

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Jackson Galaxy

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by cat behavior expert, host of Animal Planet's "My Cat From Hell," and co-founder of Jackson Galaxy's Cat Camp, Jackson Galaxy, where I ask him: how can I be a better cat parent and how can I make other people become cat people too?

Welcome to "Getting Curious." I'm Jonathan Van Ness and I am so excited. I am almost too excited, if there was such a thing, for this week's episode, because we have none other than the host of "My Cat from Hell" on Animal Planet. He is a best selling author on cat behavior. He runs well, actually, I don't want to say what he runs because it will give away who it is, but he runs this incredible cat camp every year that's usually in real life, but this year it's going to be virtual because obviously Covid-19, but without any further ado, as Cathy Dooley would say, welcome to this show, Jackson Galaxy.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:00:59] Hey, how are ya?

JVN [00:01:01] Oh my God, I'm so good. So let me tell you something. Is it accurate to say that I discovered you in 2015. Your YouTube has been around that long, right?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:01:12] I've been around since like 2009.

JVN [00:01:15] Oh, my god. Great. Because I wanted to say 2012. But then I was afraid that you were going to be, like, "Oh it didn't start till 2015." So then I lied into 2015, because really it was 2012. So I imagine it.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:01:23] Yeah. It feels like, yeah, it feels like a lifetime.

JVN [00:01:25] Well, I was, I accidentally had impulse adopted my current eight, seven and a half year old cat, Harry Larry from the West L.A. Animal Shelter on Pico Boulevard. And I already had like a seven-year-old. And I, it all happened so fast I didn't even wake up realizing I was going to get a second cat. But it happened. And so then I was like, "Oh, my gosh, how am I going to introduce them?" And then that's when I found you on YouTube. And I've been talking about you to all my clients and frankly, anyone that would listen ever since. Because-

JACKSON GALAXY [00:01:55] Oh, my God, that's amazing.

JVN [00:01:56] Honestly, like, all my cats have really gotten along because of that literal, like, how to introduce cats video. So I just like love you so much. And thank you so much for teaching me about cats. I am personally going through so much cat stuff right now. But I want to talk about that later because I do have four cats. But you, you host "My Cat from Hell" on Animal Planet. You're, like, really such an expert on cats. So I would love to just start off by asking you, how did you start? Like, were you just minding your own business one day when you were little and you were, like, "I am obsessed with cats."

JACKSON GALAXY [00:02:35] You know, you would think. Right? You would think. That I was like that, that like that four year old who goes, "Mommy, the cat talked to me." Kind of, you know? I wasn't. I didn't, I didn't have cats when I was a kid. Yeah, dogs. You know, I had cats in my life, but until I started working in an animal shelter, which was in 1993, that I suddenly, because I was surrounded by them and they all sort of picked me at the same time, they would follow me around and they would, you know, and all of my coworkers made fun of me and it was one of those, like, "OK, we're killing a lot of cats here. And if there's anything that I'm going to be able to do to stop that from happening, let's go." And I just figured it out from there.

JVN [00:03:21] So every episode of "Getting Curious" is a question. And so kind of this question that I was thinking about when we realized we were going to get to have the chance to interview you, is, is: how can I be a better cat parent and how can I make other people become cat people too? Which that's what I was saying was interesting about that story, because you yourself have, like, you know, lived through the transition of, like, not really considering yourself a cat person to being, in fact, a full fledged cat person. So I love that story and I just find no shame in being a cat person. I love it. I think, I don't really like some of these misconceptions that like surround being a cat parent. You know? I think we're really fabulous and we're just so much fun and cats are so interesting and smart. So, you know what gives? But so you kind of come into it in the mid 90s, which also, you know, 1993 was a great year. Well, other than the flood. But that was the first year that Shannon Miller won an Individual All Around World gymnastics gold medal. So.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:04:16] I feel totally validated now. Thank you so much.

JVN [00:04:18] Yeah, it's a big year. So people were busy. So what happened? So you're at this, you're working at a kill, like, a kill animal shelter and, which is heartbreaking to think about. Tell me about that.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:04:34] I mean, this was '93. We were killing as a country, we were killing, I don't know, somewhere in the neighborhood of 9 to 10 million cats and dogs

every year. And I mean, that's where we were at. And the miracle is that because our education for us has been so strong over the past 20 years, spaying and neutering, adopting not shopping, all that stuff, we're down under a million now. We're in the neighborhood of about 800,000, which is still significant, but it's not anywhere near where we were. But anyway, I, I, we had to do it back then. There was no such thing as, I mean anybody who was claiming no kill and, listen, to a certain degree not to get all weirdly, oddly political at the moment. People who do claim no kill in big cities. Let's face it, someone else has to do it still. And, you know, so there's still, the no kill thing is still, you know, but we had to do it. And that's what I'm saying. Like you know, for me, it was about what's my part to, so that I, we, as a community can, can slow this down. And we did.

JVN [00:05:52] So after joining this animal shelter in, your first animal shelter. You realize that, like your calling is in cat rescue, cat behavior, kind of improving the li-, lives of cats everywhere. Like you realize it's your calling.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:06:07] Yeah. And also in the middle of that, advocacy, because, but to your original point and we'll get to this, I'm sure, but the whole concept of how do we make more cat parents in the world? That's, that was the uphill battle then. It's still an uphill battle now. And, yeah, that's been my job is to show the joy of cats. And that's oddly weird because I have a show where I get beat up by cats. But, you know, we make up for it.

JVN [00:06:34] Well, there is so much joy in cats. And I think that, like, there's also just like so many misconceptions. And I always, like, like that saying of like, you know, comparison is the thief of all joy. And I think that, like when we're always comparing, like, the personalities and the traits of like dogs versus cats, it kind of just creates this, like, unfair narrative of like, you know, how our cats, how are people, how are dogs? I don't know. I just think it's kind of like false equivalences. And it's not like we're definitely up against, like, bigger problems in the world. But I do feel like it's, there just like not really to be, you know, compared. And I also grew up being obsessed with cats.

Well, actually, let's back up. Obsessed with any furry animal that wasn't like, you know, obviously snakes and spiders aren't furry, but, like, those scared me. But like any like, give me a guinea pig. Give me a ferret. Give me a rat. Give me a dog. Give me a cat. Give me like a furry teddy bear esque sort of wet nose and, like, I want to kiss it. Even probably like a raccoon because their little noses are so, like I love, like a wet little nose on an animal, like, I always have. But theoretically I think this is one reason why cats are so misunderstood. Here's my theory. Ready?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:07:42] Ready.

JVN [00:07:43] And it's also the theory of why all the cats are obsessed with you in the shelter. Every time I've ever saw a cat growing up, my first instinct was to run as fast as I can for the cat. Get it from out from under the bad. Hold it like a baby. Keep its head really still and like my kiss its nose. Put my nose on its nose. Tell the cat how much I love it. Like, 'cause I just do, like I literally love them so much. Like I've never seen anything as cute as like a fucking cat. Like every time I see one, I'm just like, "Holy shit. You're so fucking precious. I love you so much." And so needless to say, like, cats have never really liked me because, you know, my instinct was to, you know, rush them, get all up in their face.

