

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Hannah Shaw

JVN [00:00:03] Welcome to "Getting Curious". This is Jonathan Van Ness. And before we get started with this week's episode, I have a quick little caveat to this one. I'm trying to find the words because it's still very hard. Our guest this week is Hannah Shaw, who is the Kitten Lady, who is an incredible advocate for kittens everywhere. And we recorded this episode the week before the accident with Bug the Second. So we have been sitting with episode for a few weeks and we are so proud of the work that Hannah does and we are so excited to share this episode. So without further ado, we love you all so much. Rest In Power, Bug the Second and enjoy this episode of "Getting Curious". Welcome to "Getting Curious", this is Jonathan Van Ness, this is, I am someone who believes firmly in not playing favorites, but I have to tell you right now, this is already my favorite episode of all time. Welcome to "Getting Curious", Hannah Shaw, author, advocate, cat advocate, people advocate, person I'm obsessed with. Thank you so much for coming, Hannah. Hi.

HANNAH SHAW [00:01:09] Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

JVN [00:01:11] So I'm holding two of the most beautiful baby kittens right now and their rescue baby cat-tens, even though they look like they could be really expensive because they're so chic looking. What did you tell me? Who you think? There's like a bobcat running around the streets of L.A.?

HANNAH SHAW [00:01:26] These guys look really fancy. But I can tell you, when I got them, they looked anything but fancy. They're four weeks old now. I've had them since they were a few days old. And when I got them, they were completely crusted with fleas. Like when I tell you, the first bath I gave them, the water ran red with blood from them being so eaten by fleas. So they look really fancy now, but that's because they got the Kitten Lady treatment.

JVN [00:01:49] Where did they, where did they come to you from?

HANNAH SHAW [00:01:51] These guys came into a shelter here in the L.A. area and they were born underneath a wheelbarrow and somebody found them, brought them into this shelter. And this is what happens a lot: people find kittens outside. They assume they've been abandoned and they bring them to the shelter. Not realizing that most animal shelters are not set up with the ability to provide care to kittens this young. So that's how they end up with me.

JVN [00:02:15] Oh, 'cause it's like NICU. You're like NICU for cats.

HANNAH SHAW [00:02:18] Exactly. Yeah. So I take on the most vulnerable, most young, orphaned babies who've been separated from their mothers. And I raised them until they're weaned and healthy and ready to be adopted.

JVN [00:02:30] So in, OK so, these babies are like four weeks old.

HANNAH SHAW [00:02:34] Yeah. Like today. It's like their four week birthday.

JVN [00:02:36] So in the wild, they would still be nursing from their mommy?

HANNAH SHAW [00:02:39] Absolutely. These guys are bottle feeding. And if you want. When we're done with this, you can bottle feed them.

JVN [00:02:44] Oh, that's what we'll do on our own, for our our content.

HANNAH SHAW [00:02:47] I would love for you to bottle feed them. They're really good at eating now. They were, oh, my gosh. Jon– Jonathan is in heaven right now.

JVN [00:02:55] Oh my God.

HANNAH SHAW [00:02:56] They love you. I think they think that your beard is like a mom cat because she keeps rubbing on it.

JVN [00:03:00] I am a mom cat.

HANNAH SHAW [00:03:03] You are a mom cat.

JVN [00:03:03] Did you not, did no one tell you that I am a mom cat? Well, my producers apparently were, you know, really sleeping when they were napping you, because-, or when they were, they were napping when they were booking you because they didn't tell you I was a mom cat.

HANNAH SHAW [00:03:14] Right. Well, that's why they're so fond of you.

JVN [00:03:16] Oh my God, they're so cute.

HANNAH SHAW [00:03:16] I think they're going to start nursing on your face soon.

JVN [00:03:19] Please nurse on my chin. You guys will be disappointed and hungry because it doesn't make milk, but it does, my chin does love you both so much. Ok wait, so. So they just, so people. So vets will just or not vets, like humane or like animal rescues will just call you and be like, "Hey, we got these NICU cats. We don't know what to do with them?"

HANNAH SHAW [00:03:36] Yeah. So what happens is there are lots of kittens born outside. In fact, 80 percent of kittens born every year are born outside on the streets to community cats who live outdoors. And so people, just people who live in the neighborhood, they find these kittens in alley ways, under their porches, in the bushes.

JVN [00:03:54] No butt licking. So sorry.

HANNAH SHAW [00:03:57] There's a no butt licking rule here.

JVN [00:03:58] Well, I just they can, they can lick each other's butts if they feel like they need to.

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:02] No, it's OK. They shouldn't. Do you want to put them in the playpen?

JVN [00:04:04] No.

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:05] No.

JVN [00:04:06] Thanks for asking though.

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:08] OK. You look like you're having a good time.

JVN [00:04:09] Yeah. So.

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:10] So people will find these kittens outside and a lot of people don't realize mom is actually around the corner.

JVN [00:04:16] Getting food.

