

My Feline Reiki Teacher

BY SHERYL SCHLAMEUSS BERGER



Photo courtesy of Sheryl Schlameuss Berger

It was a foggy, rain-slick night when my husband came inside after walking our dog and said, with deep sadness in his voice, “Casey is lying in the street. He must have been hit by a car—and he’s gone.” My heart plummeted, and the tears welled in my eyes. I knew my life would never be the same, and there would be a huge hole in my heart where my special Reiki teacher had been.

MY ODYSSEY WITH THIS AMAZING CREATURE began about a year before. I knew that Reiki teachers come in all forms, but mine came in the unexpected guise of a beautiful kitty, a gray tabby with snow white on his face, chest, belly, and legs and the most exquisite green eyes. He just simply appeared in my yard one day, attentively eyeing the birds congregating at the feeder. He was skinny, scared, and completely feral. At about six or seven months of age, he was too old to domesticate in any of the traditional ways. But I had a special tool: Reiki. From my Animal Reiki teacher and mentor, Kathleen Prasad, I had learned some wonderful ways to offer Reiki to all kinds of creatures, including wild and feral animals.

Getting to Know Casey

Not knowing whether this skittish new creature was male or female, I named the cat Casey. It was summertime, so it was easy for me to sit outside in the balmy weather, letting the Reiki flow for my new feline friend. At first he would hide behind the bushes and trees, his sweet little head peeking out,

watching me intently but cautiously from a distance. I felt my palms tingle as the energy flowed, and I explained that he could take as much healing energy as he was comfortable with. I communicated to him that he was safe with me.

I provided nourishing cat food for him, as he was obviously starving. To help tame him and get him used to me, I would place a bowl of wet food nearer and nearer to where I would sit, and he learned to come forward to eat right next to me. He always kept one eye on me, never completely trusting—yet. I would let the Reiki flow as he would hungrily lap up the food from the bowl. I asked Reiki to heal whatever fears Casey had and help him understand that I was a caring friend who would never harm him. I also asked Reiki to help me learn the valuable lesson of patience. Though this was not my first encounter with a feral cat, this was the first time one had “chosen” me by showing up at my house and in my life.

I had just completed my Reiki Master level a month before Casey’s appearance, a special and joyful accomplishment for me. But though I had finished those particular studies, I had no clue that I would soon be learning vast new lessons about patience, love, and the animal/human bond from a little ten-pound creature.

I would sit on the ground in my yard, sometimes bringing out a cushion to have a softer place to sit. I sat cross-legged and would drop pieces of cat kibble right in front of me. Casey would sit several feet away and dart forward to gobble the food, and then quickly withdraw. I would envision us wrapped in a bubble of Reiki light during these times. In time, he would actually eat from my hand, in an amazingly gentle way. I’m positive that Reiki helped with that, too.

Catching him to be neutered was a project and a process because he was so quick and nimble—and so distrusting. It took months to finally figure out how to catch him. I had to go out and buy my own trap. Propping it open and feeding him in there for two weeks was a necessity to get him comfortable with the cage. The veterinary appointment was set and I was nervous, hoping my plan would work. I did Reiki self-healing to help me stay calm and focused as the actual day approached. I let the energy flow, and I used the Distant Healing symbol to send Reiki to the situation of catching him safely, as well as to the surgery he would undergo. I set the trap, put in his favorite food and waited. Sure enough, I soon heard the latch spring shut, and one very unhappy Casey was going to the veterinarian.

Everything went well and Casey recovered quickly. The time I kept him during the recovery period, he soaked up a great deal of Reiki, despite looking so forlorn about being confined to a carrier (a giant dog-sized carrier). Again, I called upon Reiki for the situation when I released him back into the yard after his recovery. He sprang from the trap: precious freedom! He promptly disappeared over the fence, and I was afraid he might never return. But about two minutes later, the little head appeared over the top of the fence, and Casey was back!