So the first cat that ever fell in love with me, was my first cat, Bug the First. And that's because I found him under the hood of a car. And I heard, like, well, my friend and I heard this, like, screaming baby. So I thought. We thought it was like underneath the hood of this car. But really, it was like a, like, fit-in-the-palm-of-your-hand kitten. And I couldn't find its mom anywhere. And I really just think that it needed, like, a house and, like, I didn't come to it, it came to me and then like, and then because that cat picked me and also kind of, like, hated every other person, like, it was, like, like that cat picked me. So I feel like it's like cats have to pick you. Not so, in whereas, like, dogs, like, kind of are more down with anyone not to like, you know, generalize all the animals because they're all different. But I just feel like if you don't really, like, come for a cat, they'll probably like you more. But if you try to like, give it too much attention and stuff, then they, they're like, "Ew. Stop giving me so much attention." Is that true?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:09:12] Yeah. It's totally true. Yeah, it's totally true. And I mean and again, like you said, it's hard to generalize. You know, every time I put out a video that I'm like, "Cats will do this" and I don't say those words that, "But your cat might," I get this flood of people saying, my cat loves to have his, you know, do like, you know, I don't know, belly farts on his belly. I mean, every cat's different. That said, don't do it, don't do it, don't think about it. Step away from the cat. You're like, "Perfect."

JVN [00:09:49] So they don't ever, so you don't ever like it when you kiss their little tum tummies?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:09:54] But that's what I'm saying, is that there's somebody and I've got one at home, my little Mowgli, I can do anything. He's like, he's just like a little dog, a little like a ball of-. Like he just, whatever you want to do them. But that's it. You have to ask permission once they say yes, then go to town. But.

JVN [00:10:13] We love consent. Animals, people, dogs, everybody. We're obsessed with consent. Literally our favorite thing. So.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:10:20] I never use that word. That's brilliant. It's consent.

JVN [00:10:24] Yes cat consent.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:10:25] Cat consent. Yeah.

JVN [00:10:27] Yeah. So what are some of the biggest misconceptions? You know, you've been like a cat behaviorist, you know, observers slash experts since, you know, Shannon Miller's first Individual All Around Title 1993. Been learning and growing ever since then. So in your opinion, dealing with, you know, cat parents, cat people, cats, non-cat species, non cat fans or cat fans. What are the biggest misconceptions about cats?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:10:56] I mean, my go to is that cats are not dogs and you've already said it. But the thing is, I think that because they have four legs, for the most part, and they're covered with fur, for the most part, they, that's where it ends. They're completely different species with different stories, with different timelines, with different connections to humans. I mean, if you think about it, in the 10,000 plus years that humans have been with cats, that we've been with them to some degree or another, we really didn't bring them into our homes in a predictable way until, I don't know, 120, 130 years ago. And just in a predictable way. So to call them domesticated at this point is probably not true. And with dogs, we made them. Really. Right? We made them to be ours.

JVN [00:11:53] We did? Where do dogs come from then? They, like we went into, we got some wolves. And, like, how do we make dogs? I mean it's a different podcast, but what happened?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:12:06] Well, and that's a different podcast guest, I guess. But what I'm, what I'm thinking is that, and what I know, is that it was selective breeding. We picked the friendliest of the wolves, the ones that are more drawn towards us. We breed those, the ones who are much more, quote unquote, "wolf-y," no, we don't. And over time, it was more like, "I need this being to do work for me. I need, I need, I need someone to do a job for me. And by the way, you can be my buddy at the same time."

And then over thousands and thousands of years, we made the dog. Yeah, of course they have wolf in them way back there. But we, but right now, really, the biggest motivator for dogs is, is our consent. Is, is our, like they just need to please. That's part of them now. Cats? Nuh uh. It's not part of them. We didn't mess with cats. Cats just were along for the ride because they did a job naturally. They hunted. They killed. They kept mice and rats from pooping in our food. We were like, "Stick around. That's amazing. That's fantastic."

Come on. And that was it. That was the ride for, for so many thousands of years until we started breeding.

JVN [00:13:26] But did Egyptians ever have pet kittens? I always felt like they had pet cats and like they loved cats or not so much?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:13:33] Well, no, they did. I mean, it was more sort of a royalty thing. Remember that there was a cat goddess in Egypt, Bastet was a goddess. And so the manifestation of cat was the manifestation of God. So, yes, royalty were buried in their, in their tombs with cats, cats were mummified. But that was like a glitch. You know what I mean? Like, it didn't, cats, for the most part, have been villainized a hell of a lot more than they were, like, worshiped, you know? I mean, we burned them at the stake with witches.

JVN [00:14:08] We did?!

JACKSON GALAXY [00:14:09] You didn't know that?

JVN [00:14:10] No.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:14:10] Black cats, black cats were burned at the stake with witches. Cats were blamed for the freaking black plague, which is hilarious because it was really the rats that were carrying the plague. We blamed the cats and tried to kill them off. We have, we have demonize, we're demonizing them now. I mean, we're, we're, we kill feral cats by the gobs. Either we ignore them or we treat them like pests because they're crapping in our yard, certain countries are murdering them by the millions. You know, cats, if you don't understand it, you want to kill it. Right? That, that pretty much, that pretty much encompasses everything about humans. That is, yeah. Not great.

JVN [00:14:58] So, breadbox sized cats, like little baby cats, like the ones that we think of now have really only been messing with humans for like 130 years. But they've been in existence for like thousands and thousands. Right? Like, little bitty baby cats.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:15:12] No, no, no. They've been with us. Right? We, we use them as mousers on farms, on boats to colonize new countries so that we wouldn't die because, you know, eating poop. But in terms of companions, yeah, it's a, it's a fairly new phenomenon. When you think of the enormity of the timeline. But yeah, no, I think from the second we decided "this cat belongs with me in my home." Then we got mad at them. I mean, the second we were like, "No, you're going to shit in this box and then you're not going to scratch this and you're not going to," because we were expecting them to be dogs. We were expecting them to listen when we talked to them or yelled at them or, you

know what I mean? And it's not even in their makeup to do that. So then, if you flash forward now, we call them willful. We call them aloof. We call them, you know, obstinate when they just have no idea what it is that you're trying to get across when you try to order them to do things like a dog. You know?

JVN [00:16:18] Ooh. So really, we need to, like, learn how to speak cat.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:16:23] Exactly. And that has been my job more than anything else. Because if you think about why cats were surrendered to the shelter and still are in mass, it's because of that lack of understanding. It's because we think when your cat pisses in your shoe, that it's because the cat hates you, you know? And so you go you, "You hate me? I hate you. Screw you. Go to the shelter. Go in the street." That, it sounds really simplistic, but it's totally true. And I'm talking, you know, I've been around the block, and it's never changed. It's never changed. There's just this, this, I don't know, dog-ification of cats that like, that has caused a lot of misery.

JVN [00:17:11] So what are some of the main personality trait differences that differentiate them, you know, on the whole? Or for someone that, you know, would be like, "No, Jackson, I disagree? I've had lots of cats. And every time I sit down a lighter or breakable object, they always push over the ledge. So actually, no cats are assholes no matter what." I'm just kidding because I obsessed with that and I love that they do that. But I'm just saying, like.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:17:37] No.

