

## **Women's Community Counsellor**

*Inspiring and Empowering You To Become Even More Fabulous*

July 2007

It's May, my favourite month of the year. I love May because spring is in full bloom, full of promise for a long, sunny, warm, and fun summer. I also love May because it's the month I was born and I get spoiled rotten by my loved ones and who doesn't love that?

As I write this, two darling cats are sitting at my feet keeping me company and providing me with a sense of calm that only pets can do. My husband and I are in our mid and late 30's and have made the decision not to have children for many reasons. However, that doesn't mean that my biology doesn't feel the need to nurture, cuddle, feed, and protect "little ones". In fact, the urge to 'mother' became so overwhelming that we decided that we needed to take radical steps to meet this innate and what feels like a purely irrational biological need. Instead of getting pregnant, we got two adorable Siberian kittens.

These amazing creatures adopted us nearly four months ago and have changed our lives forever. I am absolutely amazed at how my need to nurture has been so completely fulfilled and am blown away by how powerfully rich and satisfying this experience has been for both me and my husband.

These two feline beauties have literally become our "babies". We find ourselves constantly cooing at them, talking baby-talk (this can be very embarrassing if guests catch us), and I, in particular, have adopted the habit of carrying them around in my arms just like infants. And what is so bizarre is that *they let me* and I swear they look at me with empathy and deep understanding and for some reason tolerate my need to mother many times a day. I have to say that I am very grateful for the grace and love they show to me and I have learned more about love and acceptance from them than any human being.

While I may be a bit slanted in favour of felines, I do believe that pets are innately wise, compassionate and have many lessons to teach their human companions. One friend of mine says that when she is watching a sad movie and cries, one of her cats licks her tears off her cheeks and cuddles with her for comfort.

I can't tell you how many therapy sessions have been devoted to witnessing the miracles of animal-human connection and the enormous grief and loss that comes when a beloved pet passes away. I had one client who was so attached to her miniature Schnauzer that she had a handbag made with a decal of her beloved doggy on it. She wanted to be reminded of him when she had to go to work!

While I was training as a therapist, one of my instructors was so attached to his pet lovebird and had such separation anxiety when he left him at home, he decided to bring him to our classes and the bird patiently sat on his shoulder for an entire three hours

while his owner taught us how to be good therapists. He often fell asleep sitting there and it was quite heart-rendering.

I truly believe that humans and animals are meant to share space, love, sad as well as fun times with one another. Animals have so much wisdom and we can learn so much from them. From a therapeutic perspective, I think that the two greatest things that pets teach us are unconditional love and being in the moment. I'll talk about each separately.

**Unconditional love:** How amazing is it that even if you step on their tail by accident, feed them late, have a bad hair day, reek of onions or garlic, or are feeling totally down in the dumps, your pet will run to the door enthusiastically to greet you with big wet kisses and a wagging tail?

And unlike our human companions, most pets are not apt to hold a grudge. Recently, my hubby and I went on a vacation leaving our kitties with a friend who took wonderful care of them. Even so, they were not amused and promptly went number one AND two on my workout outfit. And while we had a lukewarm reception upon arriving home after two glorious weeks on the beach, after an hour, we were all cuddled up asleep on the couch snoring and purring affectionately. All was forgiven and my workout clothes are no longer at risk for being treated unfairly.

And another very cool thing about pets is they don't even notice if you forget their birthday! If you make a big deal of it and make a yummy chicken-liver cake with a candle in it (no, I have restrained myself up until this point but I can't promise I can hold out for another year), they're thrilled and ready to party!

**Being in the moment:** The big buzzword in therapy circles these days is "mindfulness". This concept is so popular that there was an entire therapy convention devoted to it this year. Mindfulness comes to us from our wise friends in the East and the basic message to us multitasking and frantic Westerners is: SLOW DOWN and smell the roses. Stop running around like a chicken with its head cut off yabbering on your cellphone while driving over the speed limit trying to get to your next dreaded appointment and simply BE. While this is in theory a very simple concept, it's in all likelihood one of the most challenging things we will ever try. For me to sit and meditate for 20 minutes is a minor miracle and while I force myself to do this on a daily basis, while my body is still, my mind is like an Olympian gymnast bouncing from thought to thought at the speed of light.

But if you want an easier and more enjoyable experience of being in the moment, hang out with a cat or dog on a regular basis and you will get a taste of that sweetness of *just being* which will leave you feeling relaxed, refreshed, and renewed. For me, this is in the evening (which I look forward to all day) when the work of the day is done, dinner has been eaten, and I can luxuriate on the couch with a good book and two pussycats on my feet. The act of petting the cats is the most meditative state I ever experience and looking into their eyes and smiling warms my soul like nothing else. It is in those moments that I have not a care in the world and the only thing that matters is this moment...there is truly nothing like it.

Find an animal to be with this week and bask in the unconditional love they offer and enjoy being here now; at peace and content with all that is...

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Esther Kane, MSW, RCC is in full-time private practise as a psychotherapist in Courtenay, B.C. Esther has over a decade of experience counselling women and their loved ones with a multitude of presenting problems. Her main focus is helping women to become free of barriers which keep them stuck so that they can become all that they dream of being.

To book a session or to set up a free 15-minute phone consultation (**only if you reside in the Comox Valley**), call Esther at (250) 338-1800. You can check out her detailed website at: [www.estherkane.com](http://www.estherkane.com)

Books she has written can be found at:

[www.dumpthatchump.com](http://www.dumpthatchump.com)

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