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Humble Pie Never Tasted so Bad

Wed, 2012-03-14 10:39 — Robin Olson

WARNING: THERE IS A GRAPHIC PHOTO OF AN INGROWN CLAW BELOW. VIEW WITH DISCRETION.

Just when I think I understand cats, something happens that reminds me how wrong I am. **Things here are about as terrible as can be. There's a complex territorial situation going on between the cats that results in urinating and defecating out of the litter box.** It feels as though I'm [Sisyphus](#) ^[1]. Instead of my task being that I must push a boulder up a mountain every day, only to have it roll back down the hill just as I reach the crest for all eternity; my task is that I believe I've finally worked out what's irking my cats and what will solve their issues, only to have them fight at 3am, urinate in more areas, ruin more things and turn my house into, literally a waste-land (*hopefully NOT for all eternity*). **One day I would like to get up in the morning, walk down stairs and not have to look for, find, and clean up cat urine for an hour before I can do anything else.**



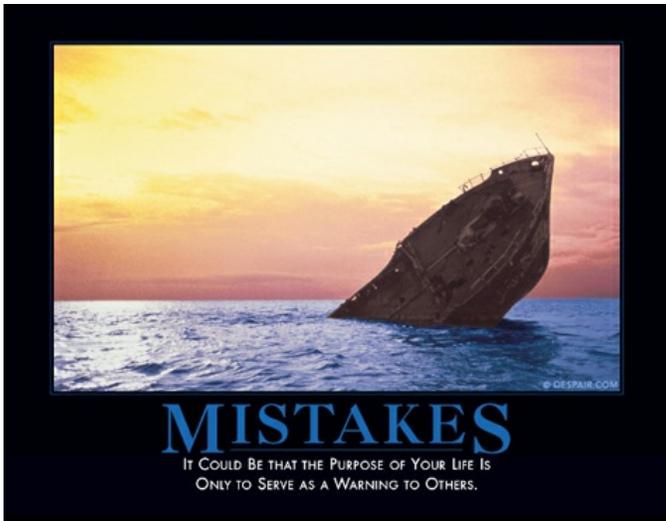
©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Gracie a la [Instagram](#) ^[2]

As you also may recall, my finances are in horrendous shape. *It took me a few weeks to get up the nerve to even write about it-then another few weeks to work up the nerve to upload the post.* I spoke of my humiliation in not being able to provide Vet care for one of my cats. Over the past few weeks I worked up the nerve to talk to Dr. Larry about it, figuring I had to try to do something to help Gracie.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Gracie always feels a bit less stressed if I cover her with something while we wait for Dr. Larry.

There's a Demotivator ^[3] poster that sums up how I feel. Perhaps the mistakes I've made will help others to do better? Right away I learned that I only have to ask and my Vet will tell me I can pay off Gracie's Vet charges over time-and take as long as I need. *I have NEVER paid a bill late, always up front, always in full. Dr Larry knows he can trust me and because of that trust, I was able to bring Gracie in to see him yesterday and not worry about the bill.*



©Despair.com "Mistakes"

The goals were: **1. Re-check the growth on Gracie's abdomen. Is it cancer? Is it worse? Does it require surgery as we thought three months ago? 2. Assess Gracie's teeth for dental cleaning-they NEED IT.**

Gracie is a fragile cat. **She's VERY timid, but also VERY sweet. She would never hurt anyone. She cowers in fear and trips to the Vet cause her to tremble.** Gracie ^[4] also suffers from Millitary Dermatitis which I have written about over the years. It's basically a rash of unknown origin...and trust me, we have tried to figure out what is going on with her. **Her skin, which was once so covered in scaly, raised scabs that she felt like a reptile. She barbered (chewed off) her fur, vomited daily and bit herself raw and bloody. I ended up using homeopathy which helped her emotional state. We only feed her raw. If she has any canned food she gets worse. Her skin is not perfect, but it's much better. She doesn't vomit daily. She has a bald patch on her tummy, but it's not bloody. I would consider her to be mildly stressed, but overall in very good shape compared to how she was last year.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Of course Dr. Larry won't see Gracie under the towel-or so she thinks.

