



Willie the Reiki Master Cat

BY GIANNA SETTIN, PHD

The path of Reiki can lead us in many directions. But when I first began practicing Reiki I would never have imagined that I would one day perform attunements on a cat. The cat happens to be my own 14-year-old who has since become rather famous in ‘downeast’ Maine where I live. Now known as Willie the Reiki Master Cat, his expertise may seem improbable to most people. But the fact is that when he does a treatment he initiates it on his own; he proceeds very deliberately; and people have confirmed that they experience healing.

A review of the literature produces scant research in this area. Certainly, there are documented cases of people whose health has improved because of their relationship with their pets, and the benefit of ‘therapy dogs’ and other animals in medical settings has become an accepted part of some hospitals and clinics. However, I couldn’t find much information on Reiki cats. Still, medical and metaphysical breakthroughs have to start somewhere. And even if a cat who gives Reiki treatments may strike many people as odd or impossible, I feel there

have been enough documented treatments of humans by Willie to verify his ability and to warrant telling the story of how he came to be a ‘Reiki Master Cat.’

Observing how cats and humans communicate, it is clear a bond is formed when they get in your lap and purr. Holding a cat inspires a sense of peace and we feel motivated to pet them, mostly on the head. So as a Reiki practitioner, it was natural for me to just place a hand on Willie’s head and let the Reiki flow. As with most cats, if Willie does not like what I am doing, he just goes away. But he not only stayed, he began to seek me out, as if asking me for a treatment. And there was an obvious difference when he sought me out for Reiki, as opposed to just wanting to be petted. When he wanted Reiki, he would quietly and firmly bump the top of his head against me (not rubbing, just bumping). The first time I realized what he wanted was when he did that and my hand flopped on top of this head in the natural position for Reiki to the 7th chakra. He sat there very still with his eyes wide open for almost 5 minutes without moving. His

ears flicked and his whiskers twitched. Then he was done and jumped down. He wasn't purring. That's how I came to tell the difference: when he just wanted to be fed or petted, he had a thunderous purr.

The First Attunement

One day after I had just started teaching Reiki, I thought I would practice attunements on Willie instead of on an empty chair or my knee. It started innocently enough, almost as a joke, but I was surprised at how interesting it was to do, and how well it went. He was already sitting comfortably in a big stuffed chair, so I invited in the spirit of Reiki with Reiji ho, prepared myself quickly, said a special prayer to Sensei Usui and began. I did not plan it or have any idea ahead of time that I was going to do this. It just happened.

During the different stages of the attunement, I made some effortless modifications that seemed like common sense for attuning a cat. At times, Willie responded in ways that let me see that something unusual was happening to him. During the time when a significant Tibetan aspect of the attunement was being performed, he had a big response and I almost lost him but he settled back down. Again, during the installation of symbols, he

ior because usually after being involved with me in some kind of activity, he goes to the kitchen to nibble a few bites of food and then he goes out the cat door. But he stayed on the floor and remained calm.

After Willie's Reiki I attunement, I realized its potential and spent time thinking through the possibilities and ramifications of future attunements. I really didn't know exactly what would happen, but it became a serious idea because he was such a receptive, spiritual soul to begin with. At the same time, I wanted to be sure that I respected the sacred nature of the Reiki teachings, and did not dishonor them in any way. I asked for guidance on this from my highest Reiki guide, and got the go-ahead. And then of course I asked Sensei Usui who smiled and nodded and indicated that we are entirely too worried about things.

The Reiki II attunement was a little more difficult, because it was slightly longer. Also, because he received the ability to use the symbols this time, he had a different reaction during this phase of the transmission. There were a few challenging moments, even though I had talked to him at the beginning and told him what was going to happen. As can also happen to humans during an attunement, he became preoccupied at one point with something I was doing with my hand and started to get up and turn around.

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started a few times, turning his head and looking around for me in a vague unfocused way. The chief modifications were in step one. I visualized rather than drew the symbols and installed them without hand motions as I reasoned that Willie would interpret my hands as an invitation to play. In step two, I installed the symbols, without touching him, into the tops of his paws, not onto his pads. He particularly liked the parts where the breath was involved (as long as it was done very gently) and the hands on the shoulders in step three. But then he was ready to leave.