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:17] She's getting food or she's not there because you're there and she's looking at you going, when is this person gonna leave so I can go back to my babies? Well, people scoop them up, bring them to the animal shelter and then shelters, we have to remember they have limited supplies and resources.

JVN [00:04:31] So in your opinion, is it better to leave the kittens?

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:33] Well, I have a whole section in my book all about this.

JVN [00:04:35] Can you recap it for us?

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:36] Yeah, it's it's complicated. It depends on the situation. So.

JVN [00:04:39] Oh tell us. I mean, first of all, read the fucking book. It's called of "Tiny, but Mighty: Kitten Lady's Guide to Saving the Most Vulnerable Felines". Do you do you do the audio for it?

HANNAH SHAW [00:04:49] I did, yeah. So I did an audio book as well, and I cry in the audio book telling some of these stories because I feel so passionately about this. And it's a really beautiful, fun book that goes through not just how to do this stuff, which I'm happy to tell you all about.

JVN [00:05:03] I'm gonna cry listening to you talk about it.

HANNAH SHAW [00:05:08] But also, like, it's filled with narrative and stories of kittens that I've saved from bushes and, you know, underneath porches and-.

JVN [00:05:15] So how do you use, how do you use your judgment? Are you looking for? I'm literally crying, you guys.

HANNAH SHAW [00:05:19] It's OK.

JVN [00:05:20] Like, what are you doing-.

HANNAH SHAW [00:05:20] I cry everyday.

JVN [00:05:20] Are you like are you like, okay, mom. I think that could've been Mom run over or I think that could have been like, Mom's not coming back. I've been observing the cats for like two days there. They're like, there's no. Like what? Like, how do you judge?

HANNAH SHAW [00:05:31] Yeah. So if you find kittens outside and they look clean and like they've been eating, they are not, you know, covered in filth, they're not crying out in hunger. Probably Mom is there taking care of them. The thing that you want to do then is try to reunite mom and babies, ideally in foster care, so you can actually foster Mom cat, even if she's feral and her babies, until the babies are old enough to be weaned because, you know, I'm a mom cat and you're a mom cat, but the real mom cats are the cats who live outside.

JVN [00:06:01] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:06:01] And we want the babies to stay with them if possible. If no mom returns, then, yeah, we want to scoop those babies up and make sure that they have the resources

they need. But that is really what my project Kitten Lady is all about, is helping animal shelters create programs for these babies. And then also helping empower the public to step up in their own way by fostering, because this is not a problem that can be solved within the four walls of an animal shelter. Really, this is a community problem with a community solution, and that's foster parents.

JVN [00:06:32] So what's the problem?

HANNAH SHAW [00:06:34] Well, the problem is one. There are a lot of kittens being born outside.

JVN [00:06:38] In the United States and all over the world.

HANNAH SHAW [00:06:39] Yeah, well, there's about half of the cats in the United States are community cats who live outdoors. So-

JVN [00:06:44] Half the cats?

HANNAH SHAW [00:06:45] Yeah. So, you know, I mean, that's the original way of being a cat. These cats lived, you know, in symbiosis with us. And then we started making them into, you know, our companions, which is great. But a lot of these cats still live outside in our neighborhoods. And if we're not doing sterilization programs with them, you know, we all spay and neuter our, our companion cats at home. But not everybody knows that you can actually do that with the cats living in your neighborhood. And that's going to prevent so many kittens from being born.

JVN [00:07:10] Oh, take them in to go get them spayed and neutered?

HANNAH SHAW [00:07:12] Yeah, it's called trap, neuter, return. And trap, neuter, return is where you take a humane trap. You trap the cats in your neighborhood, you bring them in to be sterilized, and then they're returned to where they live. So it's kind of like you wave this magic wand and you say, OK, guys, you can stay, but you just can't have anymore.

JVN [00:07:27] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:07:27] And it's really important because every kitten that I get, that comes into my rescue, comes from outside. So we want to prevent more of them from coming in. So that's number one. The second thing is people need to know that when these kittens come into a shelter. Shelters have operating hours. Do you see she's making biscuits on you?

JVN [00:07:45] Yes, she's kneading.

HANNAH SHAW [00:07:46] She's like a little biscuit factory.

JVN [00:07:48] I love.

HANNAH SHAW [00:07:48] She's making us breakfast.

JVN [00:07:49] I love.

HANNAH SHAW [00:07:50] Should be ready in a little bit. Thank you, Sunbeam. So when these kittens come into a shelter, they typically are going to meet their fate within 24 hours. They're going to either make it out into a foster home or they're going to be euthanized because-

JVN [00:08:04] They only hold them for 24 hours in a lot of places?

HANNAH SHAW [00:08:05] Well, the thing is that people have to understand and it's not at all, speaking poorly about shelters, it's actually the opposite. It's, it's shelters are doing so much and they're doing everything they can, but they have limited hours. They close at the end of the day. And these guys, you know, they're on a four hour feeding schedule.

JVN [00:08:22] You guys don't close, do you? You guys are always open for feeding.

HANNAH SHAW [00:08:24] Yeah. So you couldn't, you couldn't leave these guys overnight in an animal shelter. It wouldn't be ethical.