But Gracie is fearful and skittish..and very hard to give a pill to. She was abused before I ever got her to foster and the scars of that stay with her no matter how quiet and sweet we are with her. She's come a long way, but still tends to run off unless she comes to us. **Lately she's been climbing on us at night and sleeping on the bed. Some times I hear her walk into the room. I hear a "click" as one of her claws tap onto the wood floor. I made a mental note to get her claws trimmed when we were at the Vet. I never heard a cat's claws make any sound on the floor before.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Dr. Larry listening in...

Little did I know that one observation and decision would later come to shock me.

I don't trim my cat's claws. My eyesight isn't that good and the last time I did it I almost cut off a foster kitten's toe. I DO hold the cat and Sam clips the cat's claws-at least the cats we can handle. **Gracie has extremely fluffy paws and fur between her toes. She's so skittish, we just don't bother her. I had NO idea there was anything at all wrong with her paws. She did not limp. She did not cry out. Perhaps that she has been climbing on us every night-maybe she was asking for help? I can't say.**

All I know is I was holding Gracie while Vet Tech Amber was trimming Gracie's claws. Gracie trembled as usual, but didn't make a fuss. I didn't even have to scruff her.

Amber clipped the back claws, then began the front. **She had to spread Gracie's toes apart to see past the fur. She stopped and quietly said; "Oh, she's got an ingrown claw. Let me get Dr. Larry we have to use special clippers for this."**

Before she left she showed me what was wrong. **I gasped when I saw it. It looked unreal. There was her claw, turned into itself-a deadly pointy hook, jabbed deeply into her paw. How she was walking around the house, I had NO IDEA.** I felt a nauseating flush of adreneline hit my gut. What the HELL?! All I could think of was how fast could we get that out of her paw and how much **PAIN** Gracie must be in right now-and that she isn't even making a fuss!



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The horror of an ingrown claw.*

Dr. Larry came in and took a look. As I've heard so many times, his voice took a serious tone. There was no time for sedation. The claw would come out. Dr. Larry just had to make a few cuts to remove it from her paw. Because Gracie is so submissive, he was able to work quickly to remove the claw. Gracie barely struggled. Perhaps she knew he was trying to help. **What relief it must have been when that claw came out after a few, quick snips of the nail cutter!**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Snip, snip, snip-DONE!*

When I saw the claw laying on the exam table, I truly felt sick. **I could see a line of blood. It indicated just how deep that claw was into her paw.** This had been going on for a long while now-at least three months because that was the last time Gracie was at the Vet. Months of blinding pain. How did she not give me a clue? Or did she show me, but I didn't take notice?

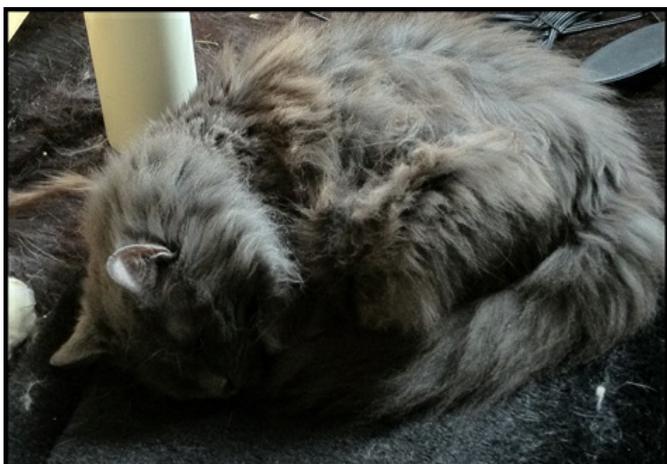


©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The line of blood indicates where the claw was outside the paw (to the left of the line) and into her paw (from the right side to the tip).*

I learned that the older the cat gets, the thicker their claws become. They grow faster as the cat ages and the sheath that usually breaks off every so often, does so less often and that's how ingrown claws can occur.