The one striking thing was that he sat through nearly all of it without moving his body, just his head; most of the time he seemed to be in a zoned-out state. It helped to beam Reiki to the crown chakra when it looked as though he was getting restless, which was very stabilizing and slowed him down, almost like a vibrational restraint (something I already knew from giving him Reiki treatments).

He wanted to leave before the final step. I think this was because I had moved around him too many times. I realized then that I should have done step number one and the preparation in front of him and the other steps from behind. But, all in all, I just let the Reiki do its job without any preconceptions or attempts to control the situation. At the end, he jumped down and plopped onto the rug where he stayed for awhile. This was unusual behav-

At this time I asked Reiki to do whatever was best in that moment. I steadied him by sending some grounding energy to him with the power symbol CR, helped him to reposition himself, and we went on. Also, because I communicated with him, he must have known that this was something special, different from being petted, and that it was important for him to stay put.

The third attunement, the ART/Master, was the hardest for him. It may have been the diversity of the energy entering his system. While extremely grounding, those Tibetan symbols have potent energy and can also be extremely activating. Or it may have been something else. But he had the hardest time sitting still for the whole thing, and I finally had to encourage him into lying down on his side and help him to stay there using the power symbol to his crown chakra, so that I could complete the attunement. In other words, it is important to be flexible and intend that the purpose will be achieved. I knew that Reiki would bring to pass the most important aspects of the attunement even if there were some unorthodox moments involved. It is the preparation, invocation of the spirit, removing one's ego, expectations and personality from the situation, and then letting go and being guided by spirit, that accomplish the goal.

So, eventually Willie was attuned from Level I up through Master. At first, I didn't tell anyone about having attuned Willie

because it seemed possibly inappropriate of me to have attuned my cat. Finally I mentioned it casually to the Reiki Exchange group, saying offhandedly that Willie was a Reiki Master, and they were quite interested once they realized I was not joking. In fact they were not surprised and affirmed that he did have special energy. Emboldened by this, I told a selected few Reiki friends and they all said things like, 'Oh sure, I did that too' and 'Why would we not broaden out the bounty of Reiki to extend to other beings?'

It makes sense that attunements for other animals need to be made specific to the way that animal (bird, reptile/amphibian, fish, insect) reacts to touch and energetic vibration (which, remember, can come to them in the form of much more intensity than we might experience of sound, color, light etc.), and also to their personalities. Most cats won't sit still for anything if you are in front of them doing something they are curious about. So the following are modifications I would recommend to the normal attunement process. (I am not describing the actual steps of the attunement here which are essentially the same as for humans along with the suggested modifications.)

Attunement Guidelines

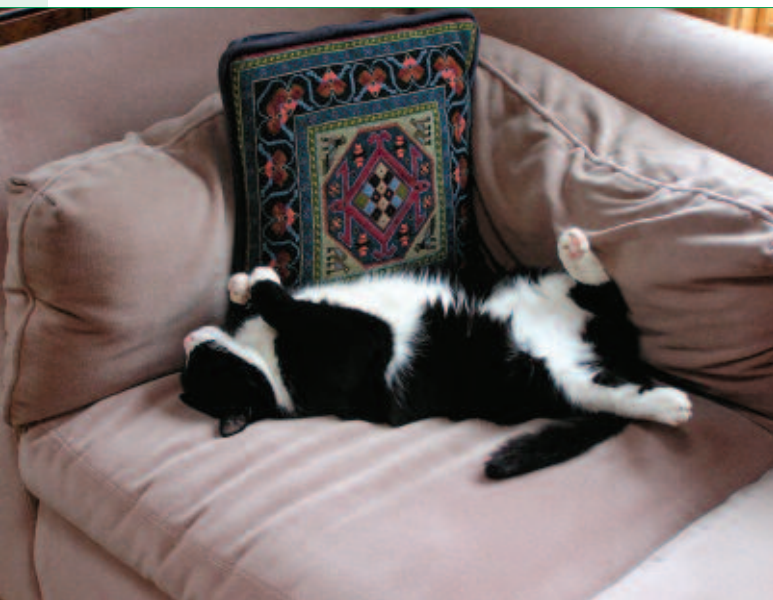
- **Don't** do it when they are hungry. It is best when they have just eaten and even are a little sleepy.
- **Don't** interrupt them while they are washing or concentrating on something important, like a speck of dust.
- **Don't** awaken them while sleeping or they will immediately go off to find food or the kitty litter box.
- **Don't** pet them or talk to them while you are doing it (as with humans, anything other than the attunement itself will be distracting).
- **Don't** try to get them to meditate first in Gassho.



