

“Being Thankful-What I learned from my pets”

This is the time of year that I usually like to speak to the virtues of gratitude and recognition of the things that mean most to us in life. Some families have a Thanksgiving tradition of going around the table and each person sharing what they are thankful for. I was wondering what would happen if the family pet was included in that family custom; if for just a moment we could talk and listen to our animal family members. What would they be thankful for?

People of course feel thankful for valuable life commodities like health, family, a home and successful careers. But our pets I suspect have a different take on things. Just the other day I saw one of our cats “Kobe” lounging in a spot on the floor that was awash with sunshine coming through the window. I couldn’t resist the temptation to go over and pet him. He looked so comfortable, so satisfied. For him, at that moment, everything was right in the world. I thought how much I would like to be half as relaxed and content as he was lying there on the floor.

Later the same day I walked into the bedroom and heard our 22 year-old cockatiel “Mowgli” singing away. As I approached and opened her cage she happily climbed onto my finger and seemed ever so content with just being there. Just having a few minutes of my undivided attention seemed to make her day.

My son’s gecko “Jake”, housed in a terrarium in the family room, was out of his hiding place looking for lunch. After downing a few crickets he just paused and rested. Again, he seemed so content. Even though he lives every day, all by himself, in a terrarium that honestly seems a bit too small, he appears perfectly happy with his lot in life.

That evening our dog “Maya” was running around out in the back yard. From all I could tell she was literally just running around. There were no people or other animals out there, she was just enjoying her time out of her kennel area and the most enjoyable thing for her to do at that moment was to simply run.

There’s not doubt that if animals could weigh in on the question of “what are you thankful for?” I suspect they would stick to the simple things in life like the warmth of the sun or the satisfied feeling of a full stomach. They would likely go on and on about the how special it is to just “be” with someone who cares for you, and how the opportunity to be physically active is something you should never pass up.

I have told many people over the years that I truly believe that we can learn so much from animals. Patience, respect, nonjudgmental and unconditional love and loyalty toward others are attributes any person would do well to acquire. But this Thanksgiving season maybe we can learn one more lesson from our beloved pets. Maybe we can learn that no matter what hand we are dealt in life, no matter what trials and tribulations we face every day, no matter how many bad choices we’ve made, or how unlucky we’ve been in the past, we can always be thankful for those little things, that even if just for a moment or two, seem to make the world right.

So the next time you see your pet taking utter joy in some simple, basic things in life, go over and join him. It will do you both good.

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