

Using Reiki and Other Healing Modalities with Cats

BY SARAH HAUSER

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I HAVE BEEN A Reiki practitioner for over 16 years, specializing in Animal Reiki, with a particular connection with cats. Often, I combine Reiki with other modalities such as Tellington TTouch,¹ Debono Moves,² craniosacral therapy,³ Bach flower remedies,⁴ and clicker training, a reward-based training developed by Karen Pryor,⁵ as well as other techniques and strategies. I work with animals in shelters and rescue environments, as well as with people and their animals in their homes.

In this article, I will share examples of how I use Reiki and other healing methods when working with cats. Sometimes, I may use only one modality, but more frequently, I will use a combination. All modalities are gentle yet powerful, and they can work exceptionally well in combination with each other. I tailor my approach to each cat's needs.



Reiki with shy Tiger at PS9 Pets.
My position, facing away, helps him relax.

For example, when working with a cat who is too fearful to be touched, Reiki is an excellent modality to start with. Most often, I will share Reiki hands-off, unless the animal comes closer and shows it wants me to touch it.

With a fearful or shy cat, I will sit down a suitable distance away from the cat. I may stay there for the duration of the session, depending on what happens. I do not face the cat head-on but will turn sideways to it or even face completely away, if that seems more comfortable with it.

All the while, I observe the cat and react to its body language and energy. Is the cat showing signs of becoming more relaxed, such as breathing more deeply, adjusting their position to be more comfortable, or relaxing their eyes? Or are their ears flattened, pupils dilated, or do they seem frozen in fear? If necessary, I will move further away. I want to ensure I stay in the moment. I am not forcing Reiki



At Bideawee, Westhampton, NY,
Sabrina's fear gave way to comfort.

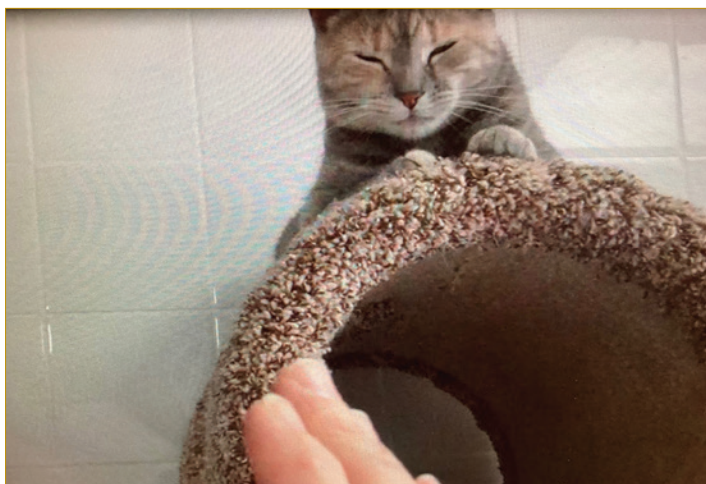
on them or “doing” Reiki to them; instead, I am offering it to them, and they are welcome to take as much or as little as they wish. They are free to come closer, to move further away, or relax right where they are. As energy knows no bounds, they will receive the energy no matter how far away from me they are.

The most astonishing moments can occur when you are truly present with the animal. The more we let go of expectations and worries, the more likely it is that the cat will relax, come closer, or even surprise you and crawl into your lap.



Georgie Girl relaxing at Bideawee.

A next step, after the cat seems more comfortable, might be to do “Air TTouch,” which involves doing TTouch hand movements at a distance from the animal, just as we can share Reiki at any distance. When performed hands-on, TTouch uses a very light touch. Therefore, it influences the nervous system, rather than the muscular system, as massage would. It is a subtle, yet profound, modality.



Using Air TTouch with Georgie Girl.

I can do Air TTouch from across a room or slightly off the body. My hand moves slowly and intentionally, with the clear visualization that I am making contact because I am connecting with my energy and intention. I want to move my hand with the same sensitivity that I would if I were touching the animal directly.



