



It hit me as I was sitting down to write this piece that it has been a while since I've written on a woo woo subject and I've missed it. Recall my last *Wholly Holistics* brought mainstream medicine into the mix by interviewing my friend and renowned surgeon, Dr. Gwen Choi. (I still can't believe I missed the opportunity to entitle her interview, "Dr. Gwen: Medicine Woman.") Today I'd like to talk on the subject of animal totems and how to use them.

A totem is defined as a spirit being, sacred object, or symbol of a tribe, clan, family or individual. Am I an expert on animal totems? No, not really; I just have developed the wisdom via hard work to accept and appreciate Spirited animal helpers. You may read books like Ted Andrew's *Animal Speak* on the subject if you want expert analysis. (It's a good reference book to have around rather than a page-turner, however.) What I want to do here is give the reader my "every man" approach to animal totems.

Here's what I know from experience: I know that my main totem is a bear. Brown bear, to be specific. I perceive Marcus's clawed paw on my shoulder as I type this sentence. That's my bear's name, although I don't recall where it came from.

For example, bear medicine teaches us to go within to find resources necessary for survival. The bear lives on its fat reserves as it slumbers most of the winter away. Bear also shows us that it is just as necessary to rest as it is to be protective or proactive. It also explains my affinity for trees and their grounding properties. How many YouTubes are there out there that show a big ole bear scratching its back on a tree?

I found out Marcus the Bear was my spirit animal protector via a meditative journey I did several years ago, but I've somehow always known and felt it. I recall my bear accompanying me as a child in a session by a certified hypnotherapist a few years back. We adults often talk children out of seeing what we naturally see. If you don't want to see something from "beyond

the veil,” you won’t. Free will is the rule when it comes to matters of Spirit.

How do animal totems help me in my work? Specifically, I sense Marcus almost always in my healing sessions with clients, among the other entities in the room. In my earlier days as an energetic healer he played more of a protector role. God knows I needed it back then since my knowledge of energetic boundaries was murky, at best. I didn’t write a novel about a Kundalini meltdown of epic proportions for nothing, but I digress. These days, Marcus still looks out for me, but mostly assists with cord pulling and psychic surgery.

Additionally, often I’ll get a sense of an animal in a client’s aura. Now, this could be that person’s lifelong companion as Marcus is with me or it could be a temporary guide stepping in to give us some clues to aide in the client’s overall well-being.

Once I was working on a friend of mine and I kept seeing crow, so I made note of it for her as I always do for my clients. After I got home from the session, I looked up the crow totem out of curiosity and found it was the outline of her entire session. Not her personal specifics, mind you, but an honest to God outline of what she has faced, her lifelong habits and preferences, and finally some perspective to implement into her life.

A weird, but valid question comes to mind regarding animals and animal totems: Do you have to be an animal lover to gain insight from animal totems? I can tell you I am not a huge animal person. I’m not an animal hater either. I do not think it’s sport to kick puppies and abuse that which cannot protect itself, but I’m not like OMG, I NEED to have fifteen cats or something either. (My big thing is always making sure the plastic bottle holder rings are always cut up. Love those sea turtles.) Animal totems are just one of the Spirit world’s ways of communicating with us sometimes thick humans. Thank goodness for Marcus.

Another manner of speaking about animal totems that may not be technically correct, but is no less valid to me, is how a certain animal makes us feel when we see it in life or on TV. I’m talking about the “real” waking world, not some metaphysical journey or hypnotic session. I can’t see a cardinal or hummingbird without thinking of my dearly departed mother-in-law. Nor can I see a dragonfly without thinking of a young friend of mine. My opinion is that angels and loved ones communicate with us this way.

A way for you to practice and develop this insight is a form of meditation. Start noticing the animals that appear in your life frequently, especially if it is out of nowhere. Insects too. You've really got to check in with your intuition on this. For instance, living on Fripp, the deer are as ubiquitous as squirrels in a city park. So, you'll want to use that gut feeling in cases where you see a certain animal all the time. And even if that's the case, it could then be the circumstances that you experience them under. This is just another way to develop your intuition.

I do want to say that animal totems are only one of many tools we can use in holistic medicine. Stones, numerology, astrology, etc., are just some of the many examples. I'm stressing this point because I want those I touch to focus on their healing rather than the hocus pocus of what I or we can discern in a session. Even though totems and other metaphysical studies are helpful and interesting, they are not the end all, be all. What works for one person may not for another. In the end, be cautious of giving away your innate power to anybody or anything. Our animal friends will second this emotion as we take the time to listen to this valuable resource.