



STROKES

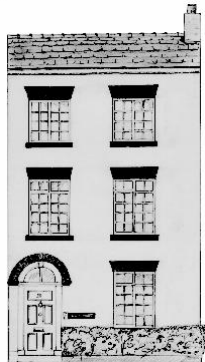
Its OK to give Strokes freely.

It's OK to ask for Strokes when you need them.

It's OK to accept the Strokes you want.

It's OK to reject the Strokes you don't want.

It's OK to give yourself Strokes.



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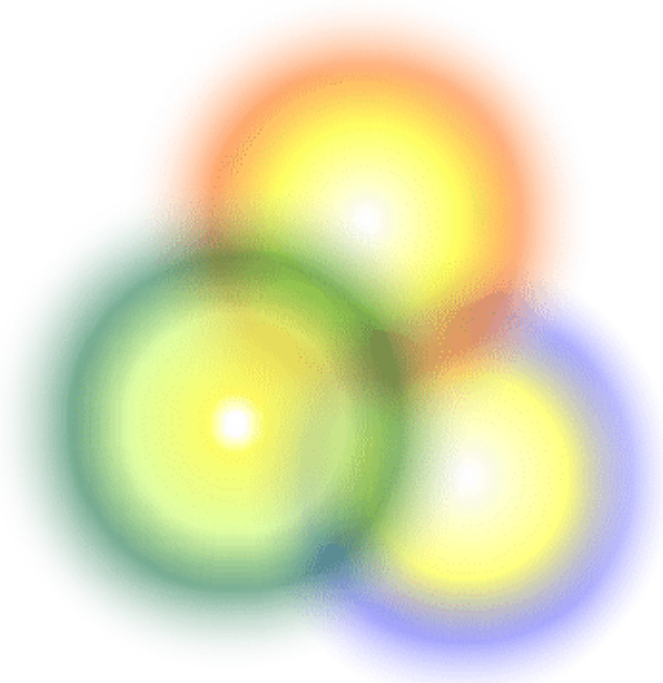
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My Mother's Cat

My Mother's Cat

by Jane Hammond

My mother has a cat called Korky. He is black, has bright green eyes and is now about 17 years old, which is quite old for a cat. I knew him as a kitten but had not seen him for many years. When I moved back in with my mother for a short time Korky and I became reacquainted.

Unfortunately, he did not seem to want my company. He would run off when he saw me and I supposed this was because he was not used to strangers in the house. Eventually he became used to me being around and I tried to make friends with him. However, if I tried to stroke him he would lash out and try to bite me. I found this behaviour puzzling, as other pet cats I have met liked being stroked. I decided to watch his behaviour to see if I could get any clues as to why he was behaving this way and if I could get closer to him.

As I watched him with my mother, I noticed that when he approached her for attention she often brushed him away. Frequently when he came to sit on her lap she would get up and find something else to do. I rarely heard him make a noise which at first I put down to my mother being deaf – he had learned that she could not hear him. He would get in her way as she walked about the house, causing her to have to drive him away or snap at him. She also complained that he was difficult to feed, that he was very

fussy and often turned his nose up at whatever she gave him. I came to realize that in many ways I was beginning to identify with this cat.

I remembered that as a child I had wanted attention, but she had always been too busy. When I needed comfort I got food when what I really wanted was a cuddle. When she was working I had to find a place that was 'out of the way' if I wanted to be near her. I could not remember having talks with her as I had with my father.

I thought it would be interesting to see how Korky would respond to being stroked and given attention even though it seemed at first to cause him some confusion. I continued to stroke him. I had to wear gloves at first, but gradually he would allow me to scratch his ears. As time progressed I was permitted to stroke him very occasionally. When I talked to him he would squeak back but sounded very rusty. I did notice that, although I was quite willing to give him all the strokes and attention he wanted, it was still my mother he went to even though he usually got rejected.

I recognised that process in me. I would discount Positive Strokes from 'others' either by ignoring them or by some smart retort. This was because I had not had much experience of them and felt confused. I still respond in this way sometimes; it takes time and patience to

learn new things, even if they are nice things.

Not long ago my mother went into a nursing home for a while and Korky has been left with me for the time being. The symbiosis he had with my mother was being broken by her absence. I have discovered that he is not 'difficult to feed', and that it wasn't food he wanted but attention – just as I had. I have continued to stroke him and talk to him, and now he meows quite a bit in return. The other day he allowed me to pick him up and cuddle him – he just purred and purred! I don't know who was happier, he or I.

The conclusion I have come to is that although someone may not be used to receiving Strokes and may appear to reject them at first, if I persevere they may eventually learn to accept and enjoy them. The reward for me will be getting to know a loving and loveable person, and find those qualities in myself.

(In Transactional Analysis a Stroke is a unit of recognition. Research shows that we need Strokes/recognition to survive and to thrive)

Jane Hammond is an Integrative Psychotherapist using various theories but mainly Transactional Analysis. She has been in private practice for over 9 nine years in the Northwich area. She works with individuals who seek help with relationships, grief, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem etc.