Gracie is not a polydactyl. It was her fourth toe on her front paw...I called it her ring-toe. She has a hole in her paw and is on antibiotics. She could benefit from a soak in DILUTED betadine solution, but with the meds on board it's not a must.

I looked for information on ingrown feline claws but didn't find much about it. I did discover a kooky looking poster with 3D illustrations of what to do if you discover your cat has an ingrown claw. If it's bad you MUST get your cat to a vet, but some times you can deal with it at home if your cat won't bite your face off when you handle him or her. Here's the info: [Step by Step instructions from GoToAid-CATS](#) ⁽⁵⁾ Download a [Poster](#) ⁽⁶⁾ to keep on hand-pardon the almost pun.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Sleeping under my desk. Relaxed and pain-free at last.*

After thinking about it for awhile, I recall seeing Gracie chewing at her paw. I've seen cats do that before to remove the claw sheath. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but that's what I should have been looking for.

I hope ALL of you will take a look at your cat's claws TODAY-especially if they're older! Trim their claws if you can. Take them to the Vet and have it done if you can manage it. Get a friend to help you do it. It's also a good time to remind you to make sure you have plenty of adequate areas for the cat to scratch. You should provide vertical and horizontal surfaces for scratching. I have cat tress with sisal covered posts for vertical scratching. I use corrugated cardboard scratchers for horizontal scratching. I have a chunk of red cedar, too. Cats like it and it's aromatic. While it didn't help Gracie this time, it may have prevented the other cats from having a problem. In 30 years of having cats, I've never had one with an ingrown claw before.

The biggest surprise was how Gracie acted not even a day later. For the first time in YEARS, I found her, not sleeping away from everyone on the bed, but sleeping right under my desk as I write this. She's not lightly sleeping, ready to RUN off at the slightest sound. She's asleep. Her posture is relaxed. She must be feeling so much better, though there is more to be done to help her feel really good.

The reasons I brought Gracie to the Vet in the first place, were eventually addressed. I discovered that **Gracie's growth has reduced in size from 10 mm x 14 mm to 10 mm x 7** (*still a nice size for a diamond, but even better size to show a shrinking cyst*). *Dr. Larry is going to drain it when Gracie gets her dental on Monday. He may send the fluid out for testing, but right now it doesn't look like cancer! **Gracie's front teeth are okay but the back teeth are NOT.** *They're causing her pain, so between the antibiotics and dental cleaning she should be really feeling great in another week.**

As for myself, I've never cared for the taste of humble pie, but I have a feeling I better acquire one soon.

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Comments

Wed, 2012-03-14 11:08 — Jody Vernay (not verified)

Gracie's toenails [21]

Wow.

Once again thank you for sharing this valuable info!

Wed, 2012-03-14 11:41 — [Teri and the ca...](#) (not verified) [22]

Re: Bad Taste [23]

Putting something like this out there in writing is part of healing, and educating. Even I, a vet tech, let one of my cats teeth get in bad shape before I noticed just how bad they were...it was Sammy, my (now retired) stud cat and I didn't interact with him as much as I do the cats that are out and about in my house (and sleep with me). He needed a full mouth extraction (done in 2 separate procedures 6 weeks apart) and I just flogged myself endlessly over that...but he healed and gained weight and never held my negligence against me....I know now when you hear 'clicking' that you will be snipping...

Wed, 2012-03-14 13:43 — Penny (not verified)

cat-astrophy-ies [24]

Have been a cat-mom almost all of my 65 years. And the only thing I am now certain of is that they will always find new ways to surprise me!

