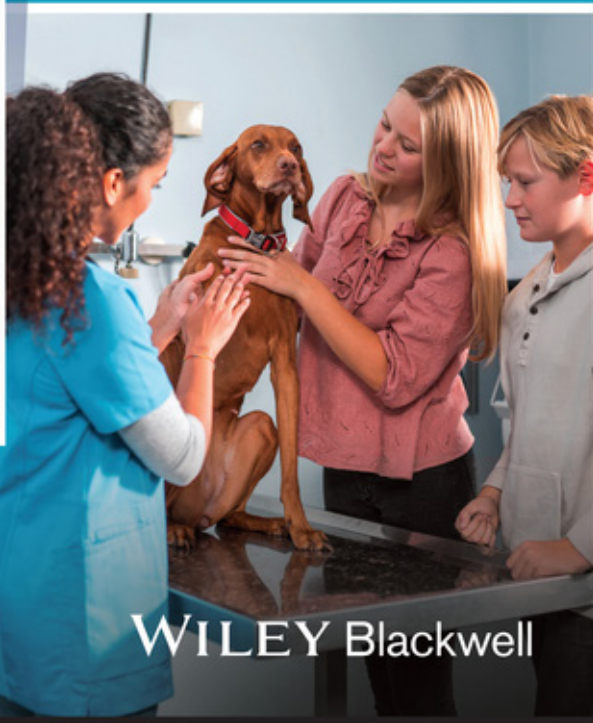


Practical Human Behaviour Change for the Health and Welfare of Animals

Bronwen Williams



WILEY Blackwell

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for the Health and Welfare of Animals**

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Foreword

The skills covered in this book – which were taught to me by the author – have had the single biggest impact of anything I have learned in over two decades working in animal welfare.

I have lost count of the number of owners I have spoken to about their horses through the roles I have held at World Horse Welfare over the past 20 years. I am office-based, so my conversations have largely taken place over the phone, and these skills have proven invaluable in that context. Many of my colleagues, who have undertaken the same training, speak face to face with a huge variety of horse owners and other individuals on a daily basis. I have the privilege of a rare insight into the work they do, the challenges they face and the way in which so many of them have embedded these skills into that work in order to help horses – and their owners – as effectively as possible.

I first met Bronwen back in 2016 when she gave a fascinating presentation on animal hoarding behaviour to some of the World Horse Welfare team. Bronwen has a great depth of knowledge and experience to draw on: she is a mental health nurse with 42 years' experience working in the NHS, volunteered in equine welfare for 30 years and has been a trainer of motivational interviewing for 22 years. I was privileged to be given the opportunity to complete a motivational interviewing course in 2019, delivered by Bronwen, which was primarily aimed at World Horse Welfare's team of field officers. This approach has since become embedded within the organisation, as a number of colleagues across various roles and departments have been trained over the past few years, with more to come in future. I could not have predicted the profound impact that course would have on me and the way I communicate, not just with owners but with colleagues, friends, family and even with strangers. More recently, I have been fortunate to co-train with Bronwen, delivering this training to others in the animal welfare world, and in turn have continued benefitting from her considerable knowledge. Bronwen would be the first to say that the skills covered in this book are no magic solution. They will not suit everyone, nor will they work in every situation.

However, I have been amazed at the range of circumstances in which my colleagues and I have successfully used various different elements, and how it has helped to enable purposeful conversations in very difficult situations. The skills can be challenging to learn, and it takes work to embed them into practice, but for me and many of my colleagues, the outcomes have justified every ounce of effort put in.