JVN [00:08:29] No.

HANNAH SHAW [00:08:31] They are loving you so much. This might be the happiest I've ever seen them. She's just like making air biscuits and he's, like, loving on your beard. They're so cute right now.

JVN [00:08:42] I was thinking I would make a video after this to get them adopted from someone else in for weeks but I think they're going to live in New York City with their three new siblings. Harry Larry, Liza and Bug the Second. Yeah. You guys are babies. Wait. So anyway, what were you saying?

HANNAH SHAW [00:08:59] Oh, gosh. You know, it's so distracting when you have kittens in your arms, isn't it?

JVN [00:09:03] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:09:03] Well, I was just saying how important it is for people to realize that this is a problem that anybody in the public can do something about. And that's really empowering because anybody can go sign up to foster. You basically baby sit for a couple of weeks and then you-

JVN [00:09:19] Well, who runs those programs like the local Humane Societies?

HANNAH SHAW [00:09:22] Yes. So the animal shelters or you can work with local rescue groups that pull animals out of the shelter. But whoever you foster through, you're making a difference, whether it's through your municipal shelter or your local rescue groups.

JVN [00:09:33] So because there's really no like gover-. Does the government like do animal rescue? Do they? Or is it more like animal catching? Really?

HANNAH SHAW [00:09:41] So it depends on what organization you're talking about. There's a few different models of shelters. There are private humane societies, which are nonprofit organizations that anybody can start. So you and I could say we're going to start a nonprofit animal shelter together, and that's private shelters. But then there are municipal shelters. So every municipality in the United States has some kind of animal control or animal shelter. And so those are open, open admission shelters. And what that means is if you're a government run facility, you have an obligation to take in every animal, regardless of whether you actually have the resources to help them.

JVN [00:10:19] But are those the kill ones, usually, the government ones? Because they just like they have to get rid of what they don't have room for or something.

HANNAH SHAW [00:10:24] It's a really hard thing because when we say like kill and no kill, it can kind of have this really negative connotation.

JVN [00:10:29] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:10:30] And of course, it's, it's very sad that animals are killed in shelters. And that's what the whole point of this project is, is to stop that. But the shelters that are euthanizing these kittens that are typically going to be your, you know, municipal shelters, they're the ones that need the most support. They're the ones that need our help. So sometimes-

JVN [00:10:47] So don't be mean to the no kill shelters.

HANNAH SHAW [00:10:48] Well. Don't be mean to the shelters that are the munic-. Or don't mean to any shelter, you know?

JVN [00:10:52] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:10:52] The people who work in these shelters.

JVN [00:10:54] 'Cause they're not trying to kill the animals.

HANNAH SHAW [00:10:55] Oh my gosh, they have the most heart wrenching job in the world. They're like standing in the eye of the storm trying to make sense of it all. And so fostering is a gift not just to the kittens, but to the people who work in animal shelters because they don't want to be dealing with this either. It's a really beautiful healing thing.

JVN [00:11:12] So how do we sign that to be fosters?

HANNAH SHAW [00:11:14] Well, the first thing is realizing that you have what it takes. And that's why I wrote this book, "Tiny but Mighty". "Tiny but Mighty" is, it is kind of talking about how the kittens themselves are tiny but mighty. But also we are tiny but mighty like movements are made up of individuals. So every single individual action you take plays towards the greater good. Right? So every person can do this. All you have to do is, you know, learn how, what local shelter or rescue groups are in your area. Contact them and say, hey, I think I'm interested in fostering. Usually they're going to have some kind of-

JVN [00:11:48] Vetting process.

HANNAH SHAW [00:11:48] You know, sign up. Maybe they'll have you do an orientation. And then I always recommend that you start with doing maybe a mom and babies or some older kittens so that you kind of get your feet wet.

JVN [00:12:00] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:12:00] You know, get comfortable with kittens who are like this age, you know, the ones-, they're so comfortable in your arms. Mountain Gem is like, he's like, OK, I'm home.

JVN [00:12:09] Because you, because you said just before we started recording that you just moved to L.A.

HANNAH SHAW [00:12:14] I live in San Diego.

JVN [00:12:15] San Diego, my bad.

HANNAH SHAW [00:12:15] Yeah. And I, I moved here a year ago, but I was living on the East Coast before that.

JVN [00:12:20] You were? So you've been rescuing kitties for a little baby bit.

HANNAH SHAW [00:12:22] For a long time.

JVN [00:12:23] So what happened, Hannah? You're just like minding your own business one morning and you were like a little baby girl. Like, how did you decide that you wanted to do this?

HANNAH SHAW [00:12:30] This happened to me by accident, and I was already an animal advocate, but I had never actually rescued animals. And I was living in Philadelphia. This was a little over 10 years ago. And I looked up into a tree and I saw a baby kitten looking down at me and I thought, is this where kittens come from?

JVN [00:12:46] How did you get up there?

