

Open Your Class with This Tomorrow

Animal Madness: How Anxious Dogs, Compulsive Parrots, and Elephants in Recovery Help Us Understand Ourselves

Option 1

Directions: The book *Animal Madness: How Anxious Dogs, Compulsive Parrots, and Elephants in Recovery Help Us Understand Ourselves* is filled with a wide variety of case studies of animals who are suffering from symptoms that resemble mental illnesses in humans. With your group members, use the information provided in the following case studies from the book determine a potential diagnosis. Cite specific symptoms the can be used to support your analysis.

Case Study #1

Jefty the Rabbit (pages 397-398)

Animal rescue expert Mainell Harriman tells the story of tan 8-year-old rabbit named Jefty. After his mate died of cancer, Jefty began to chew his fur. He soon developed large bald patches, and a vet exam revealed that all the fur that had been once been on the outside of the rabbit was now inside of him, in the form of a gigantic hairball lodged in his stomach. The vet thought it was unlikely that the mass would pass on its own and recommended surgery. Harriman started Jefty on a variety of hairball remedies to make him strong for surgery, but she decided to try something else too. She introduced Jefty to a 10-year-old rabbit who had also recently lost her partner. Almost immediately the pair began to treat each other with affection and rabbit care, to the point that Harriman postponed the surgery for a bit, hoping that the new relationship would cheer Jefty. After a few days with his new rabbit companion Jefty was doing so much better than Harriman canceled the surgery in order to wait and see what happened. An X-ray showed that the fur mass was still in his stomach, but it was shrinking. "I won't try to claim that getting happy cured a furball," she wrote, "but I will claim that it gave Jefty a reason to eat the hay and greens in front of him. He had someone to dine with and to share his pineapple cocktails with." Over the next few weeks the skinny, bald rabbit regained all of his lost weight and stopped chewing his fur. The massive hairball continued to shrink in size. Which psychological disorder do you believe Jefty might have suffered from?

Potential Diagnosis
Symptoms

Case Study #2

Rescue and Military Dogs (pages 93-96)

A few search and rescue dogs exposed to the loud, dangerous, and unfamiliar environment of the World Trade Center site after September 11 attacks became agitated, depressed, irritable, and uninterested in playing. Others grew hypervigilant and aggressive. Some are no longer able to do search and rescue work. ... Of the roughly 650 American military dogs deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than 5% were assumed by the military to be suffering from similar symptoms. Many exhibit some variation of hypervigilance and drastic personality and behavioral changes, becoming more likely to bite, for example, or more timid and easily startled than they were predeployment. These dogs sometimes avoid buildings they once entered with no hesitation, refuse to sniff cars at checkpoints, or balk when approached by men in foreign uniforms. As with human veterans attempting to assimilate to life back home is often difficult. The dogs' adoptive families struggle to deal with the behavioral and emotional problems they inherited. Which psychological disorder do you believe these rescue dogs might have suffered from?

Potential Diagnosis
Symptoms

Case Study #3

Alf the Australian Shepherd Dog

Alf is an Australian shepherd dog who is independent, thoughtful, and eagerly welcomed visitors. He has never submitted to the indignities of a leash; he has never needed it. For years, he paused and looked both ways before crossing the streets of this neighborhood and never trotted too far ahead of his owners, constantly circling back to make sure that his humans were where they should be. When he sits, he folds his paws on top of each other and cocks his head to listen to people around him. Eventually Alf's behavior changed. For example, Alf would hurry into a room and then stop, look from side to side, and appear to be confused. It was as if he'd forgotten why he'd come into the room in the first place. Then he would begin to turn in wide circles. Alf's athleticism had given way to herky-jerky movements, and from time to time he failed to recognize people he knew. Behaviorally, the disease is similar in aging dogs and aging humans. We become confused, the familiar turns foreign and scary, we may be grouchier or more easily frustrated than we were previously, and before we know it, we don't recognize the postman or remember where we left our bones or keys. Which psychological disorder do you believe Alf might be experiencing?

Potential Diagnosis
Symptoms