JVN [00:17:38] What are some of the biggest separations like? Because if a cat-. Because like my cat, Larry, sometimes he's naughty, and I say, "Larry!" but he kind of stops doing when I say that I feel like he kind of knows now because he's like eight, like seven, you know, eight. But the other ones are younger. They don't really, I feel like they don't really get it because I haven't been saying "no" to them for like eight years.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:17:57] Right. But even if you did the, the whole, if we think about this, the thing I call the "raw cat," that's the ancestor. That's the, the ancestor that is still talking to your cat on a daily basis, telling him what to do, which is basically hunt and catch and kill and eat and groom and sleep. And that's it. That's your life. Humans come in and they're like, "What have you got to offer that's not that?" But that's still the sort of the driving force. So let's say we're talking about asshole cat, right? We're talking about cat knocking stuff off the shelves. OK. So why do you think that is? It's not because the cat is spiteful. It's not because, it's because your cat's bored. It's because you're not enriching

their lives with the things that make the raw cat happy. Hunting, playing, meaning, you know?

JVN [00:18:52] Boxes.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:18:53] Boxes, shelves, places to hide, windows to sit in and watch the birds. Engaging the raw cat. But really, if you want to have sort of the most quote unquote, "dog like" experience with your cat, play with them, interactively. You know, the wand toys where you can run around the house and be an idiot with them. It's like having a dog and not having a leash and collar. It's, it's that important for them to be able to just engage that raw cat every day. And then you don't have a leg to stand on when it comes to asshole cat because it's your fault. You know?

JVN [00:19:29] Oh, I love that. And also, like, sometimes I feel like, I mean, I've definitely learned to engage with my cats more over the years and make sure that I, like, put playtime into their calendar because prior to, like, meeting the Kitten Lady, I didn't really understand about, like, how important like enrichment is, like, following her on Instagram. I was, like, OK, like, enrichment. Like then I understand that was a thing once I started to get two cats. And then the other thing I started to learn, what is it like if my cat is always biting straws and knocking over drinks, like, 'cause, like, Larry just is obsessed with straws. Like don't leave full drinks with a straw on top of it, like unattended around the cat. Like, if you know there are certain things that always like trigger them or make them one and play with it. And you don't want them to make a mess. Like it's kind of like more important for me to remember that than the cat because like, and like if I don't want to breakable thing, like, right next to a ledge, like, I just, I think a lot of times people look at me, like, crazy, especially when I've ever like, designed like a space because I'm like, "Oh, I can't have that or that or that, because a cat will be hanging from it," and they're like, "Wow, you really design your like living space based on your cat." And it's like, "Mmhmm. Like I have to or like they'll destroy everything." But I don't mind it because, like, I love them. But it's interesting...

JACKSON GALAXY [00:20:39] Everything ties together with humans, which is what, I got to be honest. I mean, obviously, I love cats. I've spent my life with them. The thing that I find so engaging in another way is the fact that the human cat relationship is so fraught with roadblocks. But I think one of the major ones is that we are not used to having to compromise with an animal. We're used to this concept of dominion. That the world is ours and, and because animals live in it, they are ours. They belong to us. Cats resist that at all turns. So that's why we again, we call them obstinate. But the idea, successful living with cats is compromise, like any relationship. And I think that's just something that, that people need to get on board with. And also to remember that that's not signaling some kind of

failure or some kind of surrender. It is a relationship. And, and you got to meet in the middle if you wanted to be successful. And that's especially true with cats.

JVN [00:21:44] Yeah, and I mean even I think with dogs, it's, like, people think, like, well, they're just so much more loving and when you call a dog, they come to you and whatever. But it's like you still have to make compromises with raising a dog, like, whether it's going on walks or, you know, like you still have to learn to speak dog. And I think having just adopted one a few months ago for the first time. I definitely think having a dog has been more difficult than what I thought it was going to be based off of having four cats.

But I also think having been a cat parent for so long, it took me well over, like, five and six years. Oh, my God. I hope no cat people are judging me and I do have, like, guilt over Bug the First 'cause I feel like I wasn't as good of a cat parent in my 20s as I could have been because I didn't understand, but I didn't really, like, make the enrichment times for him, like, I didn't know. And I also, like, when he passed away in 2018, like, I didn't know what to look for with, like, kidney failure and, like, pee and water intake. So, like, when that happened when he was 12, like, I've, I mean I've tried to get over it, but it's basically why I have, like, four cats because I'm just, like, my poor Bug.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:22:39] Can I just say something really quickly, though, is that we've all done it. We've all-. I, I lost, the reason that I became so obsessed with cat nutrition was that when I was in my 20s, I lost my first cat, you know, to diabetes at seven years old because I fed the hell out of him because I gave him all that dry crap and I just kept feeding it to him until he got so fat at seven years old that he got diabetes and he died in a year. And let me tell you, you know, from that point on, it's, it's how we learn and anybody out there who's, you know, judging somebody else because of what they did not know about cats. Come on. There's no, I mean, we're all still learning about them.

JVN [00:23:28] Totally. We're going to take a really quick break. We'll be right back with more Jackson Galaxy after this. So welcome back to "Getting Curious." This is Jonathan Van Ness.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:23:37] By the way, congratulations. Welcome to Dogdom. I'm happy-.

JVN [00:23:41] Thank you.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:23:41] Happy to have you.

JVN [00:23:43] Yeah, me too. I'm, I love Pablo so much. He's really sweet. I really, I have so many questions about my own cats now. And we just have to dive in. Because. This wasn't really the intention of the order that I was going to go in, but I just, I have to and I'm freaking out because my cats are really all going through a lot. And I have a lot of questions. And part of it is because of the dog. So basically, when Bug the First died, I did this thing where I realized that, like, I could in no way, like, sit with my grief over losing a cat. So I did this thing where, like, when one cat passes away, like, I almost immediately adopt two new ones because, like, I just, it's I call it the Charlotte Web rule where like, if you lose one, like, you just, you get more to put in the grieving hole space of, like, the one that you lost. So. So I do that.

And then I unexpectedly lost one of those two cats in, like, this, like, freak devastating accident that I can't even talk about because I'll-. But anyway, so then that happened and I really couldn't, like, sit with that grief. So then like literally that same day, like I adopted the two kittens that I have that are just about one year old now, so now I have Harry Larry, who's eight. Then I have Liza Meow Nelly, who I got during Kansas City. That was who I got when Bug the First died. She's this really cute gray cat. But she was born with panluka, and she has like so many stomach issues from surviving it. But like, just-.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:24:58] But she survived it, man. That's incredible.

JVN [00:25:00] She survived it.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:25:01] That's amazing.

JVN [00:25:01] She survived panluka. But then basically, like, as soon as I got her when she was like 16 weeks old, like, couldn't figure out a diet for her that didn't make her have explosive diarrhea. And so then she basically, like, went back to my vet in Kansas City and lived with her for, like, six months as like the vet cat until we found out like a diet that didn't make her, like, just spray shit everywhere 24/7. She didn't really have behavioral issues, just such intense stomach issues. So then I ended up changing from the food that we did get her consistent with there with that vet, because now I have all of them on, like, food just for cats. And she's really pretty consistent and good now, which is nice. Turns out Liza's a boy, but they told me she was a girl and I kept her name on Liza because whatever. So Liza's two. Then I got Matilda and Genevieve. Who are, they just turned about one. I got them, they came into the family like August 7th of 2019. So they're just, but they were, like, 12 weeks old then. So they're about like one and some change. So I got like eight, two, or wait no, like seven and a half, two, and then like one, one. And it's boy, boy, girl, girl.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:26:08] OK.

