

The Importance of Time  
By Terry J. Dey

Though it had been little more than two months since I lost my beloved 14 year-old Siamese to illness, not having a cat in the house was really starting to get to me. That is why I looked at all the homeless cats on Petfinder daily (<http://www.petfinder.com>), and I think that is why I left the Springfield Pet Smart one Sunday afternoon with two cats and \$50 in supplies.

One was a gray tabby – Marcy; the other an orange tabby named Amber. I had only agreed to foster them to give myself a chance to see how it would go. That's what I like so much about Animal Allies. They understand that it takes time for an animal to adjust to new surroundings, so they allow potential adopters to “foster” first.

Marcy lived up to everything her foster Eleanor told me about her. Within two weeks she was coming when I called her and allowing me to pet her. She loved the toy mouse I bought her and even fetched it when I threw it! She was talkative and playful – just an adorable cat.

Amber was a different story. I did not see her once in three weeks. I could just make out her orange coat underneath my dresser (it still amazes me that she squeezed herself under there). Amber hissed and swatted at Marcy whenever she came near her. Eventually she came out from under the dresser, but only at night when we were in bed.

The Animal Allies volunteers were very helpful in offering suggestions, the most important being to give her time. One day Dawn, who fostered Amber for nearly a year, came to my house to check on her. It was that day that I realized Amber does “meow.” She'd never made a peep in five weeks! Dawn said that Amber was fine and offered to take her back if I didn't think it was going to work out, but I decided to be patient.

I think seeing Dawn reassured Amber, because there was a marked change in her behavior after that. She came downstairs when we watched television and allowed us to pet her if we were sitting down. She even started to tolerate Marcy.

Throughout my fostering, I continued to speak with Judy, the adoption coordinator, and Dawn. Both told me that eventually Amber would settle in. They hoped I would give her time, but understood if I wanted to give her back. To be honest, I had my doubts. It had been nearly three months, and Amber had relaxed some, but I felt she still had a long way to go. I decided that I had grown attached to Amber and went ahead with her adoption.

I swear that Amber somehow knew that she had been adopted, because the change was dramatic. A couple of weeks later I came downstairs and stopped, dumbfounded. There on the couch were Marcy and Amber, curled up side by side! Turns out those smart volunteers at Animal Allies were right – Amber just needed me to be patient and give her time to adjust.

It's been six months since Mary and Amber came home with me that Friday afternoon. I adopted both of them, and it feels like they've always been here. Amber has settled in quite nicely. I'm sure glad I listened to Dawn and Judy about giving her time. If I hadn't listened, I wouldn't have pictures like these:



My advice to potential adopters is to be patient. People are often overwhelmed by new surroundings, and animals are no different. They adjust on their own timetable, in your time. All animals deserve a "forever home." If you allow them the chance to settle in, it's worth it, believe me.