Many animal health and welfare workers face the same regular frustrations. They encounter particular scenarios unfolding time and again with different people. They see owners repeating certain undesirable behaviours, despite the worker's best interventions. Workers are sometimes desperate to share critical information but find their audience unwilling to receive it, or they might even have thrown their hands up in despair, feeling that, however hard they try, nothing they do makes a difference. Whilst we can all absorb this if it only happens occasionally, it can quickly build up and start to have a noticeable impact on the individual: the risk of compassion fatigue and burnout in the animal welfare world is widely recognised. However, I hope that this book will provide some insight into how you can build on your own significant, existing knowledge and experience by giving you fresh ways to approach these long-standing difficulties. I have witnessed how these skills have not only helped to resolve welfare situations more quickly and effectively but also have been used peer to peer to facilitate better outcomes and allow constructive reflection on – and indeed, preparation for – difficult conversations and situations, therefore helping to mitigate some of this risk.

One of my colleagues remarked that, thanks to this training, she now has the ability to be able to handle any scenario that comes her way. Whilst she acknowledges that she won't always have the right answer, she now has the skills to help people and to have a conversation about absolutely anything, and I know she is not alone in feeling that way. I hope this book will give you the same confidence.

Sam Chubbock
Head of UK Support, World Horse Welfare

Preface

Introduction to the Contents and How They Might Be Used to Develop Your Skills

This book is designed to support anyone whose main element of their work is animal health, care, or welfare as well as those who come across animal welfare issues as part of their wider roles. You may need animal owners to make changes for the welfare of their animals, and perhaps for their own good and that of others or even communities and the environment.

It is designed to be accessible and suitable for all types of workers, including those employed in animal health, care, welfare, veterinary work, charities, rescues or volunteering, those having to enforce animal welfare legislation, and those in associated agencies who come across animal welfare cases such as environmental health, trading standards, and housing workers.

For all of us, changing behaviour is difficult. When we work with others, especially in animal health and welfare, we desperately need people to change their behaviours for the well-being of animals. But behaviour change is not easy for anyone, and few people respond well to being told what to do and that they need to make changes.

No book can take the place of learning face-to-face, especially with the skills required for supporting behaviour change, including one of the main interventions described in this book, motivational interviewing (MI). However, it is hoped that working through the chapters will help the reader think about themselves as well as others, and about how we all make changes and then to consider what skills work and what don't and how we can build on our existing abilities to support others to make changes.

This book is the culmination of several decades of teaching the intervention called MI to health and social care staff and more recently, to animal welfare workers. It has come out of the author's interest in how human mental health can be affected, for good or for ill, by animal ownership or responsibility for animals.

The author is a mental health nurse who has worked clinically in the NHS for many decades as well as an educator both in the NHS and in higher education and as an independent trainer for animal welfare agencies. She also volunteered as an equine welfare worker for over 30 years and used the techniques she teaches in that work.

MI was initially developed as an intervention for those with substance misuse problems and its use has moved into a number of other human health areas such as working with those with other addictive behaviours (e.g. gambling) and within smoking cessation programmes. It hadn't been recognised as an intervention that can transfer across to supporting those who need, or are required, to make changes in their behaviour for the well-being, welfare, and health of animals. As a mental health nurse trained in MI and then delivering training to mental health colleagues, the author found herself automatically using MI approaches and skills when undertaking equine volunteer work over three decades. Conversations about MI occurred with other equine welfare workers and the organisations that they worked for. Now, the MI training courses have been adapted and developed specifically for those who work with animal owners and carers. This book is based on, and supports, those courses. Much of the content of this book has come about through the experiences of teaching MI to a wide range of people, listening to how they go on to use it in their own practice, and also the author's own human clinical work and animal welfare experience. Many of the examples given in this book are from those who have successfully transferred the ideas and skills to their own work.

Many people have helped the author along this road, not least as her co-trainers over the years, especially Keith Noble, Beth Stranks, and Kelly Skinner, with whom many conversations have helped form or develop the ideas here and who are mentioned specifically in places in the book. Many people from the international equine charity World Horse Welfare have shared their experiences of learning and using MI in their welfare work and supported the development of MI in the animal welfare arena. Specifically, Sam Chubbock, who really 'gets it' and has been a co-trainer as well as one of the author's writing buddies. Also, Claire Gordon who first identified that the author's ideas could be used within World Horse Welfare; and Tony Tyler and Roly Owers who supported this work and have been so enthusiastic about its use in the organisation. Finally, a friend, Ian Glass whose greatest support was just listening when it was most needed.