Casey Comes Home

During his earlier times with me, Casey would often disappear for several days on his own little adventures. I would become concerned when he was gone for two- and three-day periods. There is a drainage basin that backs my yard, and I know he would hunt and explore there; many times I could see his little cat silhouette creeping around. He truly treasured his freedom. I knew there were other critters living back in the drainage basin, too. I sent distant Reiki for Casey's highest good every night, knowing it was the one thing I could do to help keep him safe, wherever he might be at the moment.

So many times I would stand in my yard, overlooking the pond-like catch basin, calling "Casey" as loudly as I could. He knew his name and would always make his way home. I would always let him know how much I loved him: I said it to him all the time, and I'm sure he sensed the genuine feeling emanating from those words.

The high point of my relationship with this remarkable kitty was when he overcame his fear and started to come into the house for brief visits. The first night he came inside, it was almost like a miracle—one that I credit to all the Reiki sessions I had shared with him.

I sat on the floor of my living room, palms upturned, offering him Reiki just as I would do outside. He began to circle me, happily, boldly purring, and began to brush up against me as he circled. I was able to reach out and pet him for the first time! I felt as if we were wrapped in a beautiful cocoon of Reiki light, both of us filled with contentment and joy, connecting across the boundaries of our different species. We were bonded in this special, almost ethereal moment.

My two indoor cats are rescues who had experienced difficult beginnings as stray, injured kittens on the street. They now enjoy a comfortable life with us, and one of them is disabled. I would keep them in a separate room the times that Casey visited. However, they would often be nose-to-nose at the windows and were very curious about each other. My plan was to introduce them slowly over a period of time during Casey's visits, but that never happened due to Casey's untimely passing. However, Casey and my canine companion (a sweet Golden Retriever) managed to have a cordial and respectful relationship.

Reiki Lessons from Casey

I often think back about all the times that Casey soaked up healing energy during our sessions. He preferred Reiki from a

short distance away, and many times his eyes would slowly close as he curled up in a lovely Reiki nap. There was only one time that he accepted hands-on Reiki, and that was the night when he hobbled in, having somehow injured his back leg. I always asked his permission when I began our sessions, but this time, he just headed straight for me as I sat on the living room rug. He dropped down right in front of me. Instinctively, I knew to place my hands gently on his back and he lay there, quietly, his eyes closed.

My hands were still tingling with warmth from the energy, but after about a half hour, his eyes fluttered open. He slowly rose and went to the back door, his signal that he wanted to be let out. It was hard for me because I wondered if his injury needed some medical attention, but I knew from experience that it was next to impossible to actually catch him and place him in a carrier to get him to a vet. He was still a feral cat at heart and I had to respect that. With the assistance of Reiki, he recovered from this injury in about a week.

I am so appreciative that Reiki created and strengthened the incredibly close bond between us. Both Casey and Reiki taught me the art of patience. All good things happen in time, especially love and trust, which often need time to blossom and flourish. Casey taught me about all these aspects, and also about the ways of a feral cat. He showed me how to best offer healing energy at a distance, and how effective hands-off Reiki could be for a scared and skittish creature.

There are other lessons that I learned through my experience with Casey and the Reiki sessions. The most important is that Reiki with animals is best offered in a flexible and open-minded way. You can't just place an animal on a Reiki table and expect the creature to lie there and have a treatment the way a human would. It is best to begin with a hands-off approach as I did with Casey, and then let the animal decide if he would like actual touch and hand placement. Animals do clearly guide us, and we need to trust that guidance.

So approach each situation without any preconceived notions about the outcome of the treatment. Let the animal guide you, teach you, and show you how they would like to interact with the healing energy. I learned from Kathleen Prasad that the key is to create a "healing partnership" with the animal. Reiki should never be forced upon any creature—the animals should have the choice to come forward and accept, if they so wish.

That last tragic night, when Casey's physical life had so abruptly ended, I finally held the precious kitty in my arms—something I couldn't do when he was alive, because he would not allow it. Through my tears, I sent Reiki to my special feline companion as he made his final journey to Spirit. I asked Reiki for emotional healing for myself in my grief. Even through my pain, I realized that by far the most important lesson I had learned from that "little cat with the big personality" was that age-old adage: Love really *does* conquer all. And what is Reiki but Divine love and wisdom?



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