

In TTouch with Cells

by Deirdre Chitwood

When I first met the Tellington TTouch® Method in 2003, I was looking for a way to make the world a better place for animals. I received one of the TTouch books for dogs as a Christmas gift and I was immediately caught by the philosophy, which was based on kindness and respect. Indeed I found that every aspect of the work dovetailed beautifully with my own philosophical beliefs and journey. Over the years as I became more deeply involved in the techniques I discovered that not only is it far reaching in the different tools it offers in all aspects of animal behaviour but it is constantly growing with new ways being discovered and developed.

The Tellington TTouch Method was created in the early 1970s by Linda Tellington-Jones, who already had a brilliant career training horses. She had owned a large riding school in California and had won many awards in all aspects of riding including long-distance endurance racing. Deciding she needed better ways to teach her pupils, she took a four-year professional training course in the Feldenkrais 'Awareness through Movement' technique and it was out of this that she developed Tellington Touch Training.

It began on the second day of the training, when Moche Feldenkrais made a statement that "a human's potential for learning could be enhanced and learning time shortened dramatically with the use of non-habitual movements". It was the theory of Moche Feldenkrais that these non-habitual movements activate unused neural pathways to the brain, awaken new brain cells and thereby increase the ability to learn. Linda thought if this true for humans it must be true for animals.

However, this was a concept that was totally contrary to what Linda had been taught and that was the basis of all conventional training methods – that the only way to teach animals is to have them repeat the same exercise over and over again. Inspired by this new concept, Linda began to practise moving different parts of horse's bodies in non-habitual ways and in 1983 intuitively began to work with moving the skin in small circles. What she found totally amazed her as she discovered that with these gentle movements she could not only speed up a horse's ability to learn but also radically change their behaviour. It was at this time that Linda also discovered that undesirable behaviour in animals results from pain, fear and miscommunication.



Linda continued researching her work with horses and, with the help of her sister, developed over 20 different TTouches using different parts of the fingers and hand, together with TTouches for different parts of the body such as the ears, mouth and tail. She began experimenting with ground exercises using a series of obstacles in what she later named a Confidence Course, which she found helped an animal to regain their natural physical balance, which in turn affected their emotional and mental balance thereby improving their ability to focus and learn. She also found that by moving parts of the body in non-habitual ways she could change habitual patterns of behaviour. Linda devised new forms of equipment which allowed the horse to respond in a more natural way when ridden and used traditional equipment in new ways. In 1984 Linda founded a certification programme for horses and in 1995 she began a certification programme for companion animals, and

in 2002 TTouch-for-You, a certification programme for humans, began. There are now over 1,600 certified practitioners worldwide in places as far apart as Japan and South Africa.

TTouch is used for a wide range of different issues. With dogs, some of these issues include pulling on the lead, fear of thunder and fireworks, training difficulties, lack of confidence, fear and timidity, separation anxiety, grooming issues, recovery after surgery, issues caused by ageing and much more. With cats much of the work I do in shelters is to help feral and fearful cats adapt to shelter life and, hopefully, become tame enough to be adopted.

The basis of the TTouch is the circular touch but there are also lifts and strokes. All the touches are given animal names such as Clouded Leopard, Raccoon, Tiger, Bear or Llama, which makes them fun and easy to learn. For the circular touches we imagine a clock face and beginning at 6 o'clock we move the skin in a clockwise direction all the way round the circle past 6 to 8 or 9 o'clock. One of the intriguing aspects of the work that has been discovered is that the TTouch turns on both sides of the brain in both the person doing the TTouch and the person or animal receiving it. During EEG studies in 1984 and 1985 it was demonstrated that TTouch activates all four brain waves – beta, alpha, theta and delta. This seems to cause a feeling of balance, well-being and harmony.



We have also found that TTouch affects the animal at a cellular level and with these simple touches we can release fear and stress locked up in the body. In a healthy body the 'cells communicate with each other', but in a body suffering from disease, allergies, ageing or harm, the cells become 'shut down' and no longer communicate. With the TTouch that dialogue between the cells can be opened up and thereby the body is encouraged to heal itself. Linda describes it as "turning on the electric lights of the body".

As the TTouch works on the cells and the central nervous system, the pressure is very light. We have a scale from one to ten but with dogs and cats we seldom work above a five pressure. To find a three pressure, using your fingers make several circles on your eyelid which just enough pressure to move the skin and then

transfer that pressure onto your forearm. Notice the depth and pressure of the indentation which should be very light. A number five pressure would be a little firmer.

One of the most important aspects of the work is that it enables us to connect with our animals in a deeper and more profound way. The TTouch body work is like an inter-species language without words. With the TTouch we learn to become mindful of how we touch our animals and how they are responding to us. It teaches us to be aware and in the present, so we can connect with them in the present where they are. They then begin to trust us more because they realize we are listening to their concerns. Indeed the T in TTouch stands for trust. We also learn to be mindful of how we behave around our animals – what is our body language conveying to them, or perhaps the intonation in our voices and our movements are too quick and aggressive? Are we unintentionally contributing to our animals' levels of stress on an ongoing basis and thereby causing their undesirable behaviour issues?

Another feature of the work is that with the TTouch we do not approach each behavioural issue separately. We have found that most are either caused by a build-up of stress or physical pain often undetected. As pet owners, today we unwittingly control most aspects of our animal's behaviour,

from when and what they eat to when and if they are allowed to go outside. In many cases animals have little freedom to simply do what and behave how they want to. This feeling of being 'out of control' causes them huge amounts of stress which builds up and can finally erupt into reactivity, barking unnecessarily, attention seeking, chewing or licking their paws or different parts of their body excessively and many other issues. We have found that with the TTouch and the ground exercises we can bring down those levels of stress and quite by magic many of the different behavioural issues begin to disappear.



Linda has often been described as a woman ahead of her time. Her revolutionary approach to working with animals has brought her worldwide recognition as an internationally acclaimed authority on animal behaviour, training and healing. Linda has written 21 books on TTouch which have been printed in 12 languages.

For further information go to www.ttouch.com.

Deirdre is a Certified Tellington TTouch Practitioner of Companion Animals and a member of Truly Dog Friendly Training. She has a private practice called Tender Touch in Stuart, Florida, USA, where she lives with her husband and five cats. She offers workshops around the USA as well as hosting regular workshops at her local cat shelter where she also volunteers. Deirdre was born in the UK where she worked as journalist for many years. For more information go to www.tenderttouch.com