

Truth about dogs and cats

BY VIRGINIA L. DAKINIEWICH

Have you ever wondered why some people loathe cats but feel an instant connection with dogs? On the opposite side, cat lovers prefer the aloofness of felines and often dislike the in-your-face tendency of canines. Still other pet owners have both cats and dogs as pets. How are dog people and cat people really different?

Led by psychologist Sam Gosling, a team of researchers at the University of Texas at Austin decided to investigate. As part of a larger study about personality called the Gosling-Potter Internet Personality Project, an online survey was conducted with approximately 4500 volunteers. The participants were given a 44-item assessment which measured their personality in five areas: openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. In previous research these "Big Five" personality factors have been shown to encompass most personality traits. The participants also indicated whether they considered themselves cat people, dog people, both or neither.

- 46% of respondents described themselves as dog people, while 12 percent said they were cat people. Almost 28% said they were both and 15% said they were neither.

- Dog people were generally about 15% more extroverted, 13% more agreeable and 11% more conscientious than cat people.

- Cat people were generally about 12% more neurotic and 11% more open than dog people.

In a paper to be published in the journal *Anthrozoos: A Multidisciplinary Journal of The Interactions of People and Animals*, Gosling found that those who define themselves as "dog people" are more extroverted, more agreeable and more conscientious than those who described themselves as "cat people." On the other side, feline lovers are more neurotic but also more open than people who preferred dogs. This trend persisted regardless of the gender of the participant. (Research Shows Personality Differences between Cat and Dog People, University of Texas at Austin, January 13, 2010)

Previous studies have failed to discover any tangible evidence for consistent differences between the two kinds of pet lovers. Gosling's paper is the first to provide a clear picture of what cat and dog people tend to be like.

"This research suggests there are significant differences on major personality traits between dog people and cat people," Gosling says. "Given the tight psychological connections between people and their pets, it is likely that the differences between dogs and cats may be suited to different human personalities."

Once you know the findings, it kind of falls into place," Gosling said. "You think, 'of course, agreeableness and extroversion—dogs are companionable, they hang out, they like to be with you, they like your company, whereas cats like it for as long as they want it, and then they're off.'" (How are Dog people and Cat people different? CNN, January 13, 2010)

People who own only cats, however, tend to be very different from those who own dogs or who own both dogs and cats. Cat owners were 33% more likely to live alone than dog owners. They were also more likely to live in an apartment. Dog owners were more likely to live in a house, be married and have a family than those who only owned cats.

People select a pet for certain reasons and the choice usually reflects something about the pet owner. Extroverted people may be more attracted to owning a dog as dogs like to be with people and give their owners active friendship. Felines are more curious and tend to be less outgoing, instead giving their owners quiet company. As cats are more solitary, this tendency may seem to attract people who are more introverted. Even going back to evolutionary times, cats are lone hunters; dogs always have travelled in packs, and always need to be in a group. (Peoplaty: Big 5 Personality Traits and Their Pets, Hubpages.com)

These findings are generalizations and certainly do not apply in all cases. There are extroverts who own cats just as there are dog lovers who are introverts. Our choice of pet may also reflect our unique lifestyle and circumstances, for example, those with allergies or space restrictions. Whether canine, feline or both, our pets are a vital part of our lives and the emotional connections we feel with them are very real. Pets contribute to our well-being and enhance the quality of our lives, helping us to become better people along the way.

Finding balance

BY MARGARET BREMNER

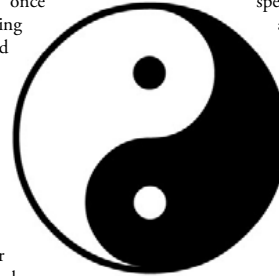
As human beings, we have been given a natural, constant metaphor for being in balance. Each of us lives in the middle of left and right, front and back, and up and down. This reminder of the need for balance is good, but it also gives us the impression of personally being the centre of everything!

Our challenge is to broaden ourselves on all sides to include more and more of the world, while maintaining our balance. Albert Einstein once said that, "A human being is part of the whole called by us 'the universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of understanding and compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

I appreciate the idea that we are not physical beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a physical experience. The material aspects of our lives are blatantly evident every minute of every day. We need to remember the spiritual and give it equal presence in order to stay in balance.

Related to that concept is the idea that everything in the physical world is a sign of some aspect of the spiritual world and was created as a learning opportunity. In other words, everything in the material 'here' is a metaphor, a symbol, for something in the non-physical realm. Some analogies are rather mundane like the 'light bulb' of a good idea or someone not being 'the brightest crayon in the box.' Other metaphors are more elevated, like the idea that joy gives us 'wings,' that 'veils' or 'clouds' obscure our understanding, and that we need to remember to 'look at things from another angle.'

Another pair of opposites seeking balance is male and female. Speaking on the subject of the equality of women and men in the early 1900s, Abdu'l-Bahá, son of the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í faith, said, "The balance is already shifting; force is losing its dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, and the spiritual qualities of love and service, in which woman is strong, are gaining ascendancy. Hence the new age will be an age less masculine and more permeated with the feminine ideals, or, to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced."



Balance is an important aesthetic consideration in artwork. Depending on the work, artists may aim for a mix of large and small, dark and light, bold and delicate, rounded and angular, minimal and over-the-top. The focal point is the place to which your eye is immediately drawn. One good way to direct the eyes to this focal point is to have one of these pairs of opposites converge around the focal point.

Imagine a dark night sky with pinpoints of starlight. Remember how in the brilliant noon sun there are deep shadows. The *Taiji* symbol—commonly called the Yin-Yang symbol—is a well-known representation of the harmonious union of opposites, of everything in balance.

The outer circle symbolizes wholeness (everything). The black and white halves of the circle symbolize the interaction of two opposing energies in balance, which causes everything to happen. These energies are not whole without each other. The halves are not completely black or white, just as things in life are not completely black or white. There is a small amount of the opposite contained within each - just like the stars at night and the shadows of midday.

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