- **Do** approach them in their place, don't get them and carry them somewhere.
- **Do** stay relatively stationary, don't move around much, and adapt your position so they can't see what you are doing. This means trying to be above or below their line of sight.
- **Do** make very small movements or do most of it by beaming or with imagery.
- **Do** follow them if they turn to the side, calmly, and return to what you were doing.
- **Do** get close to their physical aura, touching if possible; if you are in the mental-emotional aura they will try to get up to your hands to see what you are doing.
- **Do** go as fast as possible through the steps; once they lose interest, it's all over!

The Treatments

I never specifically taught the treatment techniques to Willie but after he was attuned, I began noticing that he would often press his paw against me very specifically, not randomly, and if I would pull away even a fraction, he would follow and keep the same pressure. He was very insistent. If I lifted his paw off, it was sweating. Those of you who know cats know that their paws don't usually sweat. I have since researched this phenomenon and interviewed a veterinarian who said that when a cat is in autonomic nervous system arousal or if they are exposed to heat it is possible that their paws could sweat. An example of this could be if a cat is removed from a hot car and is carried into the vet's office. It is an adrenaline response, similar to what happens to humans. But Willie seemed anything but nervous. He would get a 'spaced-out' look and his retinas would sort of drift off toward the periphery. During his treatments I would feel a sense



of what I would call a “spiritual anesthetic.” It was comforting, and he would most often do it when I was upset about something or not feeling good.

I began realizing that something was *really* going on with Willie when one of my students reported an experience (that has been replicated many times since with others). She had a headache and was sitting on the couch in the living room during a break. Willie jumped up and sat next to her, extended his paw, and placed it on her open palm. She said she felt something like an electric current begin to flow. When she moved her hand a little further away, he stretched his leg and kept contact. She said it felt like he was pushing against her hand with his paw. They remained that way for several minutes, until the flow subsided. At that point Willie jumped down and walked away. She said she felt a sense of calm and peace during this, and her headache was gone.

Later at another Reiki training, someone mentioned that the cat had been around during a practice Reiki treatment session; had placed himself next to the very place a student had pain; and that the pain stopped immediately. I talked with her and she said this was an area that had been treated before with no real decrease in pain. She said Willie had jumped up on the massage table, gone straight to her left hip, and her pain immediately stopped.

During another class, Willie lay down between a student's legs and stared right up at her for almost 45 minutes, never moving, during the entire practice session (see photo below). She reported that he came right up and without any preface, went directly to the location and never moved again. The student said that her abdominal cramps went entirely away. Willie's characteristic approach is to make a bee-line right to the place that needs Reiki and once he makes contact, he doesn't move again



until the Reiki stops flowing and then he immediately leaves. This seems to distinguish between times that he is *not* giving Reiki (when he will do “cat” things like turning around and around to find a good place to sit, or knead with his paws, or fidget or start washing himself).

Jan Howard, a Usui-Tibetan Reiki Master Teacher, described Willie as ‘going into a zone’ and refraining from purring when he is giving Reiki. She described his behavior at a Reiki Master training. (see photo above) “I was sending Reiki to him and then he laid down beside me and put his paw on my hand. The energy shifted and became reciprocal. What I heard was ‘he’s a cat, I’m a person’...but the bridge between animal and human was crossed. It was a very calming effect.”

It could be argued that there is no way to know if Willie is giving Reiki or not, because there is usually a human treatment person also present. However, as with any treatment, it is not the individual who is responsible for giving the treatment, it is only for them to activate their Reiki and it flows through them without any effort. So, perhaps once Reiki is activated whether by intention or by instinctive knowingness or empathic connection, it is available to all present. Future experimentation in this realm might give us greater insight into the human/animal healing connection. Meanwhile, attuning animals may be a way to complete the great wheel of life—the Mandela that shows us the nature of Oneness. Receiving is sometimes more difficult than giving. Perhaps if we go into the world with a readiness to receive, and allow other beings to give to us, we will open new pathways for healing each other. 🌿

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