

Teenagers are like cats

Have you ever realised that children are like dogs? Loyal and affectionate, but teenagers are like cats...

It's so easy to be a dog owner.

You feed it, train it, boss it around. And yet it still puts its head on your knee and gazes at you as if you were a Rembrandt painting and bounds indoors with enthusiasm when you call it.

Then around age 13, your adoring little puppy turns into a cat. When you tell it to come inside, it looks amazed, as if wondering who died and made you emperor.

Instead of dogging your every step, it disappears. You won't see it again until it gets hungry. Then it pauses on its sprint through the kitchen long enough to turn its nose up at whatever you're serving.

When you reach out to ruffle its head, in that old affectionate gesture, it twists away from you, then gives you a blank stare, as if trying to remember where it has seen you before. You, not realising that the dog is now a cat, think something must be desperately wrong.

It seems so antisocial, so distant.

It won't go on family outings.

Since you're the one who raised it, taught it to fetch and stay and sit on command, you assume that you did something wrong.

Flooded with guilt and fear, you redouble your efforts to make your pet behave.

Only now you're dealing with a cat, so everything that worked before now produces the opposite of the desired result.

Call it, and it runs away. Tell it to sit, and it jumps on the counter.

The more you go toward it, with open arms, the more it moves away.

Instead of continuing to act like a dog owner, you should learn to behave like a cat owner.

Put a dish of food near the door, and let it come to you.

Sit still, and it will come, seeking that warm, comforting lap it has not entirely forgotten.

Be there to open the door for it.

And just remember...

One day your grown-up child will walk into the kitchen, give you a big kiss and say, "You've been on your feet all day. Let me get those dishes for you."

Then you'll realise your cat is now a dog again!