I do trim most of my cats' nails, but have been leaving Old Tom's alone - poor guy has so much going on ... I have noticed the males' claws are much thicker than the females'. A few are so thick, it's hard to get the little-kitty-clipper on them! Now I will make a concerted effort - with ALL of them. Thanks Robin! (Again!!) PS - Tom purrs while getting his sub-q fluids, takes pills like a champ, never hits back when another cat jumps him - but hisses & growls when I try to trim his claws!

Wed, 2012-03-14 14:09 — Tereza and Larry (not verified)

Gracie's claw [25]

Poor baby, better late than never. We cut our three boys' claws every two weeks on the dot. They're healthy and grow so fast! Churchy is getting cut once a week as that little runt's claws grow faster. Glad Gracie is feeling better. Maybe one of your lessons in life is to learn that you don't have to do it all -- alone. It's okay to rely on others, once in a while:-) Lots of people, human and fur, love you.

Wed, 2012-03-14 16:47 — [Ms. Stella O'Ho...](#) (not verified) [26]

Nail trims [27]

Oh my goodness. So glad you caught that. I had no idea the older they get the faster their claws grow but it makes sense to me now. My Stella is 16. Her claws get thicker and and I thought it was just one was injured or something. Since she still plays like a kitten and does like to use the tree for sharpening I keep a close eye on her (and my other 5). Miss Jenga is a Bengal resuce that I foster, she is 10 and I have noticed her claws doing the same. It's good to know some 'claw' facts. Thanks for sharing!

Stacy Hurt

Wed, 2012-03-14 18:55 — Barbara UK (not verified)

Gracie [28]

Poor Gracie but don't beat yourself up over it. We can't watch over everything that's going on. We can only do so much and you are doing all (and more) that you can. Gracie will be so much more comfortable now and I wish her the best with the cyst

and her forthcoming dental.

I do trim my new cats claws - she doesn't mind and I do it kinda sneakily while she's sleeping! I was able to trim the claws of most of the cats I've owned except for a couple who turned into wild spitting little furies at the very sight of the nail clippers! Ah well, you can't win 'em all!

So sorry you are having such a bad time lately - I hope the sun will shine for you again soon.

Wed, 2012-03-14 19:21 — [Marilia \(not verified\)](#) ^[29]

Oh! Poor little kitteh!! ^[30]

Oh! Poor little kitteh!!

Wed, 2012-03-14 19:54 — [midbabtaz](#) ^[31]

ingrown nail ^[32]

thank you for sharing wow i have a cat Tazette who gets those on one of her paws and i trim it but it keeps growing back i guess a trip to the vet is in order to fix it and hopefully it wont happen again glad to hear Gracie is feeling better

Wed, 2012-09-05 17:24 — [Catnynouse \(not verified\)](#)

Ingrown cat claws ^[33]

Thank you for sharing the info - my cat is 15 and not in the greatest health, but it never occurred to me to check her claws for ingrowns. Sure enough, after reading this, I checked and she has one heck of a nasty ingrown claw. I noticed her walking funny a few days ago, but she never showed any other signs that might indicate a problem. I can't imagine how long her claw has been growing into her paw, but at this point, it has gone deep enough to begin coming out the other side!! My poor baby!! So, keeping a check on the claws - especially with aging, indoor cats - is a MUST! Thank you for bringing my attention to this - and helping me help my sweet, old kitty!

Wed, 2013-05-15 17:40 — [chippercat \(not verified\)](#)

Overgrown Cat Claw ^[34]

My cat, Grizzy, has this same problem. She's twenty-one years old and too weak to scratch to remove the sheaths on her nails, so they get very thick and overgrown, and then grow into the pads of her paws if I don't keep up on them. I cut them as close to the quick as I can to keep them down, and then pull them out as carefully as I can, but they have never gotten that bad. You have to keep up on the clipping, especially when they get older because they can't scratch (on a post, or usually the carpet or furniture) like they used to.

