

SHARING ENERGIES

What it Means to Live with a Pet

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In the spring issue, Jeanne Olson put to paper her thoughts on pets and their people-- how they look alike, share similar diseases, resonances, and why perhaps we actually pick a particular pet. I'd like to expand on some of those thoughts, as the link between pets and their people is a major focus of my veterinary practice.

Jeanne mentioned that we often do not feel comfortable discussing these issues with clients, that perhaps we do not have enough training in these areas. But I would suggest that at times it is critical that we go to these uncomfortable places, as there are many times when you cannot separate the pet from its environment.

It is my belief that people can affect their pets in several ways. Of course, these are only my beliefs; I have no evidence to support my claims. And I don't mean to make any of this sound simple or neatly categorized. There are so many intricate levels through which we move in this world-- physically, consciously, unconsciously, emotionally, spiritually, and on a soul level. Our dances and interactions weave and intertwine at all these levels in such intricate ways. But I would like to put forth a few ideas.

We have all noticed that people may share both physical appearance and physical disease with their pets. Often, several beings in a household will share allergies. We have seen many cases where people will show stress in the same way their pets do-- colitis, cystitis, skin conditions. The story of people sharing a similar type of cancer with their pet is classic. Less obvious are the people who get the same chiropractic subluxations as their pets.

So how does this happen? Do people *make* their pets ill? Do pets willingly *take on* their peoples' imbalances to spare them disease? Or were the two just so similar in energetic imbalances that the resonance between them brought them together in the first place?

As to the first question-- do people *make* their pets ill? I do believe that a person's energy or a house/environment's energy can affect pets. I call this the "innocent bystander" or "second hand" effect. There are numerous examples.

Nervous, anxious owners who surround their pets with a cloud of negativity. People with repressed anger or grief which you can literally feel when you enter the room. Families with money issues, relationship problems, or other stresses-- many times a child or a pet will break with physical symptoms as the "identified patient", when in reality it is the entire household that is out of balance. Body workers who have pets in the therapy room or people who are processing/releasing a lot of energy into the house. Sometimes the energy of the house or land itself contributes to disease.

Or do pets purposely *take on* their person's imbalances? Sometimes a pet might develop heart disease or cancer in order to "take the bullet" for their person. Or, what I think we see frequently: A pet develops a particular disease to reflect or mirror the person's stuff as a lesson. Back to the idea of the many levels at which are relationships operate, perhaps a pet makes a decision prior to incarnating to develop a disease or condition to bring lessons to themselves or their owners (grief, love, dependence, independence). In such cases, then, it is the soul purpose of that pet to experience that disease as part of the growth for himself and his person.

Sometimes the pet-person relationship is based on having a caretaker and an ill patient. This codependent bond will maintain or ensure illness in the pet. In this case, both the pet and the person must be willing to go through some painful growth, or the animal may have to find another home if it is to get well.

Sometimes disease is just the pet's own stuff and has nothing to do with the owner. The disease they develop is just part of their own soul growth, and the person is there to help support them through it.

As for the question of similarities coming before disease, I do believe that we resonate with those who share energetic patterns with ourselves. We attract things that are similar to us or support our view of the world. In this way, we bring to ourselves people and animals who share similar susceptibilities and weaknesses-- thus the tendencies to break with similar diseases under stress.

In my practice, we often feel the pets bring their people in, not the other way around. We see many cases where the person is, at some level, looking for growth. In these cases, it is the pet that is the catalyst for the person to begin exploring new ways of looking at health and balance. Through working with their pet's diet, they begin to eat better themselves. By discussing appropriate energetic boundaries and codependency, they begin looking at themselves. By talking about things like stress and the importance of listening to one's heart, they begin to open up to new possibilities in their own lives. We often point out to people the wonderful gift that pets bring us in this way.

What we do in the exam room with our clients is to sense the energetic connection between the pet and the person. We ask about things and issues that might be going on in the household-- any financial, career, or relationship issues? Is anyone else ill? Does anyone in the family share similar signs? Is the animal bonded more closely to any particular family member? What emotions/issues is this disease bringing up for the person (a parent who died of cancer; this pet got them through a tough divorce)? We try to explore the lessons the pet may be bringing to the person (passage through a life phase, opportunities for growth, release of attachment, living in the present, new ways of looking at health, incorporation of the mental, emotional and spiritual in everyday life). Sometimes pets make us look at our own lives-- work, relationships, how we spend our time, how we care for ourselves. We educate clients about the representations of the emotional, mental, and spiritual in the physical manifestation of disease, both in their pets and in themselves.

Rather than allowing a client to experience guilt over their role in a pet's disease, we attempt to reframe the situation as one of opportunity-- as a gift that the pet has brought them to acknowledge an imbalance so that they can grow. We encourage people to work on their stuff, often referring them to local practitioners or starting them on flower essences or Reiki. We recommend energetically cleaning the house, through rituals such as smudging or meditation. We refer people for Fung Shui and animal communication. We recommend they talk to their pet about wanting the pet to be well and not taking stuff on for them. We talk to people about separating their energy from their pet's, avoiding enmeshment, and establishing appropriate boundaries. Here, the flower essences of Yarrow and Pink Yarrow can be helpful for both the person and the pet.

I have come to see my practice as really being about getting the word out about health in general, both for people and pets. So much of my job is really about teaching, not treating. And distinguishing between health for pets and health for people is not really that meaningful; one cannot separate the two. I just use the pets to reach the people. Or perhaps the *pets* use *me* to reach the people.