



Cats and Dogs

As I think about my children's high school experiences, I realize that young children are more like dogs—while teenagers behave more like cats.

Dogs are so eager, so loyal and affectionate—it is so easy to be dog owner.

You feed them, train them, you boss them around. They put their heads on your knee and gaze at you as if you were the most beautiful painting. They bound indoors with enthusiasm with you call.

Then around 12 or 13 your adoring little puppy turns into a big ole cat.

When you call her, she looks amazed, wondering who died and made you king? Instead of following you around, he disappears. You don't see him again until he gets hungry—and then your cat pauses in its sprint just long enough to sniff whatever it is you're serving. And when you reach out to ruffle her head in that old affectionate gesture, she twists away, gives you a blank stare...as if trying to remember where she has seen you before.

And you, not realizing that your dog is now a cat, think something must be terribly wrong with it. He seems so antisocial, so distant, sort of depressed. She doesn't want to go on family outings anymore. And since you are the one that raised her, taught her to fetch and stay

on command, you assume that you have done something wrong. Flooded with guilt and fear, you redouble your efforts to make your pet behave.

Only now, you are dealing with a cat—and everything that worked before now produces the opposite effect. Call your cat—and it runs away. Tell it to sit, and it jumps on the counter. The more you move toward, wringing your hands in anxiety, the more it moves away.

So instead of continuing to act like a dog owner, you can learn to behave like a cat owner. Put a disk of food near the door—and wait. Let the cat come to you. Most of all remember: a cat needs your help and affection too. But you need to sit still...she will come, seeking that warm comforting lap he has not entirely forgotten. Be there to open the door when he needs it.

And one day, before you know it, your grown-up child will walk in to the kitchen, give you a big hug and say, "You've been on your feet all day. Let me get those dishes for you."

Then you realize your cat is a dog again.