

Did You TTouch Your Pet Today?

by Mary Bruce CTPP & Peggy Marks CTPP of Mindful Tails



What do a super-hyperactive dog, a very mouthy Lhasa mix, a cat named Taz (*who lives up to his name*), a poodle with hip dysplasia, a stranger-shy hedgehog, and a sweet kitty in her last moments have in

common? They were all helped in some way by the “magic” of TTouch.

We are often asked, “What is TTouch?” and “What does it do?” Just over three years ago, we were asking those same questions. After working in the corporate world for many years, we knew that it was time to refocus our lives. Although we had been peripherally involved with animal care and rescue work, we had always wanted to make a greater difference in the lives of animals. Part of the impetus at just that time was because we had both recently lost several of our own very special pets and it had been devastating, particularly not being able to do *anything* to help them or ease their fears in their final stages.

Sometimes life and fate have a way of meeting, because that was when a friend mentioned she had heard about this wonderful “thing” for animals; it was called TTouch and her friend was in training to become a practitioner. We were curious. After doing some research, we thought we would attend a weeklong workshop being held in Rochester, NY—just to see what it was all about.

WHAT IS TTOUCH ?

The Tellington TTouch Method of Training is a focused approach to animal care and behavior modification. TTouch provides a foundation for a gentler, more enjoyable, stress-free relationship with your animal companion. You can see significant change with even the most challenging behaviors, and it’s an easy technique for pet owners to learn.

This revolutionary and gentle method can be used as a stand-alone training tool, or in support of other training methods, for wellness care, and in support of veterinary care. The TTouch Method consists of circular TTouches, stroking and lifting TTouches, Body Wraps, Leading Exercises, and the Confidence Course.

World-recognized animal expert, Linda Tellington-Jones, originally developed TTouch for horses over 30 years ago; about 10 years ago, she developed the method for companion animals; and today, TTouch for people is now part of the Complimentary Healing Modalities curriculum at the University of Minnesota. Veterinarians, trainers, zookeepers, animal behaviorists,

breeders, shelters, and pet owners around the world are using TTouch.

Often mistaken for petting or massage, it is neither of these. TTouch uses only very gentle pressure, just enough to move the skin, but not the muscles. The intent is to “stimulate cellular function and awaken the innate intelligence” within the cells themselves—which we usually equate to “turning on the electric lights in the body.” By activating neural pathways to the brain we can increase an animal’s self-image and awareness, which in turn can modify behavior patterns, improve well-being, and influence the relationship between animals and their humans. The TTouch is non-invasive and can be done anywhere on the body. It is amazing to see how an animal can begin to realize improved self-confidence, increased awareness, better coordination and balance, and enhanced well being in just a few sessions. As Linda herself has said, “It looks so innocent on the surface, yet [for the animal] it is an opening to a whole new world.” It teaches the animal to “think instead of react.”

Sounds impressive, but how can gentle circles on the body do all these things? A day into the workshop and we were wondering just that. Mary was in a lot of pain (due to a shoulder injury), had postponed surgery, and yet was sitting here listening to what we were beginning to think of as some amorphous process. Interesting, most definitely, but effective? We were a bit skeptical. How *could* this work? Well, the best way to tell you is to say that our instructor did the TTouches on Mary several times. It felt great, which was expected; but what she didn’t expect was that, for



Guild Certified TTouch Practitioners Mary Bruce and Peggy Marks, use the Tellington TTouch Method with pet owners, in animal hospices & shelters, to enhance wellness, modify behaviors and for socialization.

They are members of the APDT; host the “Ask the TTouch Practitioner” booth at Mayor’s Alliance for NYC’s Animals Pet Adoption days; work closely with Bobbi and the Strays; and have used TTouch on Bobbi’s own dog, Foxy, when his health was compromised.

While they have given TTouch presentations in various venues, they most recently were asked by North Shore Animal League America to host TTouch workshops for their training and medical staffs.

Mindful Tails is your source for TTouch in the NYC/Long Island Tri-State area. Mary and Peggy are available to give lectures, presentations, and workshops on TTouch for Training and Wellness for Companion Animals. They are also Reiki Practitioners.

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the first time in almost a year, the pain diminished so much that she could feel her body relax. She could not believe it! Of course, the pain gradually came back because the physical injury still existed; but for almost an hour after each session, she had relief, and when it did come back it wasn't as intense. There was something to this. We became believers.

