

## How to Hypnotize a Cat

*By Peter Gerstenzang*

Last Thursday, my friend Wendy asked me if I would like to come over and watch some cat hypnotism. Did that, I wondered, involve dimming lights and casting out demons? No, she explained, that was a cat exorcism. But if her calico Cinnamon's bursts of crazy behavior in the evening didn't cease, such a ritual might be next.

I did have a few questions before I came though. For one, where did she learn about hypnotizing cats? And what if things went awry? Wasn't Wendy afraid that when it was over, Cinnamon would think she was a duck or a house plant?

The joke was on me. The afternoon was a revelation.

As I walked into her house, Wendy told me that although her cat was a model pet, Cinnamon had two hours every evening when she was completely nuts. Cinnamon knocked things over. She "yelled." She wanted more food. Cinnamon was like Rosie O'Donnell since she joined "The View."

Wendy was upset. She wanted to help her beloved cat. In an ironic and cruel twist of fate, calming drugs seemed to make Cinnamon more manic. So, Wendy spoke to a veterinary nurse who outlined a hypnosis course.

When I arrived, the treatment began.

Wendy put Cinnamon in her lap. Then, as instructed, she began stroking her and telling her what a good cat she was. The cats' eyes grew heavy. Wendy said, "When you awake, you'll be nice and calm." Cinnamon craned her head toward me. Her look seemed to say, "You know this goes against most current schools of psychological thought." I don't know what happened next because I fell asleep. When I awoke, I had the overpowering urge to lick my hands, but only after I'd had some tuna fish and relieved myself in Cinnamon's litterbox.

Did the hypnosis cut down on the cat's crazy time? Yes. Cinnamon knocks things over less often now. If she seems ready to yell, one stern glimpse from Wendy and the cat starts humming instead. Of course, the hypnosis has to be practiced every day, followed by lots of positive reinforcement. Translation: Wendy tells Cinnamon what a great cat she is and how she's going to be even better tomorrow.

I haven't been so lucky. Since that day, I've been feeling feline. In fact, I went to the doctor yesterday convinced that my cough was caused by a hairball. He threw me out of his office. But not before he gave me a referral. Whether the name on the card is a veterinarian or a psychiatrist, I don't know. If I ever make the call, I'll let you know.