



Living with Cats

Scott Huckaby's Toastmaster CTM #3

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Organize Your Speech... Objectives:

- To organize your thoughts that leads the audience to a clearly define goal
- To build a speech outline that includes an opening, body, and conclusion
- Time: 5 to 7 minutes

Mister Toastmaster, ladies and gentlemen... Man's best friend is not a cat... But I'm here to testify that people can live in harmony with cats. I know this to be true because I now have 15 years experience living with cats. My wife Teresa who has joined us today has even more experience with cats can verify everything I'm about to tell you.

My objective in the next 5 minutes or so is to share with you what I've learned about cats to help you see that it is not such a terrible thing if you find yourself in a position of having to live with cats.

The Lord has not blessed my wife and I with any children but He has made us servants of three cats. All cats have distinct personalities and we have a representative from each of the three major cat types in our house: Ty-boy is a scaredy-cat, Tosha is a fat-cat, and Shiloh is a copy-cat. Ty the scaredy-cat will disappear under our bed if anyone comes to the house and will not show his furry-face until after they leave. Tosha lived a deprived life prior to coming to our house and is now quite obese. Next to roasting her rotund belly in front of our wood-burning stove, her favorite thing to do is eat. We buy expensive diet cat food but it does not make any difference. Shiloh the youngest watches the other two and delights in doing what they do such as beat them to a favorite place to sleep.

One principle I've learned about cats is that they do not handle change well. A few years ago we replaced the carpet in the main part of our house with laminated flooring that looks like wood. We did this because of the cats, this type of flooring is much easier to keep clean when you have cats free to track in and out. Anyway, we had our floor striped down to the slab with everything moved out of its place in preparation for the new floor. Ty came into the house and immediately headed for his food-bowl, which he always did following the wall making two right turns from the cat-door. Well his bowl wasn't where it usually was so he turned around, went back to the cat door and retraced his steps as if he had made a wrong turn. Teresa took pity on him and put his bowl back in its old place.

Before I go on, I should give you some background to help you see how I got mixed up with cats. When I met my lovely wife, she only had one cat, Pasha who had a stiff leg due to abuse prior to Teresa taking him in. He eventually broke his stiff leg and we had to have it amputated. Well unbeknown to me at the time, but Pasha warming up to me was a litmus test for going forward in a relationship with Teresa. I don't think Teresa would have married anyone who didn't get along with her cat.

You see Teresa is a protectoress of little furry creatures. It is an amazing thing, little abused animals actually seek her out. We did not go looking for our cats, every one of them showed up in our yard expecting us to take them in. Here is an important principle I've learned about cats: once you start feeding them, they have made their home with you. I'm a fairly quick study so when I

voiced this observation to Teresa trying to avoid any more cats, she dismissed this by saying, “but they were hungry.” This is another principle I’ve learned about cats: they are born hungry.

I really do think the best way to come by cats is to let them find you. All of our cats came from a deprived condition prior to coming to our house. Ty-boy the scaredy-cat has buck-shot embedded in his skin and Tosha, the fat-cat was so emancipated when Teresa first took her to the vet that the vet didn’t think she would live long. That was about 10 years ago.

Our three cats know who their savior is, they follow Teresa around like sheep, especially after we’ve been gone for a while. Our cats know they are privileged creatures. They now live in cat heaven on earth. These cats have the run of the place. We have two cat doors in our house but they will still insist that we open the people door for them to go in and out.

The reason we have a second cat door was due to our most recent little furry resident. We now not only have three cats, we also have a dog. Teresa adopted Heidi the hound when she just materialized in our yard one day. They are so cute when they are just puppies. Heidi would like to play with the cats but this is another principle I’ve learned about cats: they don’t mix with dogs. The reason we had to put in a second cat door is that with the arrival of the hound, the cats couldn’t get out of the house with Heidi waiting to play with them. At Teresa’s instance, I installed a second cat door but what we didn’t count on was the Heidi Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle. Heidi is pretty fast and can be in both the front yard and back yard at essentially the same time. The cat’s saving grace is that Heidi is easily distracted by squirrels, other dogs, and any thing else that moves or has a smell.

Since Heidi the hound has taken up residence with us, I’ve observed that there are some significant differences between cats and dogs. Dogs are very

humble creatures. When I approach Heidi, she will lower her head and wag her tail in anticipation of a pet that I usually give her. If she is laying down, she will roll over so that I can give her a belly rub. Cats on the other hand are very demanding. Cats enjoy a good pet too but they will insist on it. Ty will meet me in the bedroom every day when I come home when I’m changing clothes, meowing and rubbing up against me and in general trying to trip me up until I pick him up and let him rub his nose in my beard. Ty likes to lay on the top of Teresa’s chair and will reach out and snag you with one of his claws when you pass by so that you’ll have to stop and pay homage to him. It is kind of like living with a snake in the house, you don’t want to pass by too close.

I’ve also learned that dogs are a lot more useful than cats. Cats don’t really do anything useful, they are sort of like living lava-lamps, their contribution is something akin to passive entertainment. Dogs on the other hand do useful things. Since Heidi has made our yard her home, not one stray cat has stuck around to be fed.

A friend from church helped me to understand why dogs and cats are so different. It is all a matter of perspective. You see dogs see their people and think, “they sure take good care of me, they must be god.” Cats see their people and think, “they sure take good care of me, I must be god.”

Well, I’ve got more cat stories but I’m out of time. I hope that what I have been able to share with you has helped you see that it is possible to learn to live with cats. Hopefully now you will not fear the prospect of coming home some day and seeing a hungry cat in your back yard.

Mr. Toastmaster...