JVN [00:26:09] Then I have like a two year old dog, Pablo, who we love. So here's the deal. Everyone seems like they're doing good. But I got several things going on. Harry Larry, ever since I switched from an automatic feeder because I used to have, like, a feeder that just fed them all the time when it was just Bug the Second and Larry, when Liza was away at, like, stomach vet camp. So, ever since I took that away and started feeding them morning and night, Larry has, like, developed this yowl. Like a yowl like you've never seen. Like, it happens at night. It can happen during the day. But he yowls and yowls and then he sometimes brings down socks. But I'm talking like, yowling, like, "heow, heow, heooow." Like at three a.m. all sorts of different times, and there's usually socks. And he'll lay on your face to the point where, like, they can't sleep in the bedroom anymore because, like, you can't, like he wakes you up and lays on your face. So that's Larry. Please don't tell me that all my cats fucking hate me when I get done telling you this story. Oh, my God.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:27:11] No. I'm just going to say right now that, that yowling and bringing socks means that he fucking hates you.

JVN [00:27:20] Oh, my God.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:27:20] I'm kidding. No, I don't know.

JVN [00:27:23] And then Liza she, Liza just gets, like, really randomly aggressive with the other cat sometimes. And I don't really know why, but more so than any of the other ones, Liza just gets a little more, like, pap, pap, pap, like, for no reason, gets a little more territorial. I feel like the two younger ones and Larry will, like, lay in cuddle balls and then Liza will do, like, random cuddle balls with, like, one at a time. But I just feel like Liza feels, like, kind of an outsider. Then Matilda's, like, always fine, always chill, entertains herself, really have no problems with her. She's, like, cutest little tortie you've ever seen in your life. But then Lady G, my little Genevieve, who I love so much, she's a little flame point Siamese and we're really going through it lately. So she has a lot of anxiety, really wants to hide to the point where, like, if you do let her hide, she'll never come out like for a day in her life. So like, I kind of like, I, she has cat-specific hiding spots meant for her, you know, little, like, cat caves, cathouses, stuff like that. But as far as, like, getting behind a washing machine or someplace that could be dangerous for her, like, I have those, like, they're not accessible for her.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:28:29] Good.

JVN [00:28:30] 'Cause literally, like hide under a couch and not come out for like two days because she's so, she used to be so timid. So she's more personable now but ever since we got the dog, then we kind of went to New York for like a month, which was, you know, to go from Texas to New York for like a month. Then we went from New York back here to Texas, but, like, a different house. So she's experienced like two big, pretty big changes. And since the dog, like I noticed, she had these like two little bald spots on the back of her knees. And I was like, oh, that's cute. She has like little ba-, like a little, like, pink little spot on the back of her knees. And then all of a sudden, like last week, she has this, like, bald spot on her stomach from, like, like, licking her stomach. And now she has one on her fucking tail and she's the most drop dead gorgeous ginger flame point Siamese. I mean, obviously, she's, like, from a pound and they, like, found her on a street, but she's just, like, so stunning. And she's getting these bald spots, so then I read that it could be anxiety. It could be fleas. It could be this. It could be a parasite. But none of my other animals have bald spots or are like, like chewing on themselves. So we just took her to the vet this morning and T.B.H. I haven't talked to, like, my friend who took her to the vet. So, like, I don't know, like and Larry's yowling, I don't know, if you can hear really, whatever. So what the fuck is up with this fur mowing? I read about it. What is it?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:29:49] Oh, my God. That was so overwhelming. OK, wait a minute. So we've got about 12 things. Let's start with that, that one and work backwards. So in terms of the mowing, there's a couple of different-, wait, not a vet. But there's a couple things to look for. Number one is if it's totally symmetrical. If it looks like, it is? Always symmetrical?

JVN [00:30:15] Yes. Perfect rectangle on both of them.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:30:19] I mean, that is, to me, the first thing that tells me is anxiety, because it's, it's kind of an OCD. You know what I mean? It's more of an OCD. Like, if it was something like a flea bite, then she would be chewing in that one area where there's a flea, you know? Or if it was food allergies, maybe food allergies, but it doesn't seem like she has it. But the thing is, you guys have gone through a lot of change. You know? You've gone through a bunch of change. So that's probably what's going on with her. And, and it's no mistake that she is the most generally nervous of all the cats. And so she would manifest this kind of anxiety more so than the other cats. But there's plenty of stuff to do for that. You know, I mean, there's. Don't forget, in the absence of your cat being able to say to you, "I'm stressed, I'm nervous," whatever. This is the way to do it. Sometimes they act out by peeing in inappropriate places or picking fights or hiding or something like this. So one thing that you may want to do is, when did you guys move back to Texas?

JVN [00:31:34] I'm not crying at all.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:31:39] It's not your fault.

JVN [00:31:42] I know. I just want my cats to be OK. I feel like they're all like falling apart in this move. So, like, a month ago.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:31:48] OK, so that's, that's no time at all for a cat. So the one thing you might want to do and in the interest of time, I've got videos on this. It's the concept of base camp, of, of bringing her back and not having her exposed to the entire house right now, maybe just bring her back. And it could be in a couple of days or a week as you gauge her confidence, you can bring her. But it's this area where it is scent-soaked with all of her favorite stuff. Right? It's your stuff. It's, it's comforters. It's litter box, obviously, and trees and blankets and whatever. Just things that where she's surrounded by her. If she gets confidence by her, from her, her little kitten mate or anybody like that, we travel back and forth. But the key to cat confidence or what I call a cat mojo is a feeling like they own their territory. Depending on how big the house is, she probably feels like she owns nothing. And so we just want to bring it back. Start it again. There's also holistic modalities to use with her. I work with flower essence remedies. I've got a whole line, I'd be happy to get you some. But the, besides flower essence remedies, a lot of times it's just a matter of, I don't know, there's, I mean, different people say different things about it. But for me, it's about owning the territory. It's about doing some play with her in that territory. Every time a cat pounces on something, mojo goes bang. You know what I mean? Because they're doing their job. They're doing that raw cat job. Just little things like that. But I think that's the big thing with her is just, it was a lot of space in one fell swoop and maybe too much for her.

JVN [00:33:36] So I like that, I, yay, base camp. Love that concept. I'm familiar with that concept from how to introduce two cats video. So we all just kind of go back to a base camp for Lady G, which I love that idea.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:33:47] Yeah.

JVN [00:33:47] So.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:33:50] Oh, and by the way, I just wanted to tell you, I think what you're doing is great. The idea that we're not going to give her access to the places where she becomes small. Whether that's under the bed, behind the washing machine, in a closet. You know, people feel sorry for their cats and they let them just live in the closet. Not OK. We have to, in the most gentle way possible, challenge forward, especially with the wallflowers like G. It's just about challenging. Just a little bit every day.