How to Develop the Skills Described in This Book

Throughout the book, you will find suggestions of how you might take elements, techniques, or approaches and practice them. Try finding willing friends, family, and colleagues to help you and who will allow you to practice with them. Almost

everyone likes to talk about what they might change in their lives, especially their own health behaviour changes. This means that we can usually find people who will help us on our journey of learning about how to support others to make changes. But bear in mind that it can be very hard to practice with those closest to us. Often, we have a vested interest in a possible change, so sometimes family members especially, and others we are close to, can be more challenging for us personally than some of those we might come in contact with at work or in our other roles.

The ideas and approaches described in this book are not designed to manipulate people into doing what we want, so please undertake any practice openly and for the right reasons. That said, when we ask others for support when we are learning new techniques, very few will say no. I have had a few people report back after practicing some of the skills on their partners that it was not easy, even when the partner had agreed to help them practice. One student who decided to try the skills on their husband, but without telling him, had the response, ‘Why are you being weird?’ Although it was funny and made her colleagues in the training group laugh when she shared it, this demonstrates that people, especially those who know us well, will pick up very quickly that we are being ‘different’.

Therefore, look for opportunities to practice with people, be prepared to ask them for help in supporting you in using new approaches. People can be very generous in their time and help, so use it. I suggest you look for those who may aid you to practice the techniques in the early stages, who will work with you and are not as complex as some of your other work.

Many of us come to behaviour change and MI courses, literature, or a book like this looking for the key, or the magic wand, to resolving the most difficult cases or owners that we have. I suggest that instead, we start with those who will be slightly easier for us. I liken this approach to that of learning to drive. When we start out on our first driving lessons, we usually have a suitable smaller, lower-powered car (some of us may have started out on ancient tractors). We wouldn’t put a learner driver in a high-powered sports car. We give them a chance to learn with something that isn’t so tricky and is more forgiving to errors and adjustments. Therefore, I suggest you find people to practice with or to try out the skills with who are the least complex of your clients, owners, or friends and family. Learn with a Ford Fiesta or an Opal Corsa, not a Ferrari!

Get feedback from anyone you can find to practice with. Many of the suggested exercises in the book can be used with willing friends, family, and colleagues. But our greatest feedback can be from our clients and owners, so ask their views about what helped, what didn’t, and what they think we might have done differently. When asked, clients can be very generous with their help. Also, be realistic about what you can learn in a short period of time, and give yourself opportunities to practice, refine your skills and adapt the new ideas and techniques into your own particular style of working.

It can be, at the very least, disheartening and frustrating to feel that we are working with people who won't or don't do what we recommend or advise. Over time, this can wear any one of us down and affect how we feel about our role and its worth. The good news is that those who I have taught MI to over the decades, often report that they enjoy their work more, it is less stressful, and that they experience more job satisfaction and less friction with their clients and other colleagues.

Learning to use different methods to support others to make behaviour changes is in itself a behaviour change for us. Therefore, we need to use with ourselves the same approaches and attitudes described in this book when we endeavour to make changes and learn new skills. Everything takes practice, effort and thought and that is very much the case when changing our approaches and the ways that we work with others. Be kind and compassionate to yourself, be prepared to have a go, try out new ideas, and techniques and reflect when they work and when they don't work so well. Be curious, and prepared for the unexpected. Find a little time to reflect on your practice. Perhaps even write down some notes or use a journal. As professionals, we all need to reflect on our practice. But, be balanced in your reflections, think about what skills you do already have, and how the ideas offered here in this book add to and build on those skills.

Remember, change isn't easy for anyone. It takes time and effort, and we need to make mistakes in order to perfect our approaches and to develop. Working through the ideas, skills, and techniques in this book is no different.