HANNAH SHAW [00:12:46] Kittens grow on trees? This is crazy. So I, you know, mustered all the athleticism that I don't have and I climbed this tree and I put the kitten in my shirt, shimmied back down and then was panicked, like, what do I do next? And that was the day that I learned that shelters cannot save these little kittens, most of the time. And then I learned that even if I wanted to do it, there weren't a lot of educational resources out there to teach me how to do that. So-

JVN [00:13:15] So did you do it?

HANNAH SHAW [00:13:15] Oh, yes. She's my cat now. That's Coco. And I write about her in the intro of my book because she's the kitten who started it all for me. And after that, it was like my cat eyes opened to the world. There were just kittens everywhere, like I would see them everywhere. And so I became like the neighborhood Kitten Lady. And when people say, Oh, you're like a cat lady, I'd say, no, I'm more like a Kitten Lady because I really have always focused on newborns.

JVN [00:13:39] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:13:39] I've really always just done the orphaned neonatal kittens. And that became my passion because there's a huge gap in resources there and people weren't talking about it. And how can you solve a problem that nobody's talking about? How can you empower people to do this if one, they don't even know about the issues? And two, maybe if they care, they don't really know how to do the work. So I started my project, Kitten Lady, which is-

JVN [00:14:02] 'Cause Coco was like a-? She was like, when you got Coco, she was like a teensy little kitten?

HANNAH SHAW [00:14:06] She was a teensy little mess. She had one of her eyes crusted shut. She was a mess.

JVN [00:14:11] Was she these babies age or littler?

HANNAH SHAW [00:14:13] She was about their age. Yeah. And she was a mess and I didn't know what to do. The first thing I ever fed her was a hot dog. I was like she could probably eat a hot dog. I was working at a summer camp. I didn't know what I was doing.

JVN [00:14:24] I tore up. I think I tore up, like I did tear up like packaged meat, because that's all I had when I got Bug the First.

HANNAH SHAW [00:14:30] Yeah.

JVN [00:14:30] 'Cause I was 17. I was dumb, I didn't know.

HANNAH SHAW [00:14:32] Yeah, you don't know what you're doing.

JVN [00:14:34] And I had to-, oh a break? Ew. OK. Well. Oh, OK. We'll be right back with more Hannah Shaw after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious". This is Jonathan Van Ness. So Coco was a little tiny baby.

HANNAH SHAW [00:14:55] Yeah, she was a little baby and, you know, she became my best friend. She works in my lap with me every single day while I'm doing this. And she was the kitten that made me realize when other people find these cats outside, these baby kittens outside, I want to be the friend to them that I wished I had had because I didn't have somebody I could call and ask, what do I do? And not just how do I do this, but how do you do it well? And how do you go through kind of the emotions that you go through with this, because, I know you and I have talked a bit about how emotional it can be when you're working with a vulnerable animal. You know, there's not a guide for that. Now, there is. It's called "Tiny, but Mighty".

JVN [00:15:36] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:15:36] But there, I had no, no idea what to do.

JVN [00:15:40] Yeah, adopting a sick baby cat is like, whoa.

HANNAH SHAW [00:15:42] Yeah.

JVN [00:15:43] I didn't know either.

HANNAH SHAW [00:15:43] And you deal with that when you have, when you have kittens, they're very immunocompromised. These guys can get sick very easily. They're falling asleep now. They look so angelic. This is like the one thing where a podcast really-, you're missing the visuals of two baby kittens falling asleep in Jonathan's arms. So cute. And she's, like, holding hands with you. Your jaw is just dropped.

JVN [00:16:08] OK. So, um, wow. OK. Oh, my God, they really, he just, yeah, let it go. You don't have to hold on anymore. Take your little nap. Take your little nap. You're a little baby. This has got to be the most annoying episode for people to listen to, but I don't care. 'Cause I can't focus.

HANNAH SHAW [00:16:27] You can share some photos.

JVN [00:16:29] So it is not the most annoying episode, it's the best one I've ever done. So how-? Does Coco like the other kittens?

HANNAH SHAW [00:16:37] So she is separate from the other kittens.

JVN [00:16:39] Oh yeah, because we can't, we can't introduce pathogens or outside creepy crawlies to Coco.

HANNAH SHAW [00:16:43] Exactly. And vice versa. So, you know, kittens can carry illnesses and they are also very immunocompromised. So they need quarantine space, at least for the first two weeks that you have them. So when these guys came to me, they lived in an incubator for the first three weeks because they were so, so small. So it really-.

JVN [00:17:01] You got a kitten incubator?

HANNAH SHAW [00:17:03] I have a couple kitten incubators. This is my life. I have a baby room in my house. Yeah.

JVN [00:17:09] I love, wait, how many kitten incubators do you have?

HANNAH SHAW [00:17:11] We have two right now. We have a third on order.

JVN [00:17:14] Can there be more than one kitten in an incubator? Or no.

HANNAH SHAW [00:17:16] Yeah. So they have litter mates. So there's five of them and they all are buddies and they just, you know, live in an incubator for the first couple weeks of life. And every couple hours I wake them up, feed them, help them go potty, clean them.

