiences described so that you can meet some rare birds whose looks only a mother (or a zoo biologist) could love. If they are too stressed to eat by being in captivity, they may well be last of their species. Enter a keeper trained in the new methods who teaches them not only to eat, but to let themselves be weighed and most rewarding, to play with toys. And you will meet sports coaches who stop yelling at the athletes and telling them what they are doing wrong. Instead they are able to pinpoint exactly the moment when the legs are perfectly straight or the shoulder is exactly aligned or the toe is pointed and turned out correctly. All by applying the same methods in a system called

TAG Teaching. And as a bonus, there is a section describing the latest work by neurological researchers into the physical why this all works. The only drawback is that you find yourself dropping everything and starting to work with the nearest dog, cat, ferret, tropical fish or teenager. Be warned.

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