

Jennifer A. Coscia

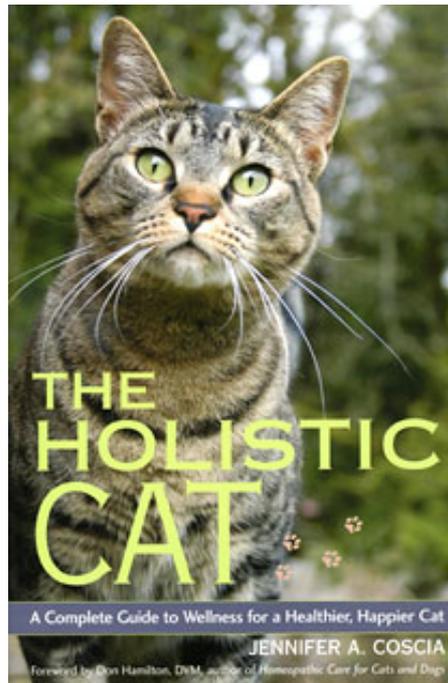
The Holistic Cat

Reading excerpt

[The Holistic Cat](#)

of [Jennifer A. Coscia](#)

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Depression in Cats

I have seen depression in cats firsthand. Many people believe that cats do not experience human-like emotion. I am not one of those people as I see proof everyday of the contrary Cats experience happiness, sorrow, anger, joy, jealousy hatred, and definitely depression, especially when associated with Separation anxiety. As a rescue agency, we see this depression in cats more often than not because of all the adoptions we do. We have certain cats or kittens that must be adopted with a sibling or friend.

Rosie (nicknamed CB which Stands for crybaby) and Ross are prime examples. CB and Ross came to me as four-week-old babies. They had three other litter mates as well. Race and Rena were adopted together when they were nine weeks of age. Shortly thereafter their sister Rachel took ill and died within a week. She had a congenital heart defect. The night she died, Ross and CB never left her side and stayed physically touching her until she passed. All the cats in the house came over and sniffed her and lay with her as well.

From that day on CB and Ross stuck together like glue. They are both black-and-white tuxedo cats, and when Ross was three months old, I adopted him out to a single man. Tom was not interested in adopting two kittens, so we agreed to let him have Ross without CB. Two weeks later we got Ross back. He wasn't eating well, had lost weight, had developed a mild upper respiratory infection from stress, which left him in a weakened immune state, and he had pretty much

lived under Tom's bed. Ross was suffering greatly from depression. Everything he had known was gone—including his sister. There were no familiar smells or sounds around to comfort him. Tom hated giving up on Ross, but I knew Ross missed his sister terribly and that was why he took ill.

I'll never forget Ross and CB's reunion. They would not leave each other alone, and I vowed that they would stay together from that point on. During the Christmas adoptions CB and Ross were adopted out to a family together. They did very well for two weeks, then Ross got sick again. This time he was really sick. It turns out that they took CB to the vet for a nail trim then continued on to visit friends for several hours. Ross ran and hid when he saw the carrier come out for their trip to the vet, so he was left behind. This stressed Ross beyond imagination. By the time they returned with CB, Ross was lethargic and feverish and wouldn't eat, so naturally they separated them again in order to protect CB from whatever Ross had.

The next day the family called me because the vet was closed and told me their predicament. I offered to take both cats back in order to care for Ross. When I got them to my home, his fever had spiked to 106.7 degrees. I placed Ross in a small cat carrier with a blanket and packed ice bags under the blanket all around him. This is a good way to quickly cool down a cat. I also gave him fluids and kept him by my side throughout the night.

His fever broke early the next morning. After that point, I kept CB and Ross together knowing that she was already exposed to whatever Ross had. And CB was the best medicine for Ross. She cleaned him continually and stayed by his side as if she were watching over him. He recovered fully within two days, and CB never broke with whatever was ailing Ross. I called their owners to give them the good news, and they were thrilled but decided not to take CB and Ross back because they would have been devastated had Ross died. The reason they came to us for a cat in the first place was because their former

**CB and Ross**

cat had died suddenly for unknown reasons. I still have CB and Ross today.

We alert new adopters that a new home will initially stress most pets, and stress causes the immune System to crash. As a result sickness can develop immediately, and in cats it is usually upper respiratory disease. We see this more times than we'd like to admit. They will usually fully recover and adjust quite well to their new home. I honestly believe this occurs, in part, due to depression or Separation anxiety. Most of the cats and kittens that we adopt out have been kept with other cats or kittens. We just don't have the space to keep cats completely isolated from one another. And, truthfully, we wouldn't want to. We only isolate those that are sick or in the initial quarantine period when we receive them into the organization. Cats are social creatures and love to be around other animals. So when these kittens go to new homes, leaving everything they've known thus far behind, especially their siblings, many will get depressed. They won't eat or drink much, will hide someplace where they feel safe, and some may

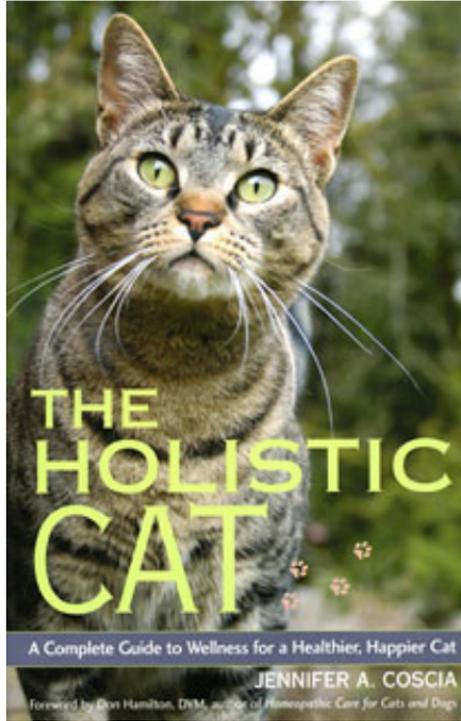
even show aggression. I have learned this to be true with mama cats as well. When all their babies are adopted, and the mama cat is left alone, oftentimes she will cry at night and frantically search for her babies. This is why we try our hardest to adopt the mama cat out with at least one of her babies. One of the mama cats we took in suffered from severe depression on a few occasions; her name is Kiki, and this is her story.

Kiki's Story—Post-Partum Depression

Kiki is a beautiful Siamese and tabby mix with the bluest eyes you've ever seen. She was brought to me by a local trapper named Lee Conway. Lee is known for trapping feral cats and transporting them to local veterinarians or spay/neuter clinics such as First Coast No More Homeless Pets (FCNMHP). I believe she *is* single-handedly responsible for spaying and neutering at least half the feral cat population in Jacksonville.

One day, while trapping out in McClenney, she found Kiki and called me. The cat appeared to be extremely friendly, and Lee suspected that she was also pregnant. She was obviously previously owned and was too sweet to go through the feral cat program. We had a vet check her out and discovered that she was around ten months of age and approximately three to four weeks pregnant. A cat's gestation period is sixty-three to sixty-eight days or a little over two months. I set Kiki up in the nursery and she made herself very much at home. She wasn't very happy by herself, so I would let her have visiting time with a few of my cats during the day. This made her very happy. She started eating more and playing with the other cats and settled in quite nicely. I estimated that we were about a month or so from the delivery of her kittens.

Her pregnancy was uneventful, and everything seemed to be fine. I started to worry when she went a full week past her due date, though. She had also started passing dark brown discharge. I took her up to



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