

Enslaved by Felinophobia

Understanding people who fear cats is the first step toward freedom. Learn how you can help a person with felinophobia.

Audrey Pavia

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Most of us were thrilled when the owner of our small company arrived at the office one day with an adult gray cat that he had adopted from an animal shelter. Many of the 35 employees who worked in the office adored cats, and were pleased to have the newcomer among us, whom we named Blue.

Blue spent the first day visiting each of us, rubbing against our legs and purring. The office took on a whole new feeling with Blue around. Those of us who love cats felt happier and more relaxed in our work environment.

On the second day of Blue's presence, we were quietly working at our desks when we heard a horrific scream from the office down the hall. I leaped from my chair and ran to see what was wrong. I found Blue innocently standing in the doorway looking at the office's occupant, Jane (not her real name), who was pale and recoiled in her chair, staring in horror at Blue.

I picked Blue up and took him back to my office and closed the door. It was obvious that he needed to stay away from Jane, whose behavior had me completely baffled.

The next day, the bad news came. Blue had to go back to the shelter. Jane had told our boss that she could not work with a cat in the office, and she would quit if the cat didn't go.

Those of us who had become attached to Blue in this short time were furious at Jane. Her seemingly irrational fear of cats could cost Blue his freedom. Who knew what would happen to Blue when he went back to the shelter? Most of us stopped talking to Jane; she became the office pariah.

Had we understood the crippling condition of felinophobia - a profound fear of cats - perhaps we could have shown Jane more compassion. Jane was as much a victim of this condition as Blue.

What Is Felinophobia? Felinophobia is one of many specific phobias some people develop throughout their lives. Like the fear of spiders (arachnophobia), the fear of flying (aviophobia) and the fear of heights (acrophobia), felinophobia (also known as ailurophobia) is an irrational fear that does not respond to reason.