

An Interview by Jason Parker, with Dr. RJ Peters, author of [HowToMakeYourCatAdoreYou.](#)

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Jason Parker: So you are an author of several cat books. I think my readers would particularly enjoy How to Make Your Cat Adore You.

RJ Peters: I think they would also. I've had a lot of good feedback on this one, which is my first ebook, by the way. I wrote it from the heart, based on a lot of up close and personal experiences with quite a lot of cats.

Jason: How many cats do you have?

RJ: Right now, I have 57 cats and 2 dogs, most of them considered "leftovers" from my shelter. About 3 years ago, though, there was an emergency rescue I had to do, in conjunction with the police dept. in another town, to get 55 cats out of a lady's mobile home. That took MY population up to 115!

Jason: meWow! Needless to say that's a ton of cats. ...What about them inspired your book and what is How to Make Your Cat Adore You about?

RJ: I was primarily inspired to write How to Make Your Cat Adore You because I was hearing people every day talk about how awful cats were. That has never been my experience, so I began watching all the cats I had (talk about a perfect opportunity to do some observational research), and noticed how they each had unique personalities and how they interacted with each other.. and with me. I saw that they were not awful, not "independent" and not uncaring. They have feelings, can be embarrassed, and are not simply motivated by food alone. On some of my most difficult days, when conditions were particularly bad, I would cry. Why would a cat come sit on my lap to comfort me? And some would lick my face, even if there were no salty tears.

Jason: It seems like that sometimes with one of my cats in particular. She goes through phases where she won't "visit me" and when she does, it seems all she wants is food.

RJ: Oh, they like food, all right, but the only explanation of being affectionate after they've eaten, can't be about getting more food. Food is also a major motivator for many people. And it's part of our social structure. Look at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, family reunions... always gotta have a big spread at these events. And cruises seem to be a lot about the constant and enormous food offerings.

Jason: True.

RJ: Animals are very much about food as well. It's normal, of course, and should not be dismissed as inconsequential, nor relegated to some underlying sneaky agenda. If an animal has only known starvation and competition to survive, they will be more food-motivated than most, and it can take quite a while to let them learn that food will always be there for them.

Jason: You know, that probably explains the actions of my cat I'm talking about. She was a stray. She may be super affectionate near dinner time because in a way she's using her survival instincts. Ya think?

RJ: I do believe that is a strong possibility. She was probably not always able to eat when she was hungry. Now she can, but may not fully trust that it will always be so. It will take a while, but in time, she will come to see that. And seeing that she is in a safe environment will help that, too. She may do best with her own bowl, in her own corner of the room, or even at her own specific dinner time, too, to eliminate the feeling of competition from your other cats.

Jason: Great tip. Thanks.

RJ: I get a lot of questions from my web site about cats, too. I think I can write another book just from all the questions I've gotten. But most importantly, I think I've helped a lot of people... and their cats... overcome some obstacles due to misunderstandings.

Jason: So tell my readers a little more about your book. What types of solutions does it provide to what types of problems?

RJ: I've covered mostly personal relationship areas, where people are learning to relate on a one-to-one basis with their pet cat. While that's not always possible with some cats, it at least lets an owner know why their cat is the way she is, and to let her be her own cat. I've stressed in several places that it's so very important to realize that cats are their own selves... they can't be controlled like dogs are. They do not respond to punishment. They cannot easily be forced to do things, and they are not impressed with some play activities. I caution everyone not to play roughhouse with their cats. It excites a fight response from them, and if you get clawed or bitten, it may make someone think the cat is mean. Not so... they are scared and just defending themselves. It's essential to be gentle with all cats, even the boy cats. Some guys tend to do this (my husband does it)... they think a big, buff boy cat likes to rough house. Oh, they will respond to it, and fight back, but it's not a game to them. If you want all the family members to be safe from scratching and biting, play gentle, or if you want to get "rough," use a toy.

Jason: Well, that explains why my boy cat "playfully" bites my mom when she visits...

RJ: Also, I bring up the fact that declawing may save your furniture, and your skin, but only from claws. A defenseless cat knows its limitations, and will hone what's left... the teeth! Gentleness leads to gentle responsiveness from them, and you won't even need to declaw. However, that said, I do have a cat here that could not be kept off the furniture and we did get her declawed. She's OK, but we are extra careful to be gentle with her. And she is a gentle cat. Does your mom elicit the playful biting from your cat?

Jason: She'll just be petting him, he'll be purring, then he'll bite her lightly.