JVN [00:17:30] Just a little bot-, or just a little bottle?

HANNAH SHAW [00:17:32] Yeah.

JVN [00:17:32] You have to help him pee and poopy?

HANNAH SHAW [00:17:34] Yeah. So Mom Cat will actually stimulate her babies to go to the bathroom by licking them. So mom, cats are amazing in that way. They stimulate them with their tongue and then they actually consume the waste, which is like, whoa. So when you foster mom and babies, you're like, where's their poop? And it's because mom ate it.

JVN [00:17:50] Why?

HANNAH SHAW [00:17:52] It keeps them clean and it keeps the nest kind of, you know, clean and not a target of predators.

JVN [00:18:00] Because poop is a target for predators.

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:02] Well, they can smell them. Yeah. And these guys are really vulnerable. These guys are such a little jelly beans when they're born.

JVN [00:18:06] Mom doesn't mess around. She's like I'll eat this shit to protect my babies.

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:10] Mom is fierce. She is fierce.

JVN [00:18:11] I will literally eat shit to protect my babies.

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:15] So, yeah. So when-.

JVN [00:18:16] What about dad cats? Are they in the picture in the wild or no?

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:20] You know, I don't deal with a lot of parent cats because I mostly focus on orphans. And, so I actually very rarely have moms and babies in my life. And I never have dads.

JVN [00:18:30] You've never had a dad?

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:32] No.

JVN [00:18:32] These cat dads.

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:33] I know.

JVN [00:18:34] Ew.

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:35] Deadbeats.

JVN [00:18:36] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:18:36] No, I. They're kissing and making muffins on each other now. No. We, we do mostly orphans. So I run a nonprofit organization called Orphan Kitten Club. We're a 501C3 nursery that also does other programs nationally to help other people do this. But we only take on orphans who are neonates, so babies who are unweaned and don't have their mom.

JVN [00:19:00] Wow.

HANNAH SHAW [00:19:00] So every baby I take on is like a hot mess when they come to me and then we clean them up and get them sparkly and beautiful so that when they meet you, you go, are you sure these guys are rescued? And I'm like, thank you. That's very flattering.

JVN [00:19:11] That's what I said.

HANNAH SHAW [00:19:12] Yeah. They looked horrible when they came to me. So we get them nice and shiny and new. Get them feeling good. Get them, you know, they get that nice-.

JVN [00:19:18] And then you adopt him out?

HANNAH SHAW [00:19:20] Yeah. They all get adopted out. So I've raised hundreds and hundreds of kittens and they live all over the country in loving homes. And-.

JVN [00:19:27] And it's like, but, so you made it your life's work. But other people who like maybe you have like a, like a different, more like traditional office job like you would, you could still totally, like, be a foster parent.

HANNAH SHAW [00:19:38] You could.

JVN [00:19:38] You would just like go like volunteer and find out kind of what the steps are. And you could probably even like if you didn't want to have the pets at your house, you could probably even volunteer at the locations. Like-.

HANNAH SHAW [00:19:47] Sure. Yeah. You can volunteer onsite. And even if you have an office job, you can still foster weaned kittens who don't need, you know, they don't need to be with you all the time. You could do moms and babies. Basically, you take care of mom and mom takes care babies. So you get all the joy of those little tiny babies. But you don't have to actually wake up in

the middle of the night for them. Or, you know, I actually worked in office jobs when I started doing this and I just got permission to just try it. I always tell people, just do a test run because you see, they are not, well, maybe they're distracting to you because they're making muffins on you, but they really, they sleep in a little carrier, 23 hours a day. They sleep and they don't make a lot of noise. They're not running around cause they're hardly coordinated yet. And these guys, all they need is a few minutes every couple hours to save their life. So I tell people, if you have time to scroll on Instagram and like all of my cat photos, you have time to do this.

JVN [00:20:43] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:20:43] It takes just a few minutes. And it makes a big difference. It is a really temporary thing. So I think sometimes people get intimidated by the idea of being a quote unquote, "foster parent" because it sounds like parenting.

JVN [00:20:53] Because they want to adopt every last one.

HANNAH SHAW [00:20:56] Well, you know.

JVN [00:20:56] That's my struggle is I feel like I want to adopt like sev-, like tell me about, like, why it's also really fierce to foster and not adopt everyone that you see.

HANNAH SHAW [00:21:04] Yeah, absolutely. Well.

JVN [00:21:05] Because then we could become hoarders, obviously.

HANNAH SHAW [00:21:08] Sure. And nobody would, nobody wants that.

JVN [00:21:09] Nope, I saw that episode of, the one where, it's not OK.

HANNAH SHAW [00:21:13] Right. Well, a big part of my message is goodbye is the goal. So I tell people, goodbye is the goal of fostering.

JVN [00:21:18] Oh, I hate that chapter of the book. I don't want it.

HANNAH SHAW [00:21:22] It's really beautiful because this is a gift that you're giving to them. So when you say goodbye, it allows them to say hello to their new family. And it allows you to say hello to more kittens who are waiting for you.

