

## The Healing Power of Purring

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I had a trooper of a cat who had a talent for sensing when I was sick or blue, and would lay extended, purring, on my chest. It always made me happy and feel better somehow. I assumed it was just my emotional response to her affection, but as it turns out there may be more to the story. In *The Cat Behavior Answer Book* (Storey Publishing, 2007), author Arden Moore talks about the power of purring.

Moore says that recent studies have validated that hanging around a contented, purring cat can drop a human's high blood pressure to within normal range, decrease stress, conquer feelings of loneliness, and even bolster self-confidence. About 65 percent of American households have pets, but we are just realizing the power our pets possess in helping us to heal emotionally, physically, and mentally. Scientists are also discovering that cats and other cherished pets possess special healing powers that help fight disease and cope with chronic conditions.

In his book the *Healing Power of Pets*, veterinarian Marty Becker describes the biochemical impact pets have on their owners' body chemistry. He interviewed numerous medical experts who provided the results of many scientific studies that support a biological basis for what we've felt intuitively—that people can be healthier by interacting positively with pets. For example, the mere act of petting your cat can lower your blood pressure.

Some medical doctors even recommend “pet prescriptions” to their patients who are alone and need companionship. That's because physicians have discovered that a family pet can actually motivate some patients to give their best effort when dealing with serious illness such as cancer. Having a pet to care for and feed can stimulate ailing individuals to take better care of themselves.

Here are three easy ways to tap into the healing power of your feline companion:

1. Spend some time each day just looking at, listening to, and talking with your cat. This helps release those “feel-good” biochemicals that help you relax.
2. Rub your cat the right way. Learn to give your pet a therapeutic massage for some one-on-one time that will soothe both of you.
3. Engage in purposeful play with your cat and you might discover that you can let go of daily stress more easily, breathe more deeply, and laugh more freely.