JVN [00:34:18] Well, I love-. I think I have a good space for her to be in a base camp. I notice some of that, Matilda really, like, has, I've never had an issue with her behaviorally. She really just gets along with everyone, always entertains herself. My little tortie. She's, I, people said when I got a tortie, they're like, "Oh, watch out for her tort-itude and all this." Like she's literally, like, the friendliest little, most playful, never has, I just, she's, she's great. So I've, at least I have one with no issues. Liza is kind of have, I'm noticing some aggression issues. There's also some aggression issues around when they eat. I was worried that Lady G was feeling stressed about, you know, eating her food around everyone else. So this last week, I thought, like, "Oh, maybe I'll separate her," I wasn't thinking base camp, but I was thinking, like, let me separate her for her breakfast and dinner so she doesn't feel like other people are going to, like, rush her food. She got so fucking pissed off when I pulled her away from the other cats and took her away from the routine that we normally do to eat. She was like frantic. And, like, just wanted to get out of the room to get back to the, like, to the table so then I just let her go and I brought the food back to the table. I was like, "OK, sorry, girl. Like, I thought you might like it better." But Liza gets really territorial around food. And I notice sometimes she really goes for Lady G around food time, which I also think stresses Lady G out. So what about that? Like does Liza need a safe space where she feels she can be in dominion so she's not attacking the other ones?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:35:44] Yes, it's interesting. It's so funny. There's a video that's going out tomorrow I think, and it's basically about food aggression. And, but the idea that I don't think, again, not, we want to think about the raw cat. We want to think about that cat who the only time that they're truly solitary is when they're hunting and when they're, you know, I mean, they'll bring food back to the community a lot of times. But anyway, the point is that, I think we tend to think that cats should be OK eating in a cluster, and that's not really part of their natural makeup. They, they have a little personal space bubble around food. So the thing is, you don't need to put it in a different room, just spread out the bowls more. You know? You have four cats, you've got four corners, or you got, you know what I mean?

Just give them a little more space. I think that that's part of what she wants. But again, moving is incredibly stressful for everybody. Humans, cats, dogs, you know, ferrets, whatever. It. So it's, I think she'll settle down over time. Same thing with, you know, saying that she was doing a little slappy slap around everybody. That'll calm down as well. Listen, you got it good, man. You got cats. If your cats do cuddle balls at any time, you know how many people are jealous of you right now? Because the most we could ask for, or the best we could ask for, at least at first, is that, I don't hate your face. That I just like that, that we can tolerate one another. You know?

JVN [00:37:19] Oh yeah.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:37:19] You got, you've introduced a dog, you've moved and, and, and you don't have, like, Tasmanian devil, like big balls of fur rolling down the hallway. You're good. I mean I think, you know?

JVN [00:37:33] Every once in a while, Liza and Larry will get into that because they're both boys and they're both, you know? So is that, if anyone ever does get in a fight, it's those two, but they're, I mean, like, I can count on, like, one hand how many times they've gotten into it where like the noises were kind of like troubling me, but it was like but, you know, there's never been like blood or like, you know? I have seen a furball or two. But what about that? That's kind of normal, isn't it? For two older boys or no?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:38:01] No, no. I mean, I don't think it's a boy girl thing, especially if they were neutered early. It doesn't really play into it that much. But if it's kicked up at all since you've moved, you know, part of it is trying to establish a little bit of like, you know, this belongs to me, you know? And just trying to work it out. But if it doesn't happen consistently enough to call it a pattern, then yeah. I mean, it's, you know, no blood, no peeing on themselves, no trips to the vet. It lets you know that it's still under control to a certain degree. Not that you should let it happen every day but for the most part, it's OK.

JVN [00:38:43] Yeah. It's never really, I mean, I can count on like one hand, but so then if you do, if you do have multiple cats and if you are dealing with moving, I one time did have this thing where like, my, when I had Bug the First and Larry, where, like, they got out of the front door of the house for like literally all of 45 seconds, but just long enough to run by a neighbors open window who had like three cats sitting in the window. And I'm pretty sure it's like the first time in my cat's adult lives that they ever, like, saw another cat. And then for like six days when they got back inside, they had like the most like, insane redirected, like anger at each other.

And like were trying to kill each other, like, all the time for like six-. It's, like, as if they never met. Like, they got out of the front door of the house and then when they came back, it's like after living together for seven years and being really good friends, they just hated each other. So that brought me back to some of your videos after not really having to need to see them. This was like back in 2017 when that happened. And then, you know, really since then I haven't had any major cat behavior issues other than, you know, dealing with a panluxe kitten. But now I kind of have been a little bit and I think that's because of the moving and, you know, a new dog and stuff. So if you do have multiple animals, is it good to like? Should they all do base camp of their own in a new space? If two of them get, like,

I do feel like Lady G and Matilda, at least Matilda, I feel like soothes Lady G. Like I feel like she does get a little bit more confidence from having her little buddy there.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:40:20] Base camp is always better when moving. And I don't think as long as the cats are not, you know, really getting on each other's nerves and the room is big enough, you can have a base camp for everybody and then they tell you when they're ready to start exploring the rest, you know? They don't want to be kept in that room. They want to, they want to explore. They want to do whatever. Now you can start letting them out piece by piece. One of the things that I really love in terms of one of the base camp things that we do is the idea of base camp expansion, that when you have pieces of furniture and beds and, and all kinds of good smelling stuff in, in the base camp, then you just take it piece by piece and start locating it around the rest of the new territory.

That way, when a cat walks by an area and there's their scratching posts that they scratch the hell out of it in base camp, and they go, wait a minute, I know that. That's me. I belong here. Let's go. You know? It becomes this sort of yellow brick road for them to get into the territory. And that's always a great idea. Base camp is the key, man. I, I really think so. And look for your guys, they're starting to get used to this, you know? But the thing that you look for whenever you move is does G start to overgroom more? Does Liza start to pick more fights? Does, does Larry start to do his yowling more? These are all ways that they could be saying too much, too much, too much. Slow it down. You know?

JVN [00:46:00] And by slowing it down, it's like maybe put me, like, like, "Could you maybe put me in a room and let me cool off and have like a base camp for a few days with my own litter box and my own food and just kind of like reacquaint myself in here?"

JACKSON GALAXY [00:42:10] Partly. And, but there's, the base camp that you establish at first should be a desirable place for them anyway, because it's going to always be like their panic room or it should be.

JVN [00:42:20] Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. But what if like, so for now, you know, in my house in Texas, like they already kind of have like an eating schedule and I didn't really establish a base camp for her when I first got here, which was, like, my bad. So she did kind of, I feel like in retrospect, she kind of made it clear to me she really liked this one guest bedroom. And then she really liked my office. Those are two places where she was isolating and hiding a lot in our first couple of weeks. So I feel like that would be a good place for her because, like, she has a scratching post, she has toys, she has some caves. But I'm worried about the food because she's a big fan of food. She is the most rotund one year old baby girl I've ever seen. She, but also a little bit of weight loss since we got back to Texas. But again, very possessive and crazy around food. So I don't want her to get

stressed out about being on a base camp and not being around the people eating food. So do you think that would be assuaged by me, just like keeping her in base camp and I'll just bring her food so she doesn't have to worry about it?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:43:17] I mean, I think to a certain degree and, you know your guys, and to a certain degree, she'll let you know. If, if every time you walk into the room, she shrinks down, you can, you're sure that that's not, you know, her at her best. But the other thing is to remember that a base camp is a place where also your scent is strong. You know? It's a place where she can remember everything about her territory that is hers and worthy of confidence. Right? And so, you know, just remembering that I think is really important that, you know, and that's why a lot of times the bedroom is a really good place as long as you block off the bed unders. But a bedroom is a great place because, you know, it is the shared territory. And it's not a place where, you know, she's off in a corner of the house, someplace where she can't smell everything that's going on. And by the way, one thing that you sort of touched on is to me, one of the other most important things with cats is setting up rituals, is setting up something where no matter what four walls you're surrounded in, that day after day looks the same. You know?