JVN [00:21:34] OK, OK, OK.

HANNAH SHAW [00:21:35] So it's I think it's a really amazing personal journey you go on when you're fostering because you learn that love is, you know, people say, oh, I would love them too much. So I would keep them. I say, love is not like a feeling you have. It's an action you take. Right? Love is an active verb.

JVN [00:21:51] It's just like a good thing for people that like are maybe in love with someone who wants to be in an open relationship, but you're not ready to be in an open relationship. So it's like get used to fostering cats.

HANNAH SHAW [00:22:01] Love with an open palm. Right?

JVN [00:22:02] Yes. Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:22:03] So it's like love is something that you give to somebody. You meet them where they are and you see that they're struggling and you give them love in the way they need it. By the time these guys are eight weeks old, you know that your life has totally transformed their lives and they're ready to launch. It's like graduation day. So just like, you know, you might cry at a graduation because you're very proud of the child who has graduated. You're not going to say, oh, I don't want to go through crying at your graduation. So we're just can keep you in school forever. Right?

JVN [00:22:32] That's true.

HANNAH SHAW [00:22:32] No, it's a beautiful thing. So I think-.

JVN [00:22:34] So Coco's you're only full time cat?

HANNAH SHAW [00:22:36] Well, I have one other cat, Elloise. And she is=.

JVN [00:22:40] 'Cause every once in awhile, you get a little triggered. You're like, oh, I have to adopt you.

HANNAH SHAW [00:22:43] Well, I always say, two kittens are definitely better than one. So having pairs.

JVN [00:22:47] I think so too.

HANNAH SHAW [00:22:48] Having pairs is really important because two kittens is a whole-.

JVN [00:22:52] Do suggest that better than like, do you recommend-? I mean, would you rather someone not adopt a cat if they're not going to get two? Or would you say, or because do some do better alone?

HANNAH SHAW [00:23:01] For kittens, I only recommend adopting in pairs, unless you have a cat at home for the kitten to befriend. Because kittens are very social. They need companionship. They learn together. They go through these transitions together that it's, it's a really positive thing for them to have a buddy. If they can go into a home where there is already a cat. I think that's great. But I don't recommend raising a singleton kitten with no other.

JVN [00:23:25] Lisa Meow-nelli is at my mom's alone, but we had to kind of.

HANNAH SHAW [00:23:27] Well, Liza is a very special kitty.

JVN [00:23:30] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:23:30] And I want to hear a lot about Liza and what's going on. Will you tell me?

JVN [00:23:33] Sure. OK. Well you guys, we didn't even plan that transition. So that's kind of fierce that that happened. I love that. OK, so basically. All right. So Bug the First passed away last September. And my grandparents always had like a black teacup poodle for 35 years named J.P. because when one teacup poodle would pass, they would like go adopt another black teacup poodle and name it J.P., which I always thought was like kind of psycho until I lost Bug the First. And then I was like, oh, I understand. Like, we don't want to feel the loss. And it was also kind of like me, like, I had all these cute nickname for Bug and I wasn't ready to stop hearing myself say them. Like when I come home and I always say, "Buga buga, I need a huga huga"? Like then, I

like chase him, and I put him on the couch and we like kiss his nose for like three minutes of like, force kiss like kitty face cuddles. Which he totally loves in person. It's like not literally forced, but kind of because it's a little cookey to get on the couch, but once we're there. He really loves it, it's like going to yoga. And so, you know what I mean? And so. So then when Bug, Bug passed, I got Bug the Second and Liza Meow-nelli and I realized after three days that Liza and I were having issues eating. Like she wasn't wanting to eat as well as Bug the First or Bug the Second was eating and definitely not the same as Larry. So I was like is there bullying issue? So I was trying to like separate so that she wouldn't be like distracted. But then it was like she didn't want to eat alone either. And I was trying all these different foods just like really wasn't wanting to eat, not gaining weight, like Bug the Second, because they were the same age when I adopted them. And so that started to worry me by like the fifth day I was like, okay, this cat is like not eating but really, really, really affectionate, really, really cuddly. Like had the kitten equivalent personality of Harry Larry. Which, do you watch my story? Do you know, like how cool Harry Larry is very-? Yes, yes, yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:25:10] Yeah.

JVN [00:25:11] He's very personable. Yes, yes yes. So I was like, she's got a great personality. She doesn't seem like she doesn't feel good. But, you know, the not eating was really stressing me out and she was really little.

HANNAH SHAW [00:25:20] Well, that was really great of you to notice that. A lot of people don't notice. And so-

JVN [00:25:23] She just wouldn't eat. So I was like-

HANNAH SHAW [00:25:24] That's a hugely important thing. Monitoring.

