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## Taming and Training Your Bird

Birds are very social creatures. They flock together in the wild, and will seek social contact in a person's home. In fact, social contact on a regular basis is necessary. Birds eagerly anticipate contact with their owners, other birds, and even other pets!

### Bathing

Bathing is an activity that most birds enjoy. Provide a small bowl of water for this purpose and fill it with warm water. In the wild, parakeets and canaries bathe in the dew of the morning grass. Allow them to roll in wet greens, such as celery leaves or carrot tops. Larger birds enjoy spraying or misting. A shower stall can be excellent fun for larger birds! Bathing is necessary for cleanliness and for social contact.

### Share Breakfast and Dinner

Twice-a-day feeding promotes nutrition. Table scraps are an excellent source of protein and vegetable nutrients. It will surprise you what your bird will like to eat. Also, when a bird is hungry, it will associate its owner with food and understand him/her as a friend.

### Training

Training is possible once you have provided a comfortable environment and established a friendly bond with your bird. Training can begin with using food as reward. However, remember that birds are suspicious by instinct and larger birds can especially become aggressive. If your bird is not ready to accept food from your hand, be patient and allow it to choose its time. NEVER hit a bird, as it will remember the aggressive act!! Being gentle and patient will work more effectively.

When your bird starts taking food from your hand, it is time to start stick training. With your bird out of the cage (wings clipped so flight is not possible), it will have to depend on you. Remember that its first means of protection is flight and its second is the cage. Place your bird on an outside perch in a corner so you don't get discouraged by chasing it around. Simply encourage your bird to get on the stick with gentle, continuous conversation.

Be PERSISTENT and don't let your bird train you! If you want your bird to do something, don't stop because of its reaction.

DO NOT exhaust your bird. Fifteen-minute sessions are long enough. Let your bird rest several hours, and then begin again.

Once your bird starts to step up on the stick, set it back on the perch. Repeat this often, always accompanied by gentle conversation. Then carry the bird around the room on the stick. If the bird jumps off, immediately get it back on the stick. Jumping off the stick is not the skill it is supposed to learn!

At some point, without changing conversation or rhythm, substitute your HAND for the stick. If your bird refuses your hand, capture it on a towel or cloth. Carry it, speaking gently, and allow it to stick its head out of the towel or the cloth. At this point, repeat the stick and substitute hand method, and reward good behavior with a special treat.

Once the person is able to pick the bird up with his/her hand, then it is a matter of how much time he/she devotes to the bird. Birds enjoy having their heads scratched. If a bird allows this, the owner can be sure that a strong bond has developed!