

Never argue with the cat

I have had several pets in my adult life. In each case the animal has chosen me. And I learned long ago that when an animal chooses you it is best not to argue about it. And so it was at the Furry Friends shelter when I entered one of the larger rooms on a Saturday morning a few months ago. I sat down and was soon approached by a variety of the feline residents. Some were curious and wanted a sniff. A couple were out for being petted. And then there was one who wanted in my lap.

When it comes to names, dogs are rather particular. I have had dogs refuse to listen until they found a name they liked first. Cats do not really care what you call them. I am not certain if that is because they do not understand what a name is, or if it is a matter of them not understanding our language any more than we understand theirs.

At the shelter each room has information sheets with their name and a picture of each cat followed by a description of their personality. The one who landed in my lap with a big purr was called "Crunch Wrap." It was probably a blessing that the cat did not understand human. He seemed to be in a good humor and was quiet except for the purr.

The following week when I went back into that room and sat down, it took but moments before this large, orange tabby came quickly to me and landed in my lap with purring and affection. He wanted his chin scratched. And then behind the ears. And he did not want to leave his position when I decided to get up. He was telling me I had been chosen. One more follow-up entry into the room later confirmed it.

They say that cats have a 3,3,3 scenario most of the time. When a cat goes to a new environment they will show changes in three days, three weeks, and three months. When I had been with him at the shelter, he had been quiet. Three days after being home he started talking . . . something that he would continue, increasing in sounds and volume.

If you listen to my very vocal feline roommate you will hear sounds that could be the words, "fine," "when," "sure," and "now." Which, when you think about it, pretty much covers a cat conversation (at least from their side). They just leave out the other words we would normally add in. When you arrive home and say, "How are you? Are you okay?" You will probably hear, "Sure" as he passes by you with feigned indifference. When the cat arrives at your bedside at six a.m. because the sun is up and the food bowl (recently checked) is still empty, "When? When? When?" Later, when the cat wanders to the food bowl, looks at you, "Now?" If you say, "No, you have already had your food," you may get another request, but sooner or later you will hear a disgruntled resignation, "Fine." as he walks away with a tail flick.

"Crunch Wrap" became "Snuzzles." I seriously doubt that he cared less about which he was called, he did not and does not respond well to either. But open the cabinet door where the cat food bag is located and you have immediate and rapt attention.

At three weeks it became apparent that Snuzzles is almost self-contained. He wants and needs little to be content. I got him furniture that has a cave area. He prefers being under the futon on a folded towel. I got a big jar of catnip. . . absolutely no interest. I bought several toys. He wants a feather on a string to chase. I got him a big, soft bed. He would not go near it. He loves a plush blanket folded up that he climbs on and does the kneading exercise also known as "making biscuits" while purring away before he sleeps.

It has been over three months now. Snuzzles likes dry food. His reaction to Fancy Feast with gravy is like offering kale to a tiger. He does not want to go outside. He does not want toys like plush animals or laser dots to chase. Offer either and he will look at you after looking at the offering with a stare wondering what you could possibly be attempting. However, a new toy has recently caught his attention. His tail. Try as he might he cannot catch it but that does not deter him. Definitely, he is a "party of one."

He makes it very obvious as to what he considers important in life. He wants food. He wants sleep. He wants, no, almost demands, chin scratches and being scratched behind the ears. And to make sure you understand his appreciation he will grab your wrist and pull it to his chest as he cleans your hand and fingers with great attention and a tongue that is as gentle as a pumice stone.

He snuggles; He nuzzles. And he really does not care what you call him. . . as long as it is not "late for dinner."