



Rose with Animal Reiki classmates at Catskill Animal Sanctuary, Saugerties, NY.

Letting Animals Lead

BY ROSE O'CONNOR
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I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF a three-day Animal Reiki Master class taught by Kathleen Prasad at the Catskill Animal Sanctuary.¹ We have split into groups of three and set up outside where some animals are behind fences, and others are roaming free. We are practicing our Reiju (Reiki attunements) with one another. I am seated in the chair, and my classmate has just finished passing on the Reiju to me. I open my eyes, and before me is a lovely sheep looking as though she is about to climb into my lap. She nuzzles in close to me, letting all three of us know that she is loving the energy we are sharing with Reiki. I experience such a deep peace and love spreading over me that I don't want to move or do anything else for the rest of the day. I want to sit there with her in this present peaceful moment.

This sharing was one of the many astounding moments in our class. We weren't told to 'do' Reiki. Kathleen and the

animals were guiding us in how to 'be' Reiki, and in those moments when we held the Light within us and placed our thoughts aside to carry peace instead, the animals connected and showed us that this is the space where they reside. The question became, "Who was doing the Reiki?"

In my experience, Reiki is love in action, and animals have so much to teach us about love since they exemplify it so wholly. The class location at the Catskill Animal Sanctuary in Saugerties, NY, enhanced and enriched our experience of this love in action.² If you ever have time to visit, I recommend it. The sanctuary lovingly cares for, with utmost respect, cows, sheep, pigs, horses, chicken, geese, goats and more. All beings have a name. They are treated like family, cared for, loved solely as themselves not as food, not as servants, and not as inferiors, but equals—spiritual beings with life and breath and heart the same as us.

I came to this class out of a desire to learn more about working with animals and Reiki, guided to place my focus here for the next part of my Reiki life, and also because of the excellent reputation of the teacher, Kathleen Prasad. I arrived without expectation, only with an open heart and mind to new learning and ways of experiencing the world, and I was not disappointed. So many aspects of her teaching were so very resonant with my core values around teaching Reiki. I learned new things that I hadn't been exposed to before, such as the Three Diamonds Meditation, which balances the energy system to become present with the Earth and spiritual energies within the self. Also, some other Japanese techniques and philosophies grounded and rounded out my Reiki training, so I am grateful.

One of Kathleen's greatest strengths as a teacher is her ability to beautifully and genuinely reach the core of the matter. Weaving the Reiki precepts so thoroughly into the practice and imprinting on our group why these pure precepts are so much the essence of Reiki, was something I so appreciated.

The work with the animals was the centerpiece of our workshop. Kathleen guided and shared stories and then let the animals lead. Those who know Kathleen know her



Karen, Rose, and Kelly unite heart-to-heart with Sanctuary sheep.



Our teacher Kathleen Prasad takes a moment to connect with Blossom.

method, Let Animals Lead®, and she does that to perfection. Richly and gently, Kathleen shared what she learned by listening to the animals for so many years. The Let Animals Lead® method is a remarkable way of stepping back and inviting the animal into the sacred space of Reiki, without imposing our human wants, needs, or egos into the process. She showed us the true meaning of surrendering to what IS when working with an animal.

As we stood and walked among the many varieties of animals at the Sanctuary, we practiced our Reiki meditations and continued to be amazed when simply setting a peaceful vibration drew the animals to us. From birds flying over our heads to goats coming to hang out with us. From pigs laying down in front of us for a belly rub, to chickens who couldn't take their eyes off us, Reiki opened our hearts and minds to what already existed—a world of love without words.

Although this class was not about animal communication, I realized why animal communication teachers always say, "All you have to do is open your heart." Because when your heart is open and filled with the "love light" that is Reiki, it's as though you are One with the animal, and com-



Karen shares a moment with her woolly friend.

munication is second nature. Not that I heard the animals speaking to me in sentences or conversations, but I was looking into their souls through their eyes, and they were hearing me, they were experiencing me. We were One. It changed everything for me.

The concepts Kathleen taught are so fundamental and simple and yet so profound. Engaging pure peace and unity with all things are what Kathleen and the animals were teaching us. When we opened up to trusting and allowing them to choose, and when we waited patiently and trusted ourselves, we received so much more than we ever expected.

As Kathleen reminded us, we can always approach Reiki, and anything in life, with the beginner's mind. The animals teach us this, especially if we come to this work with this mindset. The Let Animals Lead® method lets the animals be in charge of their healing and their session.

My first Animal Reiki client came within a few hours of returning home from the class! My closest friend Katie has a dog named Rex, and he and I are perfect buddies. I could say without prejudice that he is one of the smartest dogs I know. Katie has been working long hours, and Rex has been staying

with her dad a lot. Katie's dad has been exposed to Reiki because both me and Katie are Reiki practitioners, but he has remained skeptical of its ability to heal.

Lately, Katie was having trouble with Rex because he was out in the woods during a thunderstorm one day while on a walk with her, and since that day, he hadn't wanted to go for a walk at all. Thunderstorms always terrified him. Both Katie and her dad felt anxious about Rex.

I'd just come home fresh from my Animal Reiki training, and I offered to help. Both Katie and her father jumped at my offer to spend time with Rex and provide Reiki. Her dad's sudden openness surprised me at first but was encouraging. I realized that when we love our animals, they can lead us to open up to Reiki on their behalf, even if it's something about which we aren't sure. I have found this to be true at other times with my family members and their pets, and it always warms my heart and confirms my belief that the love of an animal can open doors and hearts beyond our expectations.

