

It is indeed an old debate. Cats can and do express emotions and feelings, and that they are definitely capable of bonding with humans.

While it is true that cats aren't "pack animals" as dogs are, they do establish "partnerships," often at an early age, both with other cats and with their humans. Incidentally, this has nothing to do with anthropomorphizing cats; they bond in a different way than humans, but they definitely bond.

Some experts state emphatically that cats are independent, aloof, and only come around humans to satisfy their physical needs.

If there is any empirical data to substantiate that belief, I am unaware of any studies in this area. It is my feeling that cats are simply more selective in their choice of human companions than are dogs.

Here are just a few anecdotal data:

- Two older kittens wait outside the bathroom door while their human is inside. When their catdad emerges they neither run into the bathroom to see what's inside, nor to their food dish, hoping to be fed. Instead, they follow him to his computer desk, rubbing and purring all the while. Obviously, they missed his company and waited for companionable reasons.
- A veterinary clinic "greet cat" hears a woman crying at the reception desk, because she has just had a longtime companion cat euthanized. The cat jumps up on the desk next to the woman, pats her face with its paws, and then "kisses" away the woman's tears. Does the cat perform these acts merely to taste the salt of the tears? I think not.
- A man is awakened in the morning with his cat giving him "head bumps." Does the cat immediately run to the food dish, meowing for breakfast? No, he settles down next to his human for a morning catnap.
- A cat walks into a room occupied by several humans and jumps on the lap of a woman who is mourning a loss. The expert in the article you read stated that this is because people who are sad have higher body heat, and the cat is simply seeking out a warm place to lie. I respectfully disagree, and postulate that the cat can instinctively spot a human in emotional distress. Cats are used more and more for therapy in nursing homes for this unique ability.

There is no denying that cats can be manipulative, and that, at times, their gestures of affection are designed to bring food or treats their way. They are much like humans in that respect. But at the same time, let's not ignore their emotional needs. They have those needs, the same as you and I. The feline-human bond is a powerful force, not to be discounted by us mere humans.