How to Use This Book

The book is designed for you to move through the chapters, but with reminders of ideas and skills that were mentioned earlier in the book. Especially in the chapters that describe and outline particular techniques, it will be useful to return to them perhaps a number of times to refresh yourself with some of the underpinning ideas discussed earlier and linked to in that particular chapter.

One chapter that it is suggested you revisit most frequently is the active listening chapter, as this underpins everything else. Without the skills outlined in that chapter, helping others to change their behaviours is very unlikely to be successful. In our courses, we know that if we don't include some active listening practice on day one, the rest of the course doesn't go so well. We still do this with experienced human health clinicians, including mental health nurses, psychologists, and social workers who all know about active listening and usually have high levels of skill in this.

At the start of this introductory chapter, I said that this book doesn't take the place of face-to-face training and learning but is designed to be as close to that

as possible. Therefore, the moving backwards and forwards through the chapters allows you to build up layers of learning as you go. It has been written holding the reader in mind throughout and thinking of how the ideas can be best put across to help you and your clients get the best from your work.

Remember, if you are reading this book, it is very likely that you already have many skills and methods that work. Don't forget the skills that you do have and what you get right. Although learning and adapting to some of the ideas and skills may not always be easy, they will compliment your existing skills, rather than learning a whole new way of being with people. Think of it as a way of honing your approaches. Be confident in what you already do and what already works, and hopefully, this book will assist you to get different outcomes with people that will benefit them, you and most of all, their animals.

Are you now ready to make some changes to how you work?

About the Companion Website

Practical Human Behaviour Change for the Health and Welfare of Animals is accompanied by a companion website:

www.wiley.com/go/williams/human



The website includes:

- Templates

1

Understanding What Lies Behind Behaviours

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines some ideas that can help us understand why people may behave as they do. One idea, the *frame of reference*, can help explain and so aid our understanding about why people develop views, attitudes and underpinning beliefs and values that drive behaviours. Understanding someone's perspective, or frame of reference, and how their situation came about, can significantly improve our knowledge of them and their world, thus aiding us to engage and help them. Through understanding, but not necessarily agreeing with or condoning someone's behaviour, we can help them feel listened to without judgment. Enabling someone to talk about how they arrived at their current situation allows us, and often the owners themselves, to more fully understand their backstory.

1.2 Behaviour Change Is Difficult

We have all made behaviour changes throughout our lives. Some of these changes have worked, and we have stuck with them. Some haven't, and we gave up and returned to old behaviours. Perhaps we have stopped, started, stopped, and then again restarted some behaviours. Thinking about the behaviours we have changed, those that were successful, and those that didn't work out, or at least not at first attempt, gives clues about how change is neither simple nor straightforward for anyone. This includes changes that people need to make for the well-being of their animals. People arrive in their current situation due to particular and unique experiences. People's behaviours, including those that may need to change, will be underpinned by beliefs, values and experiences.

Box 1.1 Exercise

You might take a couple of minutes to think about behaviour changes you have made over time, even in your lifetime. Which ones stuck? Which didn't? With what you know now, what would you do differently?

Beliefs, values, and traditions underpin much of how humans behave and often influence how they relate to animals in their lives. Understanding these and how they underpin behaviours, especially if people hold different values and views to ours, will be essential to supporting behaviour change for animal health and welfare. Owners, and others', experiences are going to be important to help us understand them and to appreciate how they got to their current circumstances. Someone's backstory is key: how they came to be where they are when we encounter them. Often, this backstory is much more complex, interesting, or unusual than we could ever imagine. We just need to ask in the right way and, more importantly, listen in the right way, to get an understanding of this backstory.

