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Got A Bad Cat & Seeking A Psychic?

Experts warn us to opt out; alternatives exist



Jay Krasnow

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Amy, a self-described cat-mommy who lives in Maryland, had a witch's brew of behavioral problems with her cat, who also stopped greeting her at the door, when she arrived home from work.

After trying standard veterinary medical channels, and having no luck, Amy took the plunge and hired what she called an 'animal communicationist' — in other words a cat psychic — someone who professed the ability to talk with felines, both living and dead.

Cat psychics are service of last resort

After prepaying for the visit — which cost her about \$70 or \$90 — Amy shared a photo of her fur ball with the cat psychic, and arranged a call with her on a landline.

(Apparently landlines are better for mind-linking a cat swami with a feline than cell phones).

During the call, Amy was at her office in Virginia, the cat was in Amy's home in Maryland and the cat swami was looking at the photo of Amy's cat from a third state.

After putting her psychic noodle to work, the cat swami told Amy that she wasn't able to reach her cat — and recommended that they reschedule the appointment. After a second appointment, the cat swami told Amy that she still wasn't able to do a mind meld with her cat.

To her credit, the cat swami refunded Amy the cost of the promised services, since she wasn't able to deliver them. But the cat swami also referred Amy to another cat swami, who was based in Colorado.

Before going for the plunge, Amy did her research.

Cat psychics say they talk to dead pets

After reading the second cat swami's website, Amy found that she had a great track record of communicating with dead cats. According to Amy, one of the cat swami's clients wrote a glowing review lauding her for giving the client's dead cat a litter of spirit kittens. That spirit kitten litter, Amy told me, appeased the ghost feline's anger over being spayed during her life so she couldn't have a litter of living kittens.

Amy decided to schedule an appointment with the cat swami in Colorado anyway.

The second cat swami, Amy said, followed a similar process as she did with the first cat swami. According to the cat swami, Amy's cat had picked up an 'entity' and had been absorbing its energy to protect her from it. But, at the time of the psychic visit, Amy's cat had absorbed too much energy from the entity — and that was causing its behavioral problems.

The cat psychic eliminated the problem by putting a protective barrier around the cat so that it wouldn't have to absorb the energy anymore. After the telephonic psychic visit, the cat's behavioral problems disappeared, and it started greeting Amy when she came home from work.

Is a cat psychic a valid option?

While Amy says that psychics can be helpful for cats when modern medicine fails — just the same as it is for human children — Amy acknowledges that she didn't have much luck some of the other times that she hired a cat swami.

But some cat experts aren't so sure that there is any value in hiring a cat psychic.

"I have many clients who have previously been to psychics, and realized it was not the right way to go," said Pam Johnson-Bennet, the author of eight books on cat behavior and training. "I believe in sound behavior science."

Added Ingrid Johnson, a cat behavior consultant: "I'm not a believer."

Most people believe in the paranormal

James Alcock, a professor of psychology who studies pseudoscience, says surveys show that a large majority of the population believe in some form of paranormal phenomena — so it's no surprise that people turn to psychics when they are puzzled by their pet's behavior.

On the other hand, says Alcock, a professor at York University in Toronto, Canada, it's unlikely that a cat that is snubbing you will ignore you for the rest of his life. "Most likely, if you do nothing, sooner or later it will brush against your leg or come and sit on your lap."

But if, in the meantime, you had consulted a psychic, you may attribute the change in your cat's behavior as being due to whatever you did on the advice of the psychic, even if

it had no effect at all, Alcock said.

We are victims of ‘confirmation bias’

Terry Sandbek, a clinical psychologist in Sacramento, Calif., says that psychics are partially a product of ‘confirmation bias.’ That is to say, if someone sees something and likes it, it’s almost impossible to convince them to believe differently, no matter how much logic and facts you present them.

“There is no psychologist who will say that cats can tell you anything,” Sandbek said. According to Sandbek, psychics usually work for people who are struggling — people who don’t have answers.

Sandbek makes no bones his perspective on cats: “If psychics are frauds, they should be frauds with cats. There is absolutely no evidence that psychics work.”

Some people really believe they are psychic

Alcock, however, sees the issue of cat swamis to be a bit more complex than Sandbek does. From his perspective, there are two types of psychics, those who really believe that they have psychic powers — people who really believe they can help others — and those who are simply conning their clients.

Psychics is a huge industry

The psychic services industry is booming in the United States, according to *Statista*. Between 2011 and 2019, the value of the industry spiked from 1.9 billion U.S. dollars to 2.2 billion U.S dollars, then dipped slightly in 2020, *Statista* says.

From what I can tell, at least 15 percent of this telepathic services market goes to pet psychics. So, basically, if catnip were a form of currency, cat swamis would be rolling in it.

Which led me to wonder, how much have people studied communications with animals? According to *How Stuff Works*, a voluminous set of research has been done on animal psychics and animal emotions — but a lot of it remains controversial.

With all the controversy swirling around pet psychics industry, I would think that the *American Association of Psychics & Healers*™ which represents alternative healers across

the country, would be chomping at the bit to defend their practices.

I reached out to Rosemary the Celtic Lady, the organization's founder, but was greeted by crickets, instead of any response. It would have been nice to get Rosemary's take on using psychic services to fix cats' behavioral problems, but the stars just haven't aligned for a mind-meld or even a brief phone conversation with her.

Alternatives to cat psychics

While I personally don't have experience using a cat swami, I've found that there are other options.

Cats are smarter than you think. According to Molly DeVoss, a cat behavior specialist. "Cats are keenly aware of cause and effect and seemingly know instinctively how to push our buttons; they are masters of manipulation."

The trick is to rub your brain cells together to figure out what your cat wants, and to give it to him. Which is what cat behavior consultants do.

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