Getting closer to Georgie Girl with Air TTouch.

Clear visualization and connection are essential. Otherwise, the cat may feel that you are just moving your hand around, rather than sharing this connection.



Just barely touching Georgie Girl. Her sister Pearl is above.

At first, I try to do the hand movement out of the cat's vision, such as behind them, to ensure that they don't see my hand as a toy and try to chase or attack it. This process is essential when working with animals who easily become overstimulated. However, when I am focused, the cat will nearly always experience the feeling of energetic connection, rather than seeing my moving hand as prey, even if my hand is in their line of sight.

When I am doing Air TTouch, or any other modality, I always feel the Reiki energy flowing through my body, which happens naturally. So Reiki is at the base of all I do, and it adds to these other modalities.

After doing Air TTouch, the next step may be to do TTouch using one of the TTouch tools, which helps create space between you and the cat. Tools can comprise such items as long-handled paintbrushes, back scratchers, feathers, makeup brushes, and the like. They can provide a greater sense of safety for both you and the cat. They also help an animal experience a different feeling, just as the TTouch movements, particularly the circular TTTouches, provide a new experience for the animal.



TTouch using a feather with Jayne at Bideawee.

When I need a lot of space, I may use a wooden dowel several feet long or a TTouch wand with something soft wrapped around the end. If I need just a little space, I may use a makeup brush or even a toothbrush. You can always find something to use, such as the wand from a wand toy or even a little stuffed cat toy. Again, your energy, visualization, and intention are vital. Flexibility is essential as well. You may need to experiment with different tools or adjust the angle or the surface of the tool that is in contact. Experiment and see what the cat responds to.



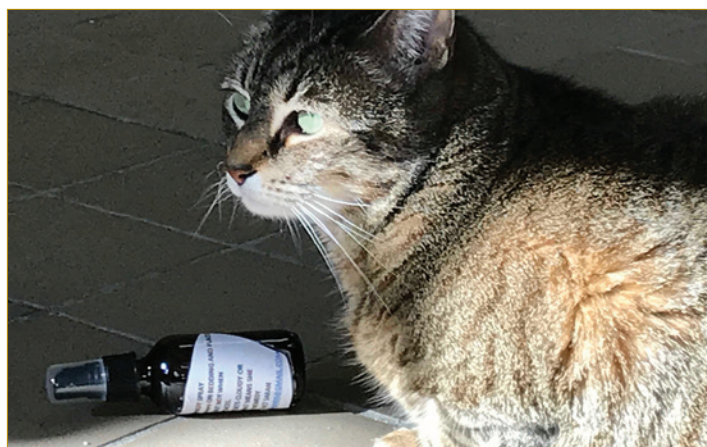
TTouch using a paintbrush with Jayne in her home.

Eventually, I will touch the cat with my hand. Getting to that point can take hours, days, weeks, or months, depending on the cat. In a shelter, a cat may appear really shy or even feral, but sometimes they are just traumatized by being in a shelter environment. In that case, once the cat's nervous system relaxes with these modalities, they may come out of their shell rather quickly.



Transitioning from the paintbrush to my hand with Jayne.

I may alternate between Reiki and TTouch techniques in a session. I might start with Reiki, then do a form of TTouch, and then just sit with Reiki again for a while. Alternately, I may incorporate some craniosacral therapy techniques or Debono Moves into the session.



At Bideawee, Lenore with her Bach flower remedy.

Often, I will also create a custom Bach flower remedy for the animal. Bach flower remedies can be an additional way to reduce stress and address emotional, physical, or behavioral issues.



Lenore relaxing, her remedy bottle behind her.

Many people are familiar with Rescue Remedy, a blend of five Bach flower essences. Rescue Remedy is a good general formula for stress reduction, but there are other essences not included in Rescue Remedy which might be more appropriate, or that you can use in combination with Rescue Remedy. For example, Aspen, Mimulus, and Water Violet are essences that specifically address fear. Walnut can help with any changes in the animal's life and can provide a sense of safety and protection. Gorse can evoke a sense of calm and well-being. There are 38 Bach essences, and I most often combine six or seven of them in a custom remedy. The remedies are very safe. If the animal does not need a particular remedy, the effect will be neutral.

