

The Intuitive Connection

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Animal Guides, Totems and Familiars

Have you ever wondered why you are attracted to a particular animal? Maybe you are obsessed with pigs, but have never lived on a farm. Or maybe you are feeling low and, unexpectedly, a hummingbird appears and cheers you up. Animals and nature provide messages for us all the time, we just need to be aware enough to receive them. So let's explore the world of animal guides, totems and familiars.

They may seem like the same thing, but there is a difference between the different types of animal messengers. First, let's focus on animal guides (sometimes referred to as spirit animals). Please note that indigenous cultures use the term "spirit animal" in a much different way, and it is a sacred part of their culture. Out of respect for their beliefs, I'll instead use the term animal guide.

ANIMAL GUIDES

An animal guide is one that appears to provide guidance and wisdom along your spiritual journey. They suddenly appear in your life, and provide a message based on their unique traits, skills, and character. They show up in your life to support you, and teach you a particular lesson that you may currently be struggling with.

Animal guides can appear to you in many forms. For example, the living animal may cross your path. Or you see the same animal everywhere you turn, including on books, pictures, television, or even seeing or hearing the name of the animal. You may even see a deceased animal as you are out and about (don't discount the message just because the animal is no longer alive). Don't let the animal's appearance (such as a snake or spider) stop you from receiving the message you need. All animals, from insects, to the largest whale have wisdom and information to assist us on our journey.

So how can you tell if the animal is an animal guide delivering a message, or just a normal encounter? In my personal experience, I receive messages in groups of three. So if I see three of the same animal appear in a relatively short period of time, that is my cue to take note. Another thing to consider is how unusual it is for that particular animal to appear in that particular location. Let's say you are at the park, and you notice several people walking their dogs. This itself is pretty normal, and you would likely expect to see this, so the dogs may not be delivering a message. However, if the people walking the dogs are suddenly dragged over to you by the dog, there may be a lesson in it (especially if the pattern repeats). Or, if you are at the park, and suddenly a red fox runs in front of you, that could be a message. The other thing I ask myself is how did the encounter make me feel? If I can't stop thinking about the animal, no matter how common they are, I'm being guided to take a look at what that animal has to teach as there is likely a lesson in it for me. Bottom line, look for patterns, synchronicities, and listen to that little inner voice that is guiding you to look further.

The beautiful thing about animal guides is that they "appear" in our lives right when we need the message or lesson. You can't force an animal guide to appear, and you don't get to choose which animal guide shows up in your life. Simply sit back, relax, and let the wonder of nature guide you and teach you as you travel on your journey.

TOTEM ANIMALS

A totem animal is a spiritual being, sacred object, or even a symbol for a tribe, clan, family, or individual in some Native American cultures. They can be called upon to act as a guardian, protector, or if their special gifts are needed during times of adversity. For these tribes, it is their belief that there is one totem animal that remains with them for their life, and in the afterlife. While other animal guides may provide direction and teach lessons, the totem animal acts as the main spirit guide, both in the physical world and spiritual one.

There is a deep connection shared with this one animal. The animal totem can be called upon for guidance. The animal may not be physically present, however, the guidance can take place during visions, meditation, or dreams.

While many of us do not have Native American backgrounds, you may still feel a connection to an animal totem, or be inexplicably drawn to one animal. Here are some questions that you can ask yourself to help determine if you have a totem animal:

- Are you drawn to one animal and have no idea why? This includes any type of living creature (don't forget insects).
- Does one animal consistently appear in your life? It could be a physical appearance, you see pictures of this animal everywhere, receive cards with this animal's picture, or you turn on the TV and there the animal is. The key is the same animal appearing over and over in your life.
- When you are out in nature, at a park, or going to the zoo, are you obsessed with seeing only one particular animal?
- Do you have recurring dreams of the same animal?
- Are you drawn to pictures, paintings, figurines, t-shirts, or logos of one animal?

Still not sure who your totem animal is? Ask! Find a quiet place and ask the universe to show you your totem animal. Then be open to synchronicities. Remember, it may come in a dream, pictures, TV, or the same animal might start appearing over and over. Like the animal guides, you don't get to choose who your totem animal will be. The totem chooses you. They will reveal themselves when you are ready to receive the message, so be patient and stay open.

FAMILIARS

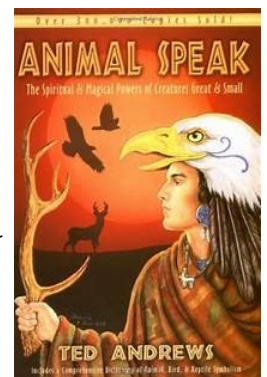
A third type of animal guide is known as a familiar. This type of animal messenger is generally accepted as part of Pagan, Wiccan or Shamanism culture. During medieval times, familiars were associated with witches, who were said to have called the spirit of a small demon into an animal. Black cats got a bad reputation for this, but the familiar could actually be any animal. The familiar was said to do the witch's bidding.

Fast forward to modern times, familiars are still used, however there is no longer demonic possession attached to it. Similar to animal guides, familiars are used for their special gifts, such as instincts, traits, and skills to tune into nature or deities. Animals are very in tune with nature, energy, and they possess many psychic abilities. Therefore, the use of the familiar in rituals, scrying, divination, and spirit contact is important (I'm not referring to sacrifice, the animal is very much alive and unharmed). Familiars can also act as guardians, watching over the person, and alerting them to negative energy or attacks.

Now that we've taken a trip down history lane, and how familiars were/are utilized, still the question remains, what exactly is a familiar? If you believe that all beings have souls, and that these souls return in a body again and again, then it is not unreasonable to think that a familiar is the soul of an animal who has returned in physical form. Hence the term "familiar." If you've had animals in your life, as special as they all are, there are a few animals that are just different. Maybe you felt a stronger connection to them, but you're not sure why. Or maybe the animal is more aware, smarter, more like a person in the form of an animal. It's not something you can describe, it is something you feel, a deeper connection.

Just like the other animal messengers, I believe familiars are here to teach us and guide us. Maybe they are acting as physical guardians, maybe they are here to remind us of our purpose and our path, or maybe they just thought we were cool and wanted to hang out with us again. Whatever the reason, animals touch and change lives, and my life would not be the same without them.

If you want to learn more about animal guides, totems and their messages, I recommend the book "Animal Speak" by Ted Andrews.



Upcoming Events

Healing Arts Festival

Scottish Rite Masonic Center

6151 H Street

Sacramento, CA

September 22nd and 23rd

10:00—6:00

10:00—5:00



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Kris Tondee

Psychic Reader

Website: readingsbykristondee.com

916-605-9091