Box 1.2 Example – A Backstory

An example of this is a very moving backstory told by my colleague Jan about her neighbour, Mary. Mary could be somewhat irritating for others living in their close community. She often did things that appeared thoughtless to others, although she was recognised as being generally well meaning. Those living nearby, including Jan, were very amused by Mary's anger when her plants were suddenly eaten by wildlife. Then, one day, Jan had the presence of mind to ask Mary why these particular plants were so important to her. Out came a backstory that was very unexpected, detailed, and so personal that the finer points were never shared with others, including me. As soon as Jan understood Mary's reasons, why these plants were so important, she felt very differently towards her. Instead of being frustrated and joining in with other neighbours who found Mary's upset funny, Jan now understood Mary's position. She could empathise greatly with her, and their relationship deepened and was much more tolerant from both sides. One simple enquiry – stopping to ask the reason why something was important, getting the individual's backstory – and everything changed.

In the world of human psychological work, seeing a situation or an issue from a completely different perspective is known as a 'cognitive reframe'. Those who need to change their behaviour to improve the well-being of their animals often

need to undertake a cognitive reframe or experience a change of perspective. I suggest that this also needs a cognitive reframe from others, including us as workers. We need to have professional curiosity, put our default perceptions to one side, and attempt to find out why something is happening to understand the other person's experience.

Box 1.3 Example – A Paradigm Shift

Stephen Covey, in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, tells a story of when he was on a train on a Sunday morning. All was peaceful until a man and his out-of-control children entered the carriage. While the kids ran riot, disturbing everyone's peace and quiet, the father seemed totally unaware and unbothered, much to the irritation of the other passengers. Eventually, Stephen Covey spoke to the man, drawing his attention to the way his children were behaving. The man then roused himself and apologised and said quietly that his wife, the children's mother, had just died in the hospital, and that he and the kids didn't know how to handle it. In that moment, Stephen Covey's whole perspective changed and his concern became focused on the bereaved family, what he calls a 'paradigm shift' – when a person sees a situation in a completely different way.

Whatever title we give this – 'paradigm shift', 'a cognitive reframe', or 'understanding the person's backstory' – whenever we can do it, it makes a huge difference to the quality of our engagement with someone and how we can work with them. It allows us to be more patient, understanding, and empathic. We don't have to agree with what they think or do, but we can get alongside them and be more effective. It can also mean that the work and any interactions can be easier for us as workers. Understanding and having empathy is hard but it is a lot easier than being the recipient of anger, frustration, and general annoyance from the person we are trying to work with.

A welfare colleague I was teaching described a response from an owner when they were called out to a welfare report, and which perhaps demonstrated a different and unexpected view. The owner, whose animals had no welfare issues, said, 'It's good, isn't it that someone cares enough about animals that they ask for their welfare to be checked?' What a great example of a very different view of the world!

We all have our own perspective or lens through which we see the world, and this is what we will look at in this chapter, along with what may support the development of our perspectives.

Box 1.4 Exercise

Take a couple of minutes to think about the cases in animal health, care, or welfare you have seen over your time working or volunteering in this field. Think about a couple of specific cases in which owners of animals had very different views, beliefs, or values from you and from the organisation you work for. They may have been small things or very big differences. Which ones come to your mind right now? How did you manage these? What impact did these differences have on your working relationship with those individual/s?

1.3 Frame of Reference

Where do people's beliefs and traditions originate from, whether these are general or specifically about animals? A model called the 'frame of reference', first coined by Schiff and Schiff (1975), suggests that we all have a complex set of assumptions and attitudes which allow individuals to assess and build meaning which creates a unique view of the world. This underpins how we see ourselves and everything else in the world. It gives us a 'filter on reality' or a lens through which we see things. The old adage of someone being a 'glass half-full or glass half-empty' type of person may be an example of a basic view on the world. If you are a glass half-full person, you tend to see the best in a situation, life and people, and a glass half-empty view of the world would be more pessimistic about life events and situations.