Rex was very excited to see me that day. When I asked him to get in the car to go to the park, he jumped in gladly. I took him to a different walking spot than he had been to before. I hoped to help him develop some new experience around walking that didn't involve thunder or feeling fearful.

From the start of our walk, I began a Reiki walking meditation and invited him into the Reiki space I was creating. What was interesting was that by doing so, the heightened awareness of the Reiki flowing made me pay more attention to him and walk slower and more mindfully. I allowed him to stop and smell everything he wished to. I was peaceful and patient as he took his time ambling along, and when we got to the part of the path that went into the woods, he



Practicing deepens our ability to live and be Reiki for animals.

hesitated. I could almost see him remembering that walk in the trees when the thunder had started. I felt myself becoming a little nervous and began to chant the Master symbol and deepen my Reiki breathing. I did not tug on the leash or ask him to do anything. I waited and concentrated on creating a clear, loving Reiki space for both of us, letting him know that I saw his Light and that he was perfect as he was. If he decided that we needed to turn around, that's what we would do.

After a few moments, he walked forward, slowly but unafraid. We made it to the bottom of the hill where he took a dip in the creek, and soon after, he stopped again. I asked him if he wanted to go back, and when I turned in that direction, he eagerly followed. I praised him for all the progress he'd made. When we reached the top of the hill once more, we found a shady spot where I sat in a meditative space, allowing Reiki to flow and inviting him in to join me there. We sat for a little while then took our leave.

The connection I felt with Rex that day was palpable. I already experienced closeness having known him for a long time. But, in those moments, with me creating a Reiki space and inviting him into it and seeing him in his most perfect Light, I was more connected to him than ever before. It was as though I could truly feel him, his feelings, and his thoughts as clearly as my own. I didn't try to do this, nor did I decide to interpret anything or analyze it. I gave thanks for the incredible connectedness.

Later that night, I received a text from Katie's father. It said, "Thanks for doing Reiki with Rex today. He is so relaxed and seems like a different dog." This confirmation from someone who had been initially so skeptical about Reiki was significant, and it was terrific to know Rex was doing better.

I saw Rex again two days later, and this time he led not only the Reiki session but the walk as well! He strode out proudly in front of me, and we walked the whole park. As I created Reiki space and invited him into it, I got a real sense that he was bouncing as much Reiki energy back at me. We finished our walk with both of us on a high note, and I could tell he was feeling fine in himself.

Later that day, I spoke to Katie, who expressed her immense gratitude and, with eyes wide, asked me to teach her how to use the Let Animals Lead® method! To see the excitement in her eyes was a true blessing, and it seems I already have my first student for Animal Reiki. I owe a high debt of gratitude to Kathleen Prasad for her beautiful teaching and her tireless devotion to our animal kingdom.

It is now a few months later that I conclude the story of Rex. It turned out that what seemingly began as a fear of



Doing some Reiki "fieldwork" among the animals.

thunderstorms was the start of a decline that led to his passing a few days ago. It honored me to be with Katie during his gentle journey to the beyond. We both supported him within the space of Love, seeing him in his perfect Light up to and beyond his last breath here in this body. Reiki helped him and us and continues to do so as we grieve the nearness of him while honoring the beautiful soul who touched our lives in so many ways. I feel blessed that this method of Animal Reiki healing afforded us the ability to step back enough to allow Rex his dignity in passing, as the expression of Divine light and love.

Throughout my time with Reiki, it has blessed me to take other excellent Animal Reiki classes with fantastic teachers, and practice sharing this love with all types of animals. I hold a deep respect for anyone who shares Reiki with ani-



Peaceful walking meditation with the Master symbol.

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mals and other Earth beings. It is this deep connection to the animals, to the Earth, that I keep returning to in this work.

At the heart of the Let Animals Lead® method lies many truths about the way we approach healing with humans as well. If each of us learned more about allowing and trusting in Reiki without having to ‘do’ anything, and learned to *Be Reiki* more of the time in every moment of our lives, and if each of us saw one another in the perfect Light that we all are, perhaps the separation between us and our true Selves would disappear. Frans Stiene uses the analogy of a lamp with many lampshades when he says, “What if we start to take the lampshades away—what will happen? It looks like our light becomes brighter, but what else? Our light becomes great because each time we take a lampshade away, our light will shine farther and farther.”³ Maybe we could pull off the lampshades of our Being to shine a brighter light into the world. 🌿



Rose O'Connor is an Usui/Holy Fire III Karuna Reiki® Master Teacher and is also certified in Animal Reiki at the Shinpiden level in the Let Animals Lead® method founded by Kathleen Prasad. Reiki, writing, animals, and children are her passions, as is embracing a peace-filled and joy-full life. She shares Reiki in CO and PA as well as abroad. Please write to her anytime at rose@reikislove.com, as she would love to hear from you!

Endnotes

- ¹ Kathleen Prasad is the founder of Animal Reiki Source, <https://www.animalreiki-source.com>, and founder of the *Let Animals Lead*® method of Animal Reiki.
- ² “Catskill Animal Sanctuary Mission History.” Catskill Animal Sanctuary. <https://casanctuary.org/about/mission-history/>.
- ³ Stiene, Frans. *The Inner Heart of Reiki: Rediscovering Your True Self*. Winchester, UK: Ayni Books, 2015, 27.