That cats thrive on routine, whether it's the position of the sun and when they, where they lie or the expectation of, you know, being fed something, we, that's the one concession the cats have made to us is I live in, my territory is now defined by walls. And so, you know, how the human goes about things, we just want to get on the same sort of energetic wavelength, you know? The same circadian rhythm. And I think that doing that alone will help in terms of moving. You hit New York, you know that their first couple days, it's going to suck because it sucks for you. It sucks for everybody. We're all stressed out. OK. In the meantime, we're cool. We've got base camp. But then when we start to get back into the swing of things in your house, think about how as humans we have our routines that if our routines are broken, we, we just start our days weird. You know? I have my thing. I know that I have to have the coffee before I could do anything else. Right? If I don't, I'm a jerk for the first couple hours. Ask anybody. With cats, it's that the sun's coming up. "I know I have to be in, literally, I know I have to be in this bed in the window right here. That's my thing." And then from there, we can start the feeding. We can do all that stuff. That's how important routine is for those guys. So think about that.

JVN [00:46:00] Yes. I love that story. OK, we're gonna take a really quick break and then we'll be right back with more Jackson Galaxy after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious," this is Jonathan Van Ness. So right before we got Pablo. Like about a month and some change, I was going through this phase where every morning I was going to give Lady G her morning cuddle. And I feel like she loved it because she was drooling, honey, slow blink, loved it, all about it. Some days it was easier to find her than other days but it

really became a ritual. I loved it. Big fan. Then we got Pablo. Then it's, like, he, if you like, if he hears you looking for the cat, he really wants to come out of his little, like, sleepytime kennel. And so it became harder to do like our morning Lady G moment. And really that kind of got born out of, like, Lady G was anti-social. So I wanted to start off everyday with her, like, having a fun little, you know, social moment. So.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:46:56] Yeah. This is big.

JVN [00:46:58] Is that why she's powered meow, meal, licking holes? Because I'm not doing the morning cuddle. But then my friends saying she hated it and so then we shouldn't do it. And now I don't know.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:47:10] Well, listen. OK, well let's back up. Why would your friends say that she didn't like it?

JVN [00:47:16] Because she's skittish and anti-social.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:47:18] No, no, no, but when you did the cuddles-.

JVN [00:47:21] She liked it.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:47:22] Of course she liked it. So here's the thing. We just hit it, right? I'm not saying this is everything, but I'm saying this is great to bring back. First of all, Pablo can hang in this crate for a little bit longer. Crates are dens. They're not punishment. You know that. He's fine. Keep him in there and go back to doing your routine with her. And I am sure it's going to make a difference. She starts her day with a little burst of routine and rhythm and love and timber and all that. And, and then she can start her day at a little mojo six instead of mojo three. And that can help her get through her days. Pablo can wait.

JVN [00:48:02] Yeah, 'cause I, it really is something that, like, aside from moving, she used to have like her own little time every morning and she doesn't anymore. And I've been thinking maybe that's what it is. But then when I said that to my little baby, you know, team, they were like, "No, she hates cuddles. Like she probably likes that you're not doing that every morning anymore."

JACKSON GALAXY [00:48:18] No, she, listen. She's telling you. Right? Don't listen to anybody else, listen to her. And if she is drooling and loving and mmmm and whatever, she's not hating it. She's loving it. And, and just one thing, though, is that it's never one thing. Right. This is just one thing that we can give her to bring her up a little bit.

JVN [00:48:40] Yeah.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:48:40] It's not because we took it away that she's over grooming. It's a whole host of things that I think are playing into that.

JVN [00:48:45] OK, next thought. This is not exactly where we were going, but just generally because they know that we had said earlier that we don't judge other people, other cat people, because everyone's just doing their best and stuff. And I agree with that, except...

JACKSON GALAXY [00:48:56] Uh oh.

JVN [00:48:58] What do you think about people who have outside cats like hybrid, outside, inside cats?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:49:03] I mean, listen, I'm not a big fan. I, I do think it's a parenting choice that you just have to realize that. Yeah. Look, in a perfect world. Cats would be indoor, outdoor cats would have the challenges and the hunting sort of opportunities and whatever from the outdoors. But, but we're in a different world now. And there's so many ways for your cat to die out there. And. And. It does, there really is a choice to be made. And I would prefer that the choice be you keep your cats in. If you own a house, think about building a catio because catios rock. I've got the best catio in the world. Just, not really. But I love it and my cats love it. And there's no way on God's green earth that we can have seven cats and three dogs without that big catio. But my cats are safe. They're not going to go out there and fight with other cats and get disease from that. They're not going to come back. They're not going to not come back at all because they got hit by a car or picked up by a hawk. We got hawks everywhere and they're not going to kill the songbird population, which, by the way, I mean, the numbers have been wildly inflated about how many birds cats kill. But why make them public enemy number one? People poison cats because they don't want them eating the birds. Why? Why would we do that? We don't have to. We don't have to.

JVN [00:50:41] So, you brought up cat mojo, which we love. Can you give us, like, in two sentences, like what cat mojo is?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:50:48] I mean, we talked about it a bunch. So in a nutshell, it's what I was talking about in terms of the raw cat. Cats have this very straight line between their ancestors and right now. Whereas dogs don't. Because we selectively bred the hell out of them. But with cats, what they wanted then to a certain degree is what they want

now: to hunt, catch, kill, eat and ownership of territory. Right? And we can provide that in, in inventive ways. Right? We can still keep our cats indoors, but enrich their environment. Give them vertical space to explore so they can get their sort of, you know, "Lion King" vibe going. They can, we, we present them with interactive place, with their hunting. We give them visual access to birds through the windows. We keep them going.

And we just, there's a lot of different ways to give cats to feel like they own their space. And, and routine is one of them. Every day I get up and I go here, here, here, here and here. I follow the sun like a sundial around the house. I have beds in each place. Ownership. And if we go to respecting the raw cat, understanding the raw cat and giving ownership, that's mojo. Mojo is when your cat walks around the space. Right? The tail held high. Like, "Hey, what's up? You know, this is mine. I belong here. I don't have to fight you. I don't have to, you know, any of that. "I own it." And I think that's really important. And everything that I do is based around that concept.