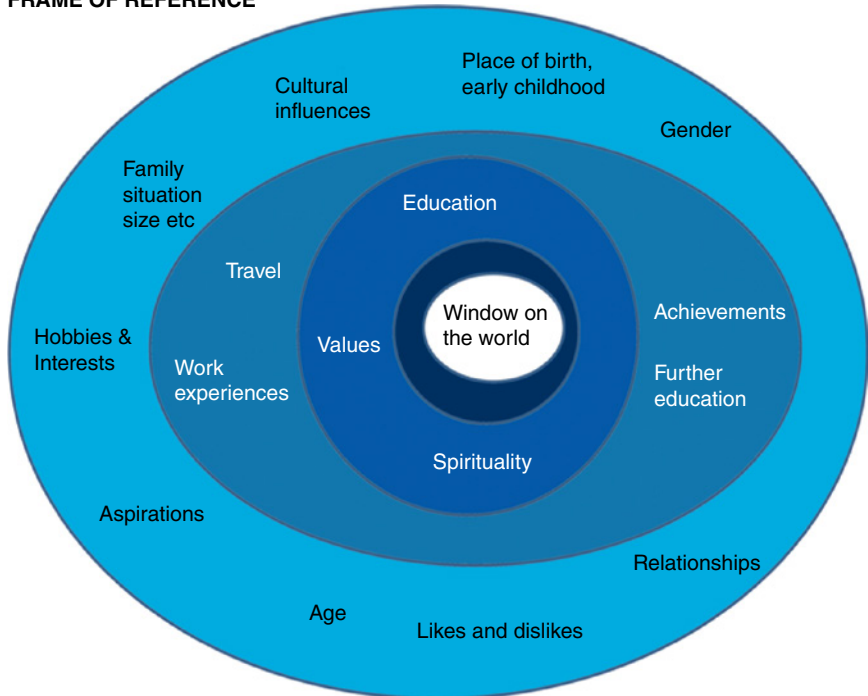
There is a saying about seeing things 'through rose-tinted glasses'; when one has a tendency to see situations in a positively biased way or by putting a warm and comfortable gloss on issues. The reality is that we all see the world, ourselves, and others in it through our own 'tinted glasses', but rather than being of one hue (rose coloured or otherwise), the world is viewed with very complex layers to our 'glasses'.

Depending on our beliefs, views, and current emotions as well as our backgrounds and experiences, our 'tinted glasses' or frame of reference will cause us to interpret reality, situations, and other people in a unique way. Our frame of reference may therefore be very different to other people's views, or interpretations of a very similar experience, issue, or event. Even those with whom we are closest – family, siblings, partners, spouses, friends, and colleagues – may interpret, experience and respond to something very differently from us.

This unique, complex lens on the world, our frame of reference, will affect how we make judgements, how we understand the world, ourselves and other people. It will impact how we view animals including those we own and those belonging to others. It also affects how we act or behave.

This frame of reference is developed by many things. The diagram below shows experiences, events, and individual traits that build an individual frame of reference or colours the lenses in our glasses through which we look at the world.

FRAME OF REFERENCE



Box 1.5 Exercise Part 1

Spend a little time, if you would like to, thinking about your life experiences and what may have influenced you to see the world as you do, your frame of reference. You might want to make some brief notes in the form below if that is useful. Next, consider if any of these factors from the frame of reference impact your view of animals? Has anything influenced you to do the work that you do with animals? Make a few notes in the last column against each of the areas

| Some factors that may influence our view or frame of reference of the world | Notes about your own experience that may impact how you see the world | Notes about your own experience that may impact how you view animals |
|--|--|---|
|--|--|---|

Inner circle

- Values
- Spirituality
- School / education

Middle circle

- Further education
- Travel
- Work experiences
- Achievements

Outer circle

- Family situation, size, etc.
 - Relationships and friendships
 - Gender
 - Place of birth and Early childhood
 - Age
 - Aspirations
 - Hobbies and interests
 - Likes and dislikes
 - Cultural influences
-

Box 1.6 Exercise Part 2

What do you make of this exercise?

What stands out when you look at or think about your answers or notes in each area?

How might these be different from those of your closest friend, your partner or spouse, or even a sibling?

How do these experiences impact the way you act and behave in the world and the decisions and judgements that you make?