As further proof, by the end of the workshop, each and every participating dog was calmer, more at ease with each other—and so were the people! When we are relaxed, our animals will be more relaxed. And we had found something that we thought was important and could make a difference to a lot of animals.

HOW CAN TTOUCH HELP YOUR PET?

There are many different TTouch techniques, and a TTouch Practitioner will design a program specifically to meet the needs of your animal. Many behavioral issues have their roots in fear or pain, and animals may only react on instinct in these cases. We see especially how this can impact animals' lives in shelters. Behavioral issues are a huge reason why dogs and cats are "dumped" back into shelters, and can keep these animals from finding their "forever" homes. Also, once the behavioral issues are alleviated, shelter workers can better determine which personality will make the right pet for the right family.

Once your new pet has settled into his or her new home, that is a good time to assess what type of training is needed. For many animals, obedience training alone may not be enough. TTouch can enhance learning ability, willingness to cooperate, reduce stress, promote socialization and trust, in young and old animals, and rehabilitate "fear-biters."

We continued our two-year training program to become certified TTouch Practitioners, and have successfully used it on many different species of companion animals, for a vast array of behavioral and wellness issues, on aging, disabled and senior pets, and much more. It makes a difference, and we are happy we followed the dream we set out to pursue.

As Linda Tellington-Jones says, "I believe animals come into our lives as special teachers. In our modern world our companion animals also gift us with a special connection to nature and to our Creator. TTouch is like a language without words that allows us to communicate and understand our animal friends. As we learn to understand our animals, we deepen our understanding of our fellow beings and ourselves. I give thanks each day for the blessing of animals in our lives."

TTouch your pet—you'll be amazed at the results.

The animals mentioned in the beginning of this article? Here is how TTouch helped them:

- Raisin, a 9-year old female mixed-breed, had the energy level of a puppy, and was unable to focus on any one task for more than a few seconds at a time, along with displaying many anxieties and neurotic behaviors. Several sessions into our program, Raisin was learning to focus on what she was doing. Much of her pent up anxiety is finally being "released," and she is making great strides to this day. Her caretaker is pleased and Raisin is a happier dog.
- Wriggley's caretaker described a friend's arm as "corn on the cob" for her dog. Wriggley, a recently adopted 15-month Lhasa/Shih Tzu mix, was overly hyperactive, mouthy, and difficult to walk on a leash. Although Kathy P. knew she and Wriggley were meant for each other, many of his previously learned behaviors had to go! We showed Kathy how to use the TTouches and the Balance Leash. Kathy feels that Wriggley's TTouch sessions have been very good for him; a stronger bond has been established between the two. She adds, "I have had multiple people comment on his progress in terms of learning his limits, and being a whole new dog. He's a much calmer dog. Thanks so much!" A friend who walks Wriggley has even commented on this obvious change.
- Taz is a 10-year old male cat who could not be touched without your being attacked by tooth and claw, due to his abusive background. After multiple TTouch sessions, his most recent visit to the Vet put his Vet into shock! He couldn't believe Taz allowed him to examine his mouth and do all the tests without a challenge—something that never happened before!
- Jacques, a wonderful 14-year old poodle, was winding down his life when we first met him. He had various health issues, including hip dysplasia. Jacques received his TTouch sessions regularly, and it helped improve his posture and ability to move. Jacques has since passed, but his caretaker, Greta R., knows that his TTouch sessions helped him to be more comfortable. "I am very grateful for all that you gals did, to help both Jacques and me. I know that he loved his TTouch sessions with you."
- Another animal we need to mention is Ambrose, a loveable, comical, little hedgehog. This skittish little creature was brought to one of our training classes, and Mary had the great experience of doing a short TTouch session. She was rewarded with several seconds of complete calmness in her hands. His owner was amazed at how relaxed Ambrose was while being handled by a stranger.
- And sweet Crystal, a cat with terminal cancer. Her gentle TTouch sessions allowed her to be more comfortable in her last days. After one session, she jumped down from her bed, walked to the door, and looked at Mary with such contentment, as if thanking her for the brief respite to her pain and discomfort. That is the best thanks we can ever get—that contentment from an animal to whom you know you have made a difference.