RJ: Well, that could be a love bite... cats will do that to each other when they are showing affection between themselves. Just so you

don't react to it, like OMG! He bit me! Then jerk away. No fast moves, just freeze, and speak softly, and he'll quit.

Jason:

He'll catch you off guard sometimes though. He's just plain silly... I've heard that cats who are declawed feel like they've lost something vital... like an arm or a leg to a person.

RJ: I'd say that's pretty close... they do know something is gone, all right. And that they can't do some things anymore. Claws are used for more than scratching. They are for gripping, as when on a slant, and for personal grooming. Not just for defense, which they will find other ways to accomplish. If a cat feels vulnerable, too, they will tend to be more fearful, and thus, more prone to defending themselves.

Jason: So your book has a lot of insight on sort of "the psychology of your kitty." Does it also breach on developing a deep relationship or something along those lines?

RJ: Yes, you're right... it's more on the psychology of getting along with your cat. But of course, that leads right into developing the meaningful relationship aspects, too. Cats are quite capable of having a relationship with you. If you are open to it. My cat Radar is a perfect example. He follows me like a dog, and actually "heels" as I'm walking. Sometimes I think we're attached at the ankle. He looks me in the eyes, directly, and "talks" to me. He wants to be wherever I am. If I sit down, or lie down, Radar is there. He gets insulted if I let other cats into my space, too.

Jason: Cat Radar... Do I feel another book title coming on?

RJ: Hey, I love it. Talk about double meanings...

Jason: Tons of people, especially my readers, are all into knowing what your cat is thinking and feeling. Is there any quick advice you can give on that subject?

RJ: Cats do show signs of what's on their minds, of course. We just have to notice them. I'm not adept at "cat whispering" or psychic connections or anything like that, but I am very much in tune with my

kitties. Just like watching your own kids before they can talk, you learn what their signals are. Cats are like that, too. (Yeah, dogs, too.) Just learn what THEY mean by what they do, and you can build on that. Be watchful and considerate. It's really amazing what you can learn about your pets just by paying attention to them. I think dog people are into controlling their pets, and that's why they don't like cats, but even dogs appreciate you being respectful of them. Well, not all dog people, of course... I'm just referring to the many people I encountered who surrendered their dogs at my shelter because they wouldn't obey them.

Jason: My dog would have been in a shelter 8 years ago if I were like them. For fun... Out of your 57 cats, is there one you fancy more, one you can't imagine yourself living without? For instance, do you take one aside into another room and pamper him. If so, what are your pampering techniques? Like, is there any special treatment going on behind the scenes?

RJ: Oh yes, I have my personal favorites. As you can guess, Radar is one of them. I also pamper Twister (she's old and deaf), TG (tripod girl, who lost a leg in a trap), Ciego (blind, rescued from a guy who poked her eyes out), and Sox (who just happens to be very very shy). I hold them often, and talk to them. I tell them they are my favorite cat (think they know I say that to all of them?), and just spend time with them alone. I also give some of them a massage (my other book, *Cat Massage Secrets*). But not all cats enjoy that. You just have to respect what each cat loves and expects. In time, as they watch the other cats having such a great time, they will actually come and ASK me for whatever the other cat just got. It's so funny.

Jason: As for cat massaging, is there any science to it? I mean, is there a deep tissue massage for cats, for instance?

RJ: There are several techniques you can use, of course, as with people. I tend to stay away from "deep tissue massage," as that could be uncomfortable, and you just can't explain to them, now this might hurt a little... It absolutely has to be 100% enjoyable, or you may not get them on the table again. Of course, here I have to contradict myself again... if there is a valid health reason, such as a muscle that needs to be rehabilitated, you may need to be firm about massaging

that spot, but keeping it brief will help them accept it. I had to work with Twister for a while, as she was born with neurological deficits and could not turn her head. I had to massage her neck muscles and stretch them so she could normalize. It took most of a year, but she looks at me like I'm her mom and most trusted companion... which, of course, I am. After she got some motion there, I worked out a play routine that had her running in circles and back again, so as to work specific muscles.

Jason: I bet that was a bit tough on her.

RJ: We got through it pretty well, as she totally enjoyed the playing part of it. And she didn't hate the neck massages, either. The stretching was a bit unnerving, but she learned that I wouldn't be doing it very long and she settled down and let me do it. Oh, you might have guessed, that's how she got her name. Her neck was "permanently" twisted and her head was stuck to one side.

Jason: Oh my gosh...