Box 1.7 Exercise Part 3

Now reflect on your beliefs, values, and attitudes towards animals and animal ownership (those you own and those others keep). Think about your beliefs and attitudes towards how animals should be fed, how they should be kept, and how they are used to work for humans or for food and other products. Lastly, think about your beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding the death of animals. Do you have views on euthanasia? Where do these beliefs and attitudes about euthanasia come from? Have these changed over time – if so, what influenced the changes?

1.4 Humans' Frame of Reference and How They See Animals

Each of us hold beliefs and values about animals and yours may have influenced your decision to work in animal health, care, or welfare. Your behaviour will be underpinned by a very individual and unique frame of reference, or view of the world. Many experiences and events, such as the areas outlined in the frame of reference, will affect how humans relate to and interact with animals (Dodman et al. 2018).

Let's look at each of those areas from the frame of reference again in a bit more detail and about how this might be for people who own animals.

1.4.1 Inner Circle of the Frame of Reference

Let's start with the inner circle. Values, spirituality, and education, all of which can develop very early on in life, can be very personal but evolve due to our experiences and the impact of other people upon us.

Values: Our values often come right from our earliest experiences in life. Whether or not life was good when we were children, helps form our values. People who were influential when we were young will significantly impact on our values about, and views of, animals. We all take on the values of those most important to us – our families; our communities; our spiritual, cultural, and religious experiences. Values may be re-evaluated and adjusted in adolescence and again in adulthood. Sometimes, as Serpell (2004) discusses, values and beliefs about animals can be held over many generations, even after they are no longer relevant or useful. As humans, we can therefore inherit some or even most of our values about animals that may have come from many generations before. These may be outdated and no longer appropriate, yet difficult to let go of as they form part of our history, identity, and feelings of connection and belonging.

In animal health and care work, when we need people to change their behaviours, it is important to explore, understand, and appreciate the beliefs and values that underpin their actions and decisions, or their lack thereof. This is the same no matter which country or continent we live and work in.

Spirituality: Spiritual perspectives on life and on animals may be formal and come from religions and cultures, or they may be personal, formulated by our thinking and own life experiences.

School/Education: Early education will probably lay the foundation for how we are able to access and develop in further and higher education. Animals and our relationships with them, in our early formative education may develop our views. Animals do tend to appear in stories and tales, modern and old. For example, *The Bible* has animals in it. Fairy tales have many animals, often as central characters, and many to be afraid of. Some schools have pets or some farmed animals such as chickens, to allow students to look after them and appreciate where food may come from.

1.4.2 Middle Circle of the Frame of Reference

Further Education: For many people, this may be minimal, or something that they did not experience at all. Further education usually means mixing with, often living among, people who may not have come from the same or even similar backgrounds as us. This allows us to widen our experiences of the world, sometimes through hearing other people's experiences or sharing our day to day lives with them. Further education teaches us to be more analytical, more critical, to question, and to change the ways in which we think and reason.

Serpell (2004) mentions that scientific developments and research can change how humans see animals. However, people need support through education and perhaps further education in order to become critical thinkers, and to take on what evidence scientific information presents, especially if it is completely different or at odds with how they have been brought up and to what they have been practicing for many years.

Travel: The ability to travel may be very limited in some of the communities you might work with, and for others, travelling experience may be much more extensive. Some people may not have had opportunities to be exposed to alternative ways of living, thinking, and working with or keeping or interacting with animals.

Work Experiences: Animals may feature in people's work lives in a variety of ways including farming, the leisure and tourism industry, pet and companion animal industries, conservation and wildlife, animal welfare, transportation, environmental and trading standards, pharmaceutical and other testing, butchery, food and other manufacturing, assistance animals, and working animals such as dogs and horses in the police and armed forces.

Cultures within work settings may impact upon an individual's frame of reference. People may hold particular views about, or attitudes towards, the animals they work with. These can be very different to how they view those they may have at home, such as companion animals. Work environments may mean that people have prolonged exposure to particular ways of treating animals, that then become the norm for them.

