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All the Best Intentions May Still Lead Nowhere

Fri, 2009-10-23 14:59 — Robin Olson

It doesn't surprise anyone that I want to do the BEST I can for each of my "resident" cats, as well as my fosters, but it isn't always possible. I realize that having seven cats (*plus God knows how many fosters*) means that each cat might not get everything they need every day. Sure, they get FED daily, and if I'm not feeling too lazy, I slug their water fountain over to the sink to rinse it out every few days (*and they get a small bowl of fresh water every day, too*). I try to play with the cats and give them each, at least a few minutes of my time. Some get more than others. Some gravitate to Sam, so that lightens the load a bit, but it has to be tough on the cats-especially Gracie and Petunia.

Gracie and Tunie Retro copy.jpg

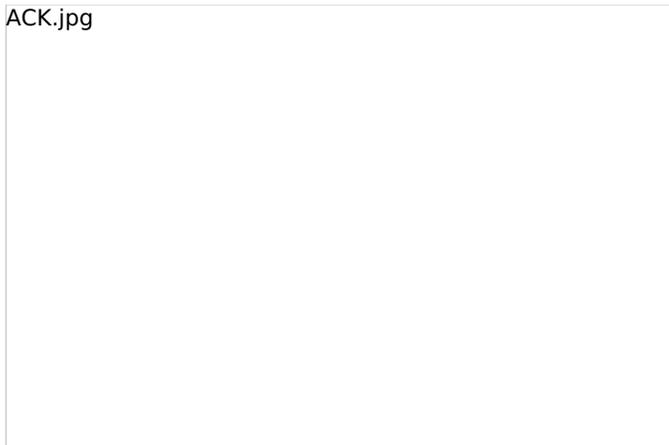


Gracie came to me six years ago as an "unwed Mother" with her three offspring. Because I had trouble placing her and her daughter, Petunia, I decided I had room in my home to keep them. I never really had a strong bond with them, but I also didn't want to continue trying to find them homes after almost a year. I was with the wrong rescue group who put my kitten on the back burner, until she was too big to be attractive to many families, and both of the cats were skittish and showed poorly.

Over the years, Petunia has developed territorial aggression and some aggression towards a few of the other cats. She did a lot of inappropriate urination, which drove me mad. Getting a consult with a behaviorist, seeing my Vet, reading about cat behavior, I came to be able to work with Petunia, to a point. Clearly, she feels she is not getting enough attention and does not care to have other cats in "her" space-like my bedroom. I've worked on giving her more attention and playtime, but, again, with the duties of a foster mom and the other cats having their issues, there isn't a lot of time for her. It's my fault.

Meanwhile, it's been a YEAR since Gracie began her odyssey with Miliary Dermatitis, possibly brought on by her own high strung emotional state. Gracie will RUN if anyone comes close to her. Partly it was from all the medications and baths she's gotten over the past year, partly because she is a nervous cat. She's been pulling out her fur, over grooming herself and vomiting it up. I haven't seen her pull her fur, but there are clear signs something is going on. Even with all this, Gracie STILL wants to sleep near me at night and still wants attention, but is fearful if I step closer to pet her.

ACK.jpg



Dr. Larry says to re-home the both of them. As I've written before, they are 6 and 9 years old. It would be VERY tough to find them a home I'd feel was good enough to care for them. I'd also miss them. They do have some adorable qualities! I just wish they could relax...

So, after all this time, I've decided to try one last thing-[Elavil](#) ^[1]. Yes, my cats are on anti-anxiety meds. Here I am, studying cat behavior, trying to help other people with their cats, when my own are so messed up I finally decided to medicate them. Surely, there is another way? Surely if there is, I'm not sure what it would be at this point.

I started Gracie on 10mg, once per day. In two days, whatever existed of Gracie's personality was gone. She was lifeless and very depressed. She didn't run off, but she seemed to lose interest in life. She ate like a pig, but stayed by herself, not wanting to be around anyone else. I could not get near her. I took her off the meds for a week, spoke with Super-Deb, the Vet tech, and decided to halve the dose and see if that helped.

Right around this time, I was seeing more and more aggression from Petunia towards Nora-who was doing NOTHING, just minding her own business. Unprovoked attacks on the rise, another call to Super-Deb and we agreed it was time to put Petunia on the other half dose.

Both girls have been on the half dose for a week now. Gracie is perky, eating well, wants to be close to me, but is still nervous. Her skin improved with a shot of vetalog and I'm waiting to see if it STAYS that way now she's not so nervous. So far, so good. Just a tiny outbreak, but not bad. She likes to visit me at night and purrs and like her pets, she's just not quite so stressed out.

Petunia seemed more clingy to her mom, but also seemed to be less high strung. I thought it was going all right, but in the past day she's actually gotten MORE aggressive towards Nora. Is she fighting her "mellow" feelings by overcompensating her attacks? I put her on the full 10mg dose today to see if that makes a difference.

My hope is to give it a month and re-evaluate. If the girls are doing better, I may continue it another month or may wean them off it slowly. I want them to gain confidence and reduce aggression or self-mutilation. I WANT THEM TO BE HAPPY, but the price they have to pay to get there is the problem. I hope, in the end, it's worth it. Right now it feels like I'm running out of options. This is my last chance to make it work for them to continue living here.

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Comments

Fri, 2009-10-23 15:24 — [AnnaBanana74](#) ^[12]

I feel for you, Robin, I ^[13]

I feel for you, Robin, I really do. What a tough situation for someone who loves her pets so much and is willing to do anything for them. I hope that a happy solution will present itself, whether it's the meds working or another rockstar cat lover to welcome Gracie and Petunia into his or her home.

Fri, 2009-10-23 17:44 — [Sunnys Mom](#) ^[14]

Wow....Shew! ^[15]

Oh my goodness, I just marvel everyday at your dedication to your kitties and your fosters. You are truly 100% amazing. I just wanted to say that I know that anti type of anti-depressants or anti anxiety medication has a culmlative affect in humans, so maybe it is the same in kitties. Sometimes is can take weeks or a month for the pills to take their proper effect? My Mom had seven kitties and they all seemed to do get along pretty well, but their was ALOT of inappropriate peeing going on. I REALLY hope things get better, and for a minute I thought you made those kitty cat cupcakes. I thought jEEZ where do you get the time!

Fri, 2009-10-23 19:15 — [Confucius Cat \(not verified\)](#) [16]

Good job with those kitties. [17]

Good job with those kitties. What beautiful black cats.

Fri, 2009-10-23 21:07 — [acninee](#) [18]

Cats & Anti Anxiety Meds [19]

When 2 of my girls decided not to get along I came across some discussions of anti anxiety meds to control aggression. From what I read it seems like sometimes they work, but sometimes, they can cause the cat to be more aggressive. The thinking was that the meds relax the cat's inhibitions, and you get a cat who is going to express the core personality more strongly, for better or for worse, so a dominant aggressive personality will become more so. Not very helpful, I'm afraid.

Fri, 2009-10-23 21:13 — [Shelli](#) [20]

What a tough place to be in - [21]

What a tough place to be in - that damn rock and hard place has a difficult middle. Love, and strength to you.

And meows to the girls from our furry brood.

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