

She Charges \$550 for 90 Minutes and Has a Wait List of 7,600 People

**Pet psychics are making their way from the fringe to
socially acceptable**



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By

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Tech worker and part-time dog trainer Maddie Guy, 33, couldn't figure out what was going on with her English Springer Spaniel, Rudder. He was being snippy with other dogs and facing a medical issue so mysterious that every test had been run and a doggy MRI ordered.

Comfort came in the form of a birthday present from friends: a phone session with an animal communicator.

Guy, who lives in Chicago, says the communicator, while looking at a picture of Rudder, began talking with the dog. She informed Guy that Rudder was being cautious with other dogs because he wasn't sure if he could trust his front legs in the event the dog wasn't friendly.

Several months later, Rudder's front leg started wobbling and his eyes looked goofy. Guy remembered the conversation. She called the vet, shared what had been said and requested a neuro consult. The vet wasn't fazed, saying other clients had referenced animal communicators before. Rudder is now on seizure medication.



Maddie Guy with her dog, Rudder. PHOTO: MADDIE GUY

“I’ve told a lot of people about my experience,” says Guy. “The most common response I get is, ‘Oh wow, that’s really interesting.’”

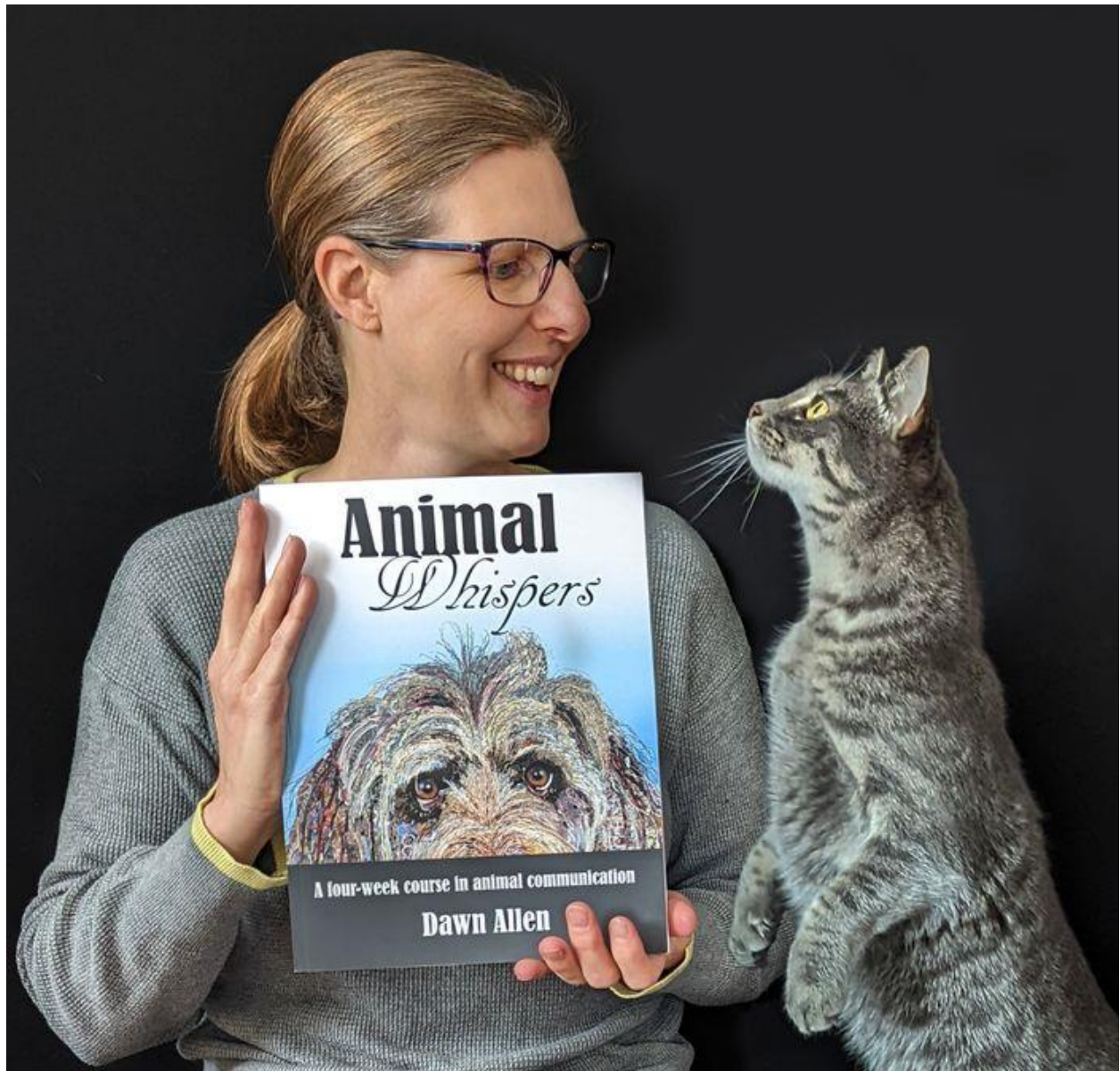
Pet psychics are making their way from the fringe to socially acceptable. Those who tell others about their experiences with animal communicators say they are more likely to be asked for referrals than be mocked.