Achievements: What we have achieved, or aspire to achieve, can affect how we view ourselves and others, and the world as a whole, including the animals within it. For some, competing against others may be a way of aiming for or obtaining achievements. For some, activities such as breeding and showing animals can bring a sense of achievement. This may lead to welfare issues if the individual puts more value on the achievement rather than animal welfare. This can be seen in the breeding and animal showing world, when breeding is done in the pursuit of producing the winning animal, the one who will be held as high value by others or who may make or reinstate the breeder's reputation and social standing. This type of breeding for achievement, described as 'chasing the one' (Williams et al. 2020) can result in animals who do not meet the required standards being discarded as 'waste' products.

1.4.3 The Outer Circle of the Frame of Reference

The Family Situation / Size: The position a person is born into within a family, the eldest or youngest for example, may affect how they see the world and their place in it. The need to secure an income and resources for the family may be a key part of someone's life, especially for men in many cultures. A sense of responsibility for siblings or other family members or gender expectations and roles within a family will influence an individual's frame of reference. We can inherit our family's behaviours and beliefs about animals, but the unique experiences for each of us due to our place in our family and its dynamics can create differences in frames of reference even between siblings. Added to this, when animals are part of a family situation, whether as companion animals, farmed, hunted or as working animals, this will have an impact on how they are viewed and treated.

Gender: Our gender, and what it means to us – how we were treated as a child and growing up – may influence how we view the world. An example of this was an owner of a number of animals who came in contact with animal welfare workers. She had married young, had been expected to have children and did so, having a number in quick succession. This owner didn't want her animals rehomed as she was worried that the female animals would be used for breeding by those in her culture. This very personal experience led her to not want a similar life for her animals.

Relationships and Friendships: Relationships and friendships help form our frame of reference. Experiences with fellow humans can drive how people choose to keep or how they treat their animals. Peer pressure and requirements to fit in with a group or community can influence how we see the world. This may encourage people to obtain and keep animals similar to those which are owned by friends to enable them to be accepted into a group. This can happen with reptile keeping, for example. Other examples may be young men who obtain horses or ponies when they are living in urban areas without the appropriate environments for equines. Other people may choose to keep particular breeds of dogs which fit with an image that their group has and which they want to portray to others.

Groups that support people with young animals can have a significantly positive impact on the treatment and management of animals by new owners. An example of this is puppy training courses. More problematic may be groups of young adolescents who influence each other to seek out and torment or harm animals. An individual might not have done this on their own but may take part when they are part of a social group and experience peer pressure.

Place of Birth and Early Childhood: Birth and how children are raised, especially in the very early years, will have a huge impact on their frame of reference. Attachments with primary caregivers are formed in the first two to four years post birth. These attachments set the template for how an individual will build relationships and connections with others throughout their life. Attachment patterns may also inform how people build relationships with animals. These may drive some to have overly close bonds or intense feelings for animals leading to problems for them, for others, and for the animals involved. An example of this may be a person who won't allow an animal to be euthanised even when it is very necessary and is in the animal's best interests. Another example could be those who keep inappropriate numbers of animals, causing welfare issues, including cases which could be considered to be animal hoarding.

Childhood abuse is increasingly recognised as a significant factor in how individuals develop and the few who go on to abuse animals. If people have experienced violence such as beatings as children, then it is very possible this affects how they see the world and they feel that they too need to use such behaviour.

However, others may decide that they will not behave in the same way as adults did with them. They may choose to do something radically different, but they will still be influenced by these early experiences. Monty Roberts might be an example of this. Roberts is a well-known American horse behaviourist. In one of his books, he described how he felt he was treated by his father in ways that were very similar to how horses in the USA were treated and traditionally 'broken' by using harsh and cruel ways in preparation for being ridden. Roberts says he decided that he wasn't going to behave in the same way, rather he was going to use different methods (Roberts 1997). This led him to pioneering new ways to work with horses