

Do you know your pet?

As a person who loves to learn new things, I enrolled myself in a creative writing class a few years ago. It was a positive experience and very eye opening for me. During our first class, we were instructed to choose three characters. Each week we examined one of the characters in detail and wrote from their point-of-view. One of my characters was a big orange tabby cat whimsically named 'Main Cat'.

When it came to the time for the class to comment on my first story from Main Cat's viewpoint, our teacher had many encouraging things to say. He thought that I had done a very convincing job of portraying the cat with human emotions and qualities. To my surprise, there was a word for this technique: anthropomorphism.

I was disturbed and surprised to realize that many people were not aware that animals do indeed possess and experience all emotions. Even our Scottish instructor, who spoke often of his wonderful, beautiful dog, had missed this important aspect about animals. That was the first time in forty years that my fundamental innate belief had been challenged.

Through my daily work, it has been consistently demonstrated, either first hand or directly relayed by these animals, that they have the ability to feel every emotion that we humans do.

It only takes a moment for us to think about our own relationships with our companion animals to be able to identify many of their more obvious emotions. Haven't we all witnessed an animal's joy and

contentment when we come home after a long day at work? Have we ever noticed an animal's excitement when we get home? Have we ever noticed them by jumping together or curling up and watching TV together? Have you ever experienced their feeling of contentment while they dozed off to sleep with one little paw extended just enough to make physical contact with you? Have we witnessed anger or fear in an animal's growl or hiss when they or their territory is being threatened?

Have we observed feelings of pride and ego as our pet leaves a groomer smelling and looking all fresh and proper?

'Human' emotions are not only apparent in our domesticated animals. Witness a satiated wild animal after it has devoured it's prey. Observe how relaxed a lion feels as it grooms itself while lying in the morning sunshine, before it naps. Watch a mother bear instinctively defend and protect her young.

Through my animal communications, I have discovered that animals can feel utter loss or abandonment in some situations. They can feel depressed or experience separation anxiety from their people, or from other animals. One of the more shocking discoveries for me had occurred while I communicated with a little black cat with whom I had spoken multiple times. Each time that she had boarded with me, I had worked hard to try to discover the root of her excessive, seemingly compulsive grooming, that would leave her with open lesions on her skin.

This little cat had been feral from a young age. She had difficulty trusting people, but was fine with other cats. I remember complimenting her on what a gorgeous little girl she was. I asked her if she knew that she was beautiful. Her response taught me that humans are not the only ones who can suffer from poor self-esteem. Animals are also affected by negative self talk, and self judgement. The way we look, or more accurately, the way that we see ourselves, are not exclusively human emotions?

This little cat had experienced difficult times before being adopted into a caring family. When she had been young, overly thin, and hungry, she had been emotionally scarred from people referring to her as ugly, skinny, and sickly looking. She was not able to believe herself very pretty, with a shiny healthy coat and a well-proportioned sleek and fit body.

In the two years that I have been practicing animal communication, my understanding of an animal's emotional and physical behaviors have improved substantially. As cute and furry as they are, there is a whole lot more going on with them than the obvious. Their range and mental capacity are far broader than the simple needs of food and walks. I have learned that the animals are always talking to us and hearing us, especially when we are thinking about them. The only difference between us is that they can't readily put their emotions into words like we do.

These animal communication skills have been enlightening to say the least. I believe that each of our companion animals is here to help us and teach us something about ourselves, or about our own emotions. My own four house cats, aside from making me laugh each and every day, have taught me plenty. Smudgie likes to remind me to sluff off and find playtime for myself. Moustacha shows me the importance of finding time to pamper and appreciate myself. Sweetpea teaches me the importance of trusting others based on my own instincts. And lastly, Spunky reminds me to feel and show compassion to others. Do you know what your pets are trying to teach you? Sometimes their message is as simple as teaching you to love yourself or others.

So, the next time you have a chance to really observe your pet, try to recognize the emotions that

they are displaying. I hope that many people already acknowledge my personal observations. For the people who still wonder if animals have feelings, I hope that I have raised a few eyebrows and initiated a few discussions.

Melanie Walker is an animal communicator and the owner of Pet Bed and Breakfast Inc. Her kennel is the very first fully cageless boarding facility for cats. (Sorry, no dogs). She started the kennel in 2001 with one clear goal in mind, 'To provide cats everywhere with the feeling of freedom and personal safety while they are boarded'. She believes her cagefree environment offers cats the lowest stress kennel option.

The Pet Bed and Breakfast is located at 5460 Canotek Road, Unit 101, Ottawa, (Mil Rd & Qwy). View the website at <http://www.petbedandbreakfast.ca/> for more information, television footage and photos of this truly unique cat kennel or contact the office at 613-748-3585.



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