RJ: It didn't hurt that I'm a chiropractor and know how to work with these things.

Jason: Aha... If you were going to give just a normal massage to your cat just for pleasure, do you have to learn specific hand positionings, which specific muscles to massage, etc?

RJ: No, anyone can massage their cat for pure enjoyment and pleasure. It just takes a while to train the cat to sit still that long! So, of course, just start slowly, as when they are already on your lap, with some gentle stroking along the spine, to the tail, like a long scratch from neck to tail. Once they get used to that, they will "ask " for it again. Just be aware of what they are asking for... it might take a few times to work that out between you. I have one here who LOVES the "kneading" type of massage. I rub my thumbs in a circular motion into his leg muscles and his arms and along his back. He asks for this by backing up to me and standing up on tip toes. It's so cute!

Jason: I bet it takes a while to get to the point where your cat will allow you to massage his arms and legs for long periods of time though, correct?

RJ: Yes, but of course, you won't want to be giving one hour massages. And they don't want them that long either. Except for Radar... he'll let me massage him forEVER. I'd say a 2 minute massage is a good start. Little by little you can work up to 5 or 10 minutes. If things are going well, and they still like it, you can go as long as they like... and you like. But there will be interruptions. Other cats will come around and demand some of the same!

Jason: Hehe... Warning: if you massage your cats, your life will be over.

RJ: Exactly! LOL

Jason: Have you ever heard of those resorts and hotels just for cats?

RJ: Yes, and I would love to run one. It would only go over well in an affluent neighborhood, though. It costs plenty to pamper them like that.

Jason: I was thinking that maybe you should! Then all your 57 cats could be pampered by your staff all day too.

RJ: Hehehe... great idea. Wanna be the social director?

Jason: Only if my cats can come, too.

RJ: Ah, but of course!

Jason: On your website where you sell [HowToMakeYourCatAdore You](#), you mention different types of problematic cats. I'm just curious, can you give insight on how you would help provide a solution to all of these types of cats without giving away too much info? I think you said Aloof, Aggressive, Bored, Disgusting, Destructive, Messy, and Disgusting. =)

RJ: Since I have a strong background as a doctor, I learned that taking a case history is the best, most important thing you can do to develop solutions to problems. So, when I am trying to help someone with their cat, I ask a LOT of questions. I need to know quite a bit about the situation, as every one is unique and different in their own way. Right, those are words most people use to describe cats they know or own. If a cat is exhibiting any of those, I figure it is the result of some misunderstanding between the cat and the human. Cats are not normally aloof, etc.

Jason: I see.

RJ: However, I find humor in things WE think are disgusting, but are completely normal and OK for the cat. You know, how they lick places we don't want to look at, or eat dead stuff... I have seen that most aloof cats are that way because they are treated that way. If a person doesn't make the effort to communicate, the cat won't either. They can sense that it may not be a welcome approach, so they stay back. After all, who's bigger?

Jason: So I guess just getting angry, yelling, and punishing is never a solution? Or is it sometimes?

RJ: Never. Cats don't understand the human activity of punishment. They don't get it with that stuff. However, they do understand "if this, then that." So, if they jump up on the counter, and you don't like it, you can shout NO! or slap the table or counter with a newspaper... make a noise. They HATE loud noises. They must never come to associate a negative thing with YOU... just things like, counter = noise, better not go there. I also tell people to never ever hit a cat. They only learn to fear the person... and in time, all people, if they don't know whether that one will do it, too.

Jason: Thanks for your insights. So loud noises should be what you produce instead of hitting in the middle of a negative action...

RJ: That's right. I've had some success with water, too. Keep a spray bottle handy. give 'em a spritz for doing whatever it is they shouldn't. However, some cats love this, and it can become a game.

Jason: Haha... My boy cat loves water. It's the funniest thing I've ever seen. He's even jumped in a tub of water before.

RJ: Yeah, I've had some like that here, too. So much for being afraid of water, eh?

Jason: That's what I thought.

RJ: Well, I was thinking, we both probably have some work to do yet today... I know I'd better get with it here. I've totally enjoyed this, Jason.

Jason: I've enjoyed this a whole lot. Thanks so much for taking the time to speak with me today.

RJ: Well, we can do it again sometime, too. I hope you get your book going and it's a huge success. Let me know how and when I can get one, when you're ready, OK?

Jason: Thanks for your blessings. Will do. Most definitely.

RJ: thanks again,

Jason: Any time. And thank you. Have a great day!

RJ: You too!