

Found in Translation

Behaviorist Temple Grandin says the study of animal behavior helps her understand her own Autism.

Maureen Kochan

Temple Grandin says she had no special connection to animals as a kid. Now, at 44, Grandin is considered one of the nation's foremost experts on animal behavior. Her book, *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior* has been making its way up the best-sellers list.

Grandin's book offers readers a unique perspective. My book is different from any other book I've read about animals, mostly because I'm different from every other professional who works with animals. Like autistic people, she says, animals suffer from a profound misunderstanding because they think and process information in a way that's unique to most people. They perceive the world visually and see everything as a jumble of mesmerizing details rather than a coherent whole.

Autistic people may think the way animals think, she says, but we also think the way people think—we aren't that different from normal humans. Autism is a kind of way station on the road from animals to humans, which puts autistic people like me in a perfect position to translate animal talk into English. I can tell people why their animals are doing the things they do.

Let the decoding begin.

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