Wed, 2014-07-16 23:07 — [Catnynouse \(not verified\)](#)

Thank you for sharing... ^[35]

Your blog came up on a google search about ingrown toe-nails. My elderly kitty best friend sleeps on my pillow every night. This morning we were playing in bed and I was stunned to see puss seeping from her footpad. It was an ingrown claw. I had no idea -- she walks fine, although she walks a lot less than a few years ago, and she never complained. And she sleeps inches from my face every night. I felt horrible.

I've been feeling just terrible about it, so I'm grateful to know that other attentive cat owners have had this happen, and that it's something I can watch out for now for my aging friend. I'm sure it was hard to type -- I could barely admit it to my friends - but I'm grateful you were able to share.

Mon, 2014-11-24 22:40 — [Margaret \(not verified\)](#)

ingrown claws ^[36]

Thank you for writing this! I have been beating myself up also over finding three (!) ingrown claws on a rescue cat with kidney disease that I've been caring for. I never checked her claws in the 8 months I've had her. I don't know how long they had been like that, and sadly I did not notice until after she died Saturday from throwing a blood clot. I felt horrible but I truly did not even know cat claws could do that! Still feel awful, but your article helped, and I'm very grateful you wrote it. Thank you.

Sun, 2015-05-10 19:20 — [PC \(not verified\)](#)

ingrown claw guilt trip! ^[37]

This happened to my last cat when he got very old - I didn't notice until he started holding up his paw when it hurt. From then I clipped his claws and never had the problem again, though I felt awful I'd never noticed....

Six years later, new young cat - had a million problems when I rescued her. After several ops, diet & lifestyle stuff, she's been healthy. Then I heard a clicking the other day, popped her claws and this MONSTER appeared - one had grown right round in a circle but not through the pad, the next one over was pushing into the pad.

I took her straight to the vets - I'd never checked, because I thought it couldn't happen to young cats and it is rare. The vet had no clue why it happened, but apparently it can be from a bruised toe or something that just stops the claw sheath coming off for some reason.

I felt awful. Truly, truly awful - it was horrendous, but although she's very affectionate she doesn't like having her feet messed with, and I'm not looking for problems I don't expect. The important thing to remember is that if it hurts they will TELL you, and we really only need to feel bad if we ignore it once we know. You DIDN'T know, you didn't ignore it, and if it had been hurting you would have noticed. I can't believe how bad my cat's was, but she's honestly shown no sign at all. Don't beat yourself up over things you didn't know of - I know that's even worse after they die but you really didn't do anything wrong. You did all you could with the info you had, and that's all we ever CAN do - that goes for everyone here.

Now. What I want to know is....if her front claws are fragged, what the hell has she been sticking in me? Has my cat taken up covert acupuncture?

Sun, 2015-05-10 19:46 — PC (not verified)

Garcia's claw - don't feel guilty [38]

I just posted a long reply to another comment about this so won't bore you with it all again...

But. We can only deal with problems when we know - I just found a monster overgrown claw on my cat and rushed her straight to the vet feeling like the world's worst person. I only found it because I heard it clicking, goodness knows how long it would have gone un-noticed otherwise. It wasn't bothering her at all, she was running, jumping, scratching, no pain at all. And although she's very affectionate she's a cat and is very protective of her personal space - she hates having her feet messed with, why would I distress her looking for something that is usually only a problem in older cats?

I'm glad you posted because you're obviously taking excellent care of your cat, and we have to weigh it all up - the distress caused when we poke and prod, the trauma of vet trips, all of it. We can't resolve what we don't know about, and there should really only ever be feelings of guilt if we know we've ignored signs. Sounds like your Gracie is just like mine and it wasn't hurting her, however bad it looks to our eyes. Once you knew, you resolved it immediately. THAT is what's important. No humble pie needed, honest!

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Robin @ [Google+](#)

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