I generally make the formula in spray form to use in the environment, and in drop form, which you can apply to a treat, a bit of food, or your hand. Then you can do TTouch or pet the cat. I often spray the cat's remedy around my body and on my hands before I work with it.

Treats can be immensely helpful in working with shy cats. I may put down a few hard treats or take out a lickable cat treat to see if I can lure the cat closer. Then I'll see what can happen next. I may incorporate some TTouch, or the cat may return to its hiding place. I always let the cat guide the session.



Aurora and Bill Withers share a treat at Bideawee.

Some shy cats respond to treats and will allow a lot of touch while eating. So I may start the session that way. After the treats, they usually begin cleaning themselves, ready to relax into Reiki, often remaining very close to me.



Basil and Sage at PS9 will receive Reiki after treats.

Playing with a cat using a wand toy can also help lure a shy cat closer. That's another way to begin a session. Then you may want to work with some treats or share Reiki.

Holding an image in my mind of the cat being comfortable and safe, rather than seeing a negative image of the cat as scared, or perhaps striking at you, etc., has an enormous impact. It's essential to be patient and let the cat tell you what it's ready to do, rather than imposing your agenda. I find that cats make faster progress this way. However, sometimes it is good to nudge forward a little bit!

For cats who easily become overstimulated, and sometimes for shy cats, I might start by doing some clicker training, combined with what we call TTouch Groundwork. The groundwork helps animals relax and concentrate by giving them a new experience. For example, I might lead them slowly through a labyrinth setup with a treat or toy, or weave them through a course of traffic cones.



Leading Adelay through a labyrinth at Bideawee in a clicker training class.

Here is a case study illustrating the combined use of Reiki, TTouch, Bach flower remedies, and clicker training.

Mira

Cat rescuers found Mira in a feral colony and brought her inside because she was friendly and approachable. PS9 Pets, a pet supply store in Brooklyn that partners with local rescue groups and always has some cats up for adoption, took her in.



Mira, just before I went to see her. Her eyes looked intense.

When I first started working with Mira, I could tell she was overstimulated. I took a few deep breaths to calm my energy and went into her screened-in enclosure. She started rubbing me repeatedly. Mira had nipped a couple of other folks, so I wanted to work with her carefully.

In the first session, I only stayed in her enclosure for about five minutes. Then I sat right outside it, where she could see me through the screen. I continued to let Reiki flow. At first, she seemed agitated that I was just out of reach, but after a few minutes, she calmed down. I also realized in this first session that it was currently best not to use treats with her, because she would become overly focused on waiting for the next treat.

Over the next couple of sessions, I could sit with her longer, and she would settle near me. It was beautiful to see her truly relax, even if only briefly. I am sure that part of her overstimulation was because of adjusting to being safe inside. She was slowly realizing she was safe here, that she didn't have to watch constantly for danger.

I advised the store manager to request customers not to pet Mira, instead allowing Mira to "pet" them while they sat quietly and calmed themselves to project peaceful energy.

Another helpful aspect was a calming Bach flower remedy spray I had made. I sprayed it on my clothing and hands before going in with her, and others who interacted with her were doing the same. That way, when she rubbed herself on us, she was getting some of the essence as well.



Mira settling near me for Reiki.