It is perhaps a natural progression in a world where [guinea pig spa services](#) exist. About half of U.S. pet owners think of their pets [as much a part](#) of the family as a human member, according to Pew Research Center. Even amid inflation, [spending on pets](#) continued to increase. And a 2022 YouGov survey found that 67% of Americans said they have had a paranormal experience.

People book sessions with animal communicators to unravel behavioral issues, to learn about preferences for end-of-life care, and when the time comes, to make sure their pets are enjoying the

afterlife. But increasingly, pet psychics say the questions are as simple as, is the cat happy? What more can we do?

Owners come away from sessions with a little less sadness, a stronger sense of connection and an easing of anxiety.



Dawn Allen and Beth the cat. PHOTO: DAWN ALLEN

Dawn Allen, 48, who is from western Massachusetts, has been working as an animal communicator for 25 years. She does 30 phone sessions a week at a rate of \$85 for 40 minutes. She says she

used to often field calls from skeptics who weren't sure they were sold on the legitimacy of her skills; now that rarely happens.

"There's been a cultural shift," she says. "It got way, way normalized."

Christina McNeill, a Great Dane enthusiast from San Francisco, has worked with Allen for clues to medical issues and for guidance on what her dog Billie needed from her as she took her last breaths. She also used Allen to converse with Ferni, Penelope and Tennessee—all Great Danes—ahead of big life changes, such as moving. They were once prepped for a [cross-country road trip](#) from San Diego to Kentucky where they would be staying in Airbnbs.

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"I used it to tell them you have to behave," says McNeill. "Don't destroy the furniture. Be respectful."

The dogs were on their best behavior the whole time and received rave reviews from Airbnb owners, which she attributes to the conversation with Allen.

"You can believe that or you can't but I know how they sometimes behave," she says.

After Tennessee died and McNeill was looking for a new Great Dane, she used Allen to learn who Ferni and Penelope liked most out of the dogs they were meeting.

Nikki Vasconez, a former lawyer, started working as an animal communicator four years ago. Early in her career, a video she made about a session with a dog named Albie went viral. The dog told her he didn't like his nickname. She says he didn't specify what it was, only that it made people think he was large and overweight.



Albert the dog was embarrassed by his nickname, 'Big Al.' PHOTO: DIANE MILLER

"Those were his exact words," she says. "I later found out his nickname was Big Al."

Vasconez, who is 34 and lives outside Philadelphia, says during phone sessions with clients she has connected with hundreds of house pets including dogs, cats and turtles, in addition to horses, cows, and pigs (the camel and the bearded dragon were one-offs). Sessions are \$550 for 90 minutes. She says she has a wait list of more than 7,600 people.

Vasconez says she not only understands messages from animals but can also channel what they are feeling in her own body.



Nikki Vasconez has connected with hundreds of pets. PHOTO: NIKKI VASCONEZ

Joe Nickell, who says he has spent 50 years researching and investigating paranormal phenomena, says animal communicators and the people who use them tend to have a personality type that's prone to fantasy. Pet psychics work much the way human psychics work, he says.

"The so-called successes are an example of counting the hits and ignoring the misses," he says. "You can scan over a lot of what's being said and you can find some things that you can connect to."

Cate Williams, 30 and from Dallas, Texas, was never a psychic enthusiast, neither for herself or her pets. Before this year, she had only ever had one tarot card reading in her life, on a whim in New

Orleans. But within a month of each other, one of her two dogs died and her husband died suddenly of a brain aneurysm.



Cate Williams with her late husband and two dogs. PHOTO: ANNE GROBEN

Williams had read about Allen and contacted her for a session about her remaining dog, a German shepherd named Ronan.

“This was definitely my anxiety rearing its cute, beautiful head about how he was faring after the deaths,” says Williams.

She learned through Allen that Ronan understood that his brother and her husband weren’t coming back. Ronan also informed Allen he wasn’t enjoying how many people had been coming through the house as of late.

“He mentioned that he does not like that because the focus is no longer on him and his toys,” says Williams.

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