JVN [00:25:26] And I was also like just really triggered from losing Bug. And I was already just very like sensitive to like, you know, noticing pee, BMs, like eating just, you know, being quick to look at that sort of thing. So then I started noticing, like, a lot of leaking, like there was a lot of like poopy leaking everywhere. And I was like, what's happening? And so then we were doing probiotics, trying all these, like foods that, you know, doing them for like two weeks at a time, like, you know, to give her a chance to, like, try to adjust and not just switching it every two seconds and making sure I was doing the same food for all the boys across the board. And then we moved to New York. And by the time we got done filming in Kansas City, I moved to New York, I was dealing with like pretty severe accidents, like once a day. Like it wasn't like missing the litter box by a little bit. It would be like, you know, couch, like rug. Just like not super close to a litter box. But I was like cleaning it up everywhere. And it was like, fine. Then when I got back to New York, it was like the week of Thanksgiving and like five nights in a row, like I would come up to my bed and it looked like the aerial golf course view of like a golf course. But it was made like cat diarrhea lakes, like the shape of golf course. Like 18 pools.

HANNAH SHAW [00:26:33] I'm sorry to laugh. That's just like a beautiful description.

JVN [00:26:37] Yeah. And I was like, how can such a small, little, tiny baby make so much liquid diarrhea? And she wasn't even eating. She. I finally found a food that she would eat. But she didn't eat nearly as much as the other two. And I'm like, how is that little of food turning into this much liquid? So then, you know, when you're raising a cat with diarrhea, you get really used to being, training yourself to hear like that shhh. Like, if I heard, like, that pee sound, that sounds like peepee. I'm like, oh, no. Like is she? Because I would want to hear, like, liter grind afterwards, like, I wouldn't want to hear like the pee on like wood, you know? Like that's what, or-

HANNAH SHAW [00:27:06] And when they have diarrhea that badly, there's all these secondary things that happen. They become so dehydrated.

JVN [00:27:11] Yes. Listless, tired. So, it's like, yes. So then the week of Thanksgiving I woke up at like 2:00 in the morning to her, like pawing my chest and just like, you know, cause she was very cuddly, like loves to sleep. Just the most cuddly, sweet personality cat. And she's sitting on my chest. And then I hear the noise. But I was confused because it was 2:00 in the morning. I was like, no, it couldn't be, like you're, you're actually on my chest. So I know that I'm not maybe one of the other cats has diarrhea. So then I turned on the lamp next to my bed and she had a shit gallons of kitten diarrhea, like all over my chest, like it was over the comforter.

HANNAH SHAW [00:27:45] That's horrible.

JVN [00:27:45] But literally just like and like, I'm not kidding you. And I see like five nights in a row, like, I'm serious like five nights in a row. But at the least the first four nights it was like I walked up to it. It wasn't in the middle of the night. So at that point I was like, OK, this, I, like I don't know what to do anymore. I need a, so I found a vet in New York that would help me, like, really raise her because I just like I couldn't keep like just being like swimming in diarrhea all the time. I was like all the time. But that was a really painful decision. 'Cause I was like, I really like and I was like, I don't, I was like, looking at her, I was like, I don't like want you to think I'm never gonna see you again, like you're coming back home. But I just like I can't, I don't what to do.

JVN [00:28:16] No, you've been such a loving and responsible guardian to her.

HANNAH SHAW [00:28:19] But then in New York, it was so expensive and that vet was like just raking me over coals, honey. So then I called the vet in Kansas City who had helped me with, help me, me when I first adopted them and helped me with Bug the First. And she was like, Oh my God, queen. And so I got her back to Kansas City and then she raised her, or she raised Liza from like December to like two weeks ago, up to like nine pounds, totally thriving, totally gained weight. I have pictures on my phone. My mom, she lives with my mom now. She's oh, she's about a year old. She's going to come back to New York in September. Oh, my gosh. Really quick break. We'll be right back with more "Getting Curious" after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious", this Jonathan Van Ness. We have Hannah Shaw, Kitten Lady, activist, cat mother, cat activist. So then she's doing really good now and she's gonna bring, my mom is going to house sit for me when I'm on book tour in September. And she's going to bring Liza back and then I'll have a three cat household. So question about that is this. We're not having any accidents anymore. We're totally regulated on our food. We have our system down. But when I get Liza back, she's not sick or anything because she's been at my mom's house and has effectively been in like a quarantine.

HANNAH SHAW [00:29:40] Sure.

JVN [00:29:40] But she hasn't, my babies, my two, Bug the Second and Larry haven't, wouldn't have seen her for like 10 months.

HANNAH SHAW [00:29:48] Right.

JVN [00:29:48] So I need to do like a reintroduction again, like I would have any other time, like keep her in a separate, like in her safe room for like a week and do the whole sock thing.

HANNAH SHAW [00:29:56] Yeah. I think every, every case is going to be different. So you are a great judge of, of what's going on and you can, you know, make a decision about when it's, when it's right to take those next steps. Definitely starting with a home base is important. So just getting her in a space that she's comfortable, you know, so that she's just, she's got her crash pad, she

knows where she is. She can start smelling things, recognizing this is my territory. I know where my litter box is. I know where my food is. I feel really safe here. I feel loved. And then you can start scent swapping.

JVN [00:30:30] Yes. That's the sock thing.