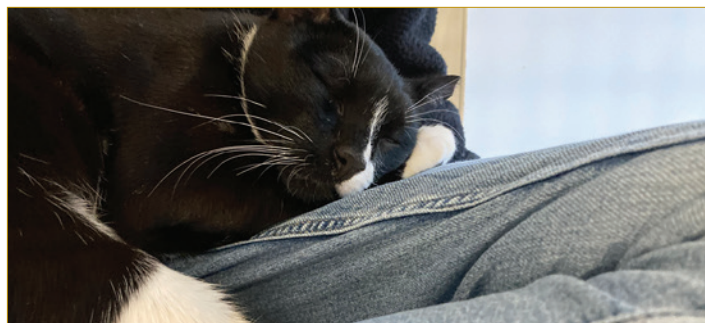
As our sessions progressed, besides sharing Reiki, I could do Air TTouch over her body, out of her view. I could have done TTouch hands-on, but I wanted to progress carefully to ensure that she would be comfortable, rather than overwhelmed.

The next thing that happened was surprising. As I sat sharing Reiki with her, first she stepped over my lap in one direction, then the other, sat in my lap for a minute, and eventually, ahhhhh... curled up in my lap and went to sleep. It was so sweet and so peaceful!



Mira in my lap.

Then I started adding some direct TTouch, just a little at a time. Mira was noticeably calmer, not only with me but also with the staff and the few cat-savvy customers who were allowed to interact with her.



Mira, cozy on my lap.

Next, the staff started letting Mira roam free in the store for periods of time. As they wanted to train her not to go to certain areas of the store, I used clicker training with her. By this time, since she was calmer, and because I was working with the treats in a precise way, rather than just tossing them, she didn't become too overexcited when the treats came out. And on a practical level, the training enabled the staff members to teach her to come off of shelves or places where they didn't want her to go.



Connecting with Mira out of her enclosure at PS9 Pets.

At that point, we could pet Mira and even hold her for short periods with no biting, which was great! All of this work not only helped her to feel so much better, but also increased her chances of adoption, and lessened the possibility of a return for biting.

The best news is her recent adoption! The PS9 staff advised adopters about her tendencies, of course, and we have already received reports that she is settling in well. It is one of the greatest joys to know that a cat has gone into a loving forever home!

I hope my examples of combining Animal Reiki with other gentle healing methods will inspire Reiki practitioners to expand their practice to animal work in shelters,

rescues, or homes. Over sixteen years of successfully combining these modalities with Animal Reiki to help fearful, traumatized, or shy animals validates that they will be a significant addition to your Animal Reiki work. ■



Sarah is a Reiki Master with special training in Animal Reiki. She is also trained in Tellington TTouch for Companion Animals, Craniosacral Therapy for Small Animals, and Bach Flower Remedies, and has also received an extensive education in Debono Moves. Sarah has a deep love for all animals but specializes in working with cats. She has worked with the most challenging behaviors and situations in shelters and in her private practice. Her email address is hausershealinghands@gmail.com, her website is healingenergyforanimals.com, her Substack newsletter is <https://sarahhauserwarriorparakeet.substack.com>, and her Instagram account is [@sarahsuricat](https://www.instagram.com/sarahsuricat).

Endnotes

- ¹ Linda Tellington-Jones developed Tellington TTouch, inspired by the Feldenkrais Method®, four decades ago. It is a separate modality initially developed for animals. "Discover the Magical Connections of TTouch®!" *TTouch*, <https://ttouch.com>.
- ² Mary Debono is a Feldenkrais® practitioner and the creator of Debono Moves, a gentle, hands-on approach that helps people and their animals rediscover ease, comfort, and connection. <https://www.marydebono.com>.
- ³ Craniosacral therapy for animals is a gentle, hands-on treatment that aims to relieve restrictions in the central nervous system and connective tissues, promoting overall health and healing. It is used to address various issues, including pain, anxiety, and behavioral problems in pets. "Craniosacral Therapy," *Wikipedia*, February 20, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craniosacral_therapy.
- ⁴ "The 38 Remedies Quick Reference Guide," *BachCentre.com*, December 5, 2024, <https://bachcentre.com/en/remedies/the-38-remedies/quick-reference-guide>.
- ⁵ Julie Gordon, "What Is Clicker Training?" *Karen Pryor Academy*, December 28, 2022, <https://karenpryoracademy.com/what-is-clicker-training>.