

Critter Cure

My kitten, Dinah, keeps trying to leap from the floor to the bathroom sink. Not standing a chance hasn't stopped her from trying - and trying! (Good thing her size'll increase before her desire wanes!). Dinah knows what she wants. If she wants petting, she simply presses that mushy little body against me, and viola! Done being petted? She just bounces away! No apologies. Dinah just ... is. And I adore every fuzzy inch of her.

Our passion for pets is a hot topic. People used to be apologetic - or at least highly selective - about sharing pet-related feelings. Today - there are tv channels, best sellers, and even scientists devoted to our zeal for animals! When the ultra-conservative AMA gave pet ownership a thumbs-up, endorsing critters as good medicine, all the nay-sayers were done for! We can now be unabashed in our devotion, emancipated- vindicated- and free to buy all the darn cat toys and doggie sweaters we want!

Why did it take so long for pet loving to be validated? I have been called defective, shallow, for saying the greatest losses I ever suffered were of my pets. How can people not understand?! Pet-person relationships transcend species specificity. We aren't human and canine/feline/bird- we are two souls knowing, nurturing, and healing one another. We are of a piece.

Recently Puff, my beautiful, beautiful cat who had been born in my hand lay dying in my arms, and I sang him 'Puff the Magic Kitten' for the last time. For 14 years Puff had slept with one foot inside my shoe. When I buried him, heart breaking, I gently slid his paw inside the sneaker I'd been wearing moments ago. Forever, he will be Puff-in-the-shoe. Who can judge my grief, diminish the bond we had? No one.

Let us remember to never, ever take those souls we're connected to - whatever species they are- for granted. Relish the miracle that is you and them together - every, every, every chance you get. Don't wait for the AMA to tell you to love heartily, and passionately, and vulnerably. Just ... love.