JVN [00:52:25] OK, I'm obsessed with that. I love that so much. What do you. What would you say that, you know, because you are someone who was not originally a self professed cat person and now you're, you know, one of the best cat slash dog parents around. What are the things that have surprised and delighted you about cats and continue to surprise and delight you that would it be enticing for someone to get into the fight, as Elizabeth Warren says, about like helping to protect and give home to and voice to cats all over?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:52:56] Yeah, that's. Thank you for asking that. I mean, honestly, one of the things that I loved, I mean, from a personal standpoint, I loved to be presented with, and I feel this way with humans too, where there's mystery involved. And I have to, I have to work to get to know you. And, and everything is not just laid out for me. And that's, cats are those guys for me. There's, there's so many layers to them. And I think part of that is, you know, strange cat in the strange world that, that that process of domestication has, has taken a long time for us to even get a hold of. And, and in that respect, I love advocating for them in that way as well, that, you know, a lot of people are not good with mystery and they're not good with getting to know and having to work and compromising. But that's why I just wanted to put it out there, that it's, it's fun to have a being in your house.

That's not who you thought they were, that you have to discover, that you have to, you know, work in a way but, but in a rewarding way. I mean, everyone knows what it's like to have a good relationship and a good relationship means you gotta, you gotta put yourself aside and make it about somebody else. And I'm not saying that's not the case for dogs, God knows, but that's part of it. But I just. And the part about advocacy is that once you get to know who a cat is as opposed to who you want them to be, there is, they are the

under, the undercat. They are the ones who have been fighting for respect for so long and we're still killing way, way, way too many of them. And way too many of them are being born in our streets. And there are tens of millions of them in our streets.

And we can advocate for them in ways that is not hard. It doesn't take a lot to take action for these guys, and that's what Cat Camp is all about. I mean, whether we're doing it in person or not doing it virtually, it's about taking the most casual cat curious person and, and letting them know that you can do this much and save a shit ton of lives, you know, and, and, and also at the same time, just letting people know the cats are cool, especially men, by the way. Let's just put that out there. The whole guys are about dogs, women about cats, the whole, if I'm fighting anything, it's the stereotype of the crazy cat lady and expanding it out. The best thing that somebody can do is, is, you know, especially if you're breaking that stereotype of a cat person. Take pictures of yourself with your cats. Put it out there. Let people know that this is not what you think it is. Just because you have a cat doesn't make you the crazy cat lady. Yes, you can have cats and still have dates. You know what I mean? Like, there's, those little barrier breaking things are crucial.

JVN [00:56:19] They really are. And I think they are just such an unnecessary thing that keeps people held back. Those like societal stereotypes of, like, who has cats. Yeah, it really is, that part is just so aggravating. What are some of the things that cat curious people can do outside of getting, you know, following you on YouTube and, and what not? But what are some other things that, even if we have folks in our life who have, like, just gotten a cat, they've been cat curious, they like, and they, maybe they didn't, they haven't done as much research as they should have done. What are some of the things that people can do to best set themselves up for success? If they are new cat home providers.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:56:57] Well, I mean, prepare your, you know, just, just learn a little bit. And again, that's, I hope if I've done anything over the years, it's that. Is just to give you the, in the, in the most easy sort of bite sized way to teach you what a cat is. And, and then that way when they come into your home, you know, you're always there's always that period of discovery and adjustment for everybody. Anytime you bring someone new into your house. But I think at least you've got a leg up, so to speak.

JVN [00:57:30] So in these last, you know, four months. Or no. How? I have no sense of time anymore.

JACKSON GALAXY [00:57:39] Right? It's like six months now.

JVN [00:57:40] Yeah. Covid 19 is, yeah. It's changed everything. So how has cat behavior, has that changed some of the issues that have come your way and how has adoption and trap, neuter and return practices? How has all of this industry been affected by Covid?

JACKSON GALAXY [00:57:58] Yeah, I mean, it's been, it's been a cluster, for sure. And, and I saw it the second that the lockdown started happening, that people started going crazy about their cats and cats started going crazy about the people. And that's the same reason we started getting crazy about the people in our lives because we were overexposed to each other. And all of a sudden we're, like, "Get out of my space." And again, going back to cats owning territory, they're like, "Whoa, whoa, wait. You leave the house, I own the house, and then you come back to the house. And now we're all surrounded." You got humans and dogs and cats and kids and whatever, all jammed into the same space. And a lot of stuff happens. And it was funny 'cause that's, that's what led to, we did a special episode of my cat about a month ago or something, based solely on that, on the fact that cats were freaking out because we were-.

There was even a story where, like there was a family, kids, this 18-year-old comes home from college and the cat's so freaked out because the kids home 24/7, playing his music in Mach volume and the cat jumps out a second story window to get away, you know, breaks his paw, but he's cool. He's gone. And they get him back in. And all the kid could say was like, "Well, I guess he doesn't like rap music." Hold on. It was his place. You came home. You know what I mean? A little respect, but honestly. Oh, wow. Well, I could get off on this. I'm not going to get off on this. That's fine, but I think in general, oh, I just want, like that. In general, I think we just have to remember again that having an animal in your world, they are your cat family, they're your dog family. We need to treat them not as nuisances. And we have to make allowances for what their needs might be. And during this time, man, I'm telling you, and it has not been easy on any of us, you know?

I mean, you know, you're like me. I mean, my life was about traveling. I have never, ever, I've been married for six years and we've known each other for eight years. I've never been home for more than two months at a stretch. And here we've been, you know, locked down for as long as we have. It's challenging. And it's challenging with animals as well. We've had things come up in our home with our dogs, with the cats, things that were totally unexpected. But it's overexposure. You know, we've just been around each other a lot.

Oh. You ask me about TNR. That was a long time ago.

JVN [01:00:44] Yeah. Have those, have those efforts been completely hampered by Covid?

JACKSON GALAXY [01:00:49] Yes, absolutely. We got screwed when kittens, don't forget kitten season was the same time as the lockdown. So vet offices and high volume spay neuter clinics shut down. The shelters shut down and, and all of a sudden we had no place, trappers had no place to bring the cats that they were trapping to, to neuter and bring back to their colonies. We got, we've got a whole sort of generation of kittens who were born out there and in places like Los Angeles, we could not afford that. So no, no, it was, it's, it's hardcore. We're open again for business, people freaking stepped up. I mean, the adoption numbers have gone through the roof. Foster numbers have gone through the roof. We've emptied out a lot of shelters. I'm a little concerned about what's next. Right? Because now we're in financial insecurity. And what's gonna happen with all the animals that we adopted. But that's our next challenge. And, you know.

JVN [01:01:56] How can people get involved with, you know, TNR programs or volunteering? And, and if someone is thinking, like, "Well, I really can't be a cat parent right now, but I do have some time I can give and I do have some," how can people get started?

JACKSON GALAXY [01:02:11] Again, that's why Cat Camp is here. And it's something where we're using this opportunity right now, going virtual, to speak to a bigger audience, we're not just in New York anymore. And. And the idea is, "What can I do in my community for my community's cats?" And it. And again, it doesn't have to be this huge bite out of your life. It could be very, very simple. Groups that do trap, neuter, return. They need people to just drive the cats to the clinic. They need people to just put newspaper in the traps and bait the traps. They just need help of any kind. And that includes money. You know, the best way to do it is to do the research yourself.

Anywhere you guys live, there's somebody there who's caring for the community cats. Find them. Just find them. And how can I help? One of the things that drives trappers crazy and I can tell you this because this is my world, is when somebody says, "Man, I've got about four or five cats and now we've got kittens in the yard and blah, blah, blah, come and help me." No, no, no. You, if you care, which I swear, I hope everybody does. And you've got a mom and her kittens in your front yard. You got to learn. We can teach you. We can absolutely teach you. It's painless. You can get traps. You can figure it out yourself. We will help you every step of the way. But if you ask us to do it, you're asking a lot. These are people who care for 20 colonies every single day. You know, just figure out how you can widen your circle just a little bit, which again, is hard during this moment. But we're seeing how people are more and more willing to take action about a number of different things these days. But, you know, as we say in Cat Camp, you can start small.

JVN [01:04:02] I love that. And just getting proactive. I think that's so great. So last few minutes like to, I have, I want to just do some rapid fire shit, which wasn't planned, but.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:04:09] Go for it.

JVN [01:04:11] I'd talk to you so fucking much. OK. City kitties. Toilet training. Yes? No?

JACKSON GALAXY [01:04:17] No. Don't do it. Don't toilet train your cats.

JVN [01:04:21] OK, litter robots?

JACKSON GALAXY [01:04:23] Not a fan. You know what I mean?

JVN [01:04:25] Why? I fucking love it, my house smells great.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:04:27] Of course-. I know everybody loves them, but there's always that chance that Lady G, let's say, just for instance, who goes in there suddenly there's a sound, maybe a little bit of a malfunction, something like that. She steps out of a sudden, fleshy flush. It's a little bit like this to her. That means she's going to stop using it. And I just, it's one of those things, man, where it's like you got cats, you got litter boxes, you know? And also the one other thing about that, same with toilet training, woo woo woo. Just hold on, is, you want to know what's coming out of your cats.

JVN [01:04:59] You can still see it.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:05:00] No, you can't, it's gone. Just flushed it.

JVN [01:05:02] Yes, you can.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:05:03] Oh, stop.

JVN [01:05:04] No, it's all up in there. You see it down the thing, honey.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:05:06] I know you don't want to hear this. I don't know you want to hear this. I'm, just me. Just me.

JVN [01:05:11] No, no. Hey, you know, I can't make the rules, this is rapid fire. You're giving me honest answers. I like that. So obviously, wet food, dry food, obviously.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:05:20] Wet.

JVN [01:05:22] Yeah.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:05:22] If you, yeah.

JVN [01:05:24] No, tell me more.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:05:25] No, I was going to say, I mean, in the hierarchy, a raw diet is the best thing in the world, grain free wet, any kind of wet. Dry, down at the bottom. Don't feed your cat dry food.

JVN [01:05:37] This isn't really rapid fire. But I do think it might be one of my last questions. Other, well actually, I have two more. So you know how people can sometimes be, like, "Oh. What type of cat is that?" It's like. And I'm, like, "Well, it's, they're all just like shorthaired ones, like, you know, Genevieve is like a flame point Siamese." But that's just, like, her pattern and they're all still, like, cats. Like, is a savannah cat different than, like, a short haired cat is different than, like, one of those, like, breeder, like, Dutch Apple-head cats? Like, or are they all just cats?

JACKSON GALAXY [01:06:03] I mean, in as much as dogs are just dogs. I mean, there's, there's, there's something that connects everybody. And humans are just humans. But I think, for instance, you said Savannah, that's, those guys, Savannahs, Bengals, Pixie Bobs and the ones that are hybrids. Tho-, that's a different animal, meaning that they're so in touch with their raw cat that they present problems, I think sometimes depending on how close they are in generation. You know, I got to be honest, I think being a rescuer and a shelter worker for as long as I have been, I'm not a fan of cat breeding. Ooh, I'm going to get in trouble. But I got to be honest.

Let's take a break, you guys. We got, we got a lot out there dying right now. Let's get them all homes and then we can think about it again. We're looking at a world right now where dog overpopulation could be over soon. In the next ten years, even less, dog overpopulation. We can look at responsible breeding. Cats. We're not there, man. We have not rounded the corner. So let's get them all homes first. Ah, you didn't want me to do that there, but you know?

JVN [01:07:14] No, I think that's so valid. I think that's such a good, I mean, I, I have been someone who's always been a cat rescuer. I've always very much judge people who are like, I got, like on the-, I have had a lot of clients over the years, when I was doing hair, that were like because I knew I was a cat person like, oh my God, I adopted this, but like they were, you know, a lot of like breeder cats. And I was like, Oh, cool, good for you. But, like,

I never, like, was, I've always obviously seen the problematic nature of that. And I also think people will often, when I've seen people criticize other people for having, like, adopted animals online or, you know, shop, not adopted, sho-, bought, shopped for like, you know, bred ones. It's like, well, maybe they weren't a candidate for a rescue animal. You don't know. And I'm like, that is also really problematic language because that's implying that rescue animals are somehow more wild or untrainable.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:14:22] Or damaged. Right.

JVN [01:14:23] Yes. Or more likely to attack or whatever, which is also not true. So I think it's it's one thing to say, like, "Look, I understand that, you know, hundreds of thousands of animals are euthanized every year. And even in light of that, like, I want to make this decision to like shop for the breed that I want." And if that's what you're going to do, that is, but you should own that. And not say, "Well, I wasn't a candidate for this or I didn't want take bleh bleh." Because it is such, I do think, like so, I am on your team on that. Down with it. I'll double down on it.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:08:34] It's all good.

JVN [01:08:35] And it's, I think it's really, you know, I think especially if anyone has a right to say that you are day in and day out seeing the consequences of folks who choose to shop over buy when you have seen so many animals euthanized.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:08:46] And you what? Honestly as we're talking, I think to myself, like, what's the most unifying thing I can say? And the most unifying thing I can say, obviously, you love cats even though you're, you're, you're buying. There's a way to offset your cat carbon footprint, you know what I mean? Like, if you're going to do that, spend the same amount of money and get it over to your local rescue organizations, your TNR organizations, just like you're saying, own the fact that you are taking a bit and, and do that and give. And just own it, you know what I mean? That's all I'm saying. Not the cat. But, you know what I'm saying?

JVN [01:09:27] Oh, I like that. Jackson Galaxy, I love you so much. So where can people sign up for Cat Camp. And basically people need to follow your Instagram and your YouTube. Basically.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:09:36] Yes. Just follow all that stuff but go to [CatCamp.com](https://www.catcamp.com). It's free you guys. It's free. We're not charging you for anything. Come by, learn some stuff and prizes, and me and the Kitten Lady are there.

JVN [01:09:50] Oh, my God! You're friends with, I love the Kitten Lady.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:09:52] Well, of course we're friends. We're very, very close friends.

JVN [01:09:54] I'm obsessed with her duckies.

JACKSON GALAXY [01:09:58] We're doing a little AMA between us. It's gonna be a lot of fun. And, and like I said, it's free. And you're going to learn something and, and, and look, advocacy is nothing to fear. You guys, you can do it, too.

JVN [01:10:10] Oh, my God. Jackson Galaxy, you're the best. I love you so much more than I already did. Thank you so much. You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Jackson Galaxy. He's a cat behavior expert, the host of Animal Planet's "My Cat From Hell," and the co-founder of Jackson Galaxy's Cat Camp, which will stream live, for free, through CatCamp.com on September 26. You'll find links to his work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quiñ - thanks to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend - show them how to subscribe. Follow us on Instagram & Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our socials are run and curated by Emily Bossak. Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, Emily Bossak, Chelsea Jacobson, and Colin Anderson.