HANNAH SHAW [00:30:32] Yeah. So like giving, you know, take her bag and give it to the others and then take their stuff and give it to her. You know, it's possible that they will see each other and hit it off right away. And it's also possible that it takes a few weeks. So I always recommend just going into it with an open heart and mind, knowing that, you know, if there's some hissing in the beginning, that's OK. Like that is part of the transition. They're just sort of navigating that new relationship in that territory and, you know, figuring out where everybody falls. But I, I think that you are so dedicated to these cats, it's very clear. And I think you're gonna do such a good job getting them back to equilibrium and happiness.

JVN [00:31:12] You know how sometimes like they play fight? How do you, like you know, how like cats play fight sometimes?

HANNAH SHAW [00:31:16] Sure.

JVN [00:31:16] How do you know if, like, they're like hating each other or if it's just like normal play fighting?

HANNAH SHAW [00:31:19] Oh, well, if they're like screaming really loudly or if there's, you know, there's a difference between a scared, really fearful cat who is, you know, on their side tail poofed out ears all the way down. Big eyes, you know, loud.

JVN [00:31:36] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:31:36] Loud.

JVN [00:31:37] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:31:38] Sounds versus just kind of, you know, like tumbling around in the schoolyard. So.

JVN [00:31:42] Ok, wait. Here's this other thing. This is like a lot of me talk and not-.

HANNAH SHAW [00:31:45] No, it's OK.

JVN [00:31:45] Because a lot of times when I interview, I try to like do things more for like general questions, but it's my fucking podcast and I have questions about my babies.

HANNAH SHAW [00:31:51] I love, and I want to hear about your cats.

JVN [00:31:53] So lately I've been with Bug the First and Larry, because we're filming right now, you know, in Philadelphia and everything. And I just got to this point, where I'm like over not having my cats, like and I just was like, I'm going to be, I heard that Taylor Swift, like always has her cats, like just judging from her gram.

HANNAH SHAW [00:32:06] Right.

JVN [00:32:06] And I was like, I want to be Taylor Swift. Like, I want to have my cats everywhere. So I started, like having Harry Larry and Bug the Second coming with me, like from Philly to New York, because it's like an hour drive. And I just been like having them come with me. Bug the Second, such an expert traveler.

HANNAH SHAW [00:32:20] Oh good.

JVN [00:32:21] He hops right into his old kiddy carrier. Doesn't make a sound. His ears aren't pissed off. He just like looks out the window and is like, he doesn't wanna come out of the kitty carrier. That stresses him out but he's happy as a clam and his little-, and he's not stressed out afterwards. You would think Harry Larry with how fun he is that he doesn't mind. This cat is the worst traveler you have ever, ever, ever seen. So at first I was like, I don't want to drug my cat. So I was like, I'm just not drug you. This cat screamed meowed. I've never heard a cat make noises like this. Like, I was like, oh, he'll probably calm down in a little bit. He was making the same noise from the time my, we left the apartment till the time we walked from door-to-door.

HANNAH SHAW [00:32:59] Sure.

JVN [00:32:59] He was hoarse.

HANNAH SHAW [00:33:01] He's singing.

JVN [00:33:02] But he was literally the next day, like his meows, like when you tried to meow like normal. He was like cackle-y, like he was hoarse from like using his voice too much. So then I was like maybe like a little Benadryl, like I read online, like a little baby, like, let's start with like a B.B. gun instead of like a cannon. That didn't do anything. And then I was like, what about our friend Gabapentin? So I shove a lil Gabapentin there. Still more angry than a banshee. Like, what should I do? Just like put a towel over his carrier? 'Cause even when-, because he does want to get out of his carrier. Because I was thinking maybe-.

HANNAH SHAW [00:33:33] Is he happy once he gets there? Like is you're staying there for an extended period and then he's happy once you arrive, he just doesn't like traveling.

JVN [00:33:41] Yes. Exactly.

HANNAH SHAW [00:33:42] Well, the Gabapentin is what I did with my cats when I traveled across the country and we have, I have, my partner and I have three cats and his cat, Haroon, is very much the same way. Like, cries the entire time. And the gabapentin didn't do much.

JVN [00:34:00] Do we double dose them of is that bad?

HANNAH SHAW [00:34:01] No, no. I certainly wouldn't do that.

JVN [00:34:02] No, no, no. Of course not, no, no, no. I don't want to do that.

HANNAH SHAW [00:34:07] You can cover. Did you cover with a towel or with a blanket or something like that?

JVN [00:34:10] Does that help? To cut off the stimulation?

HANNAH SHAW [00:34:10] Yeah. So you have to think like a cat when you're wondering, when you're "Getting Curious" about a cat. You want to think like a cat. So you're in a carrier. You can see out and you're thinking, I'm here, but why can't I be there? When you cover it, it's more like a

wall. So, you know, you just put a nice little blanket cover. That's why I even half here, like, I had a blanket covering them when I came in, because it's just, it's a little more calm. It's dark. It's like a little cave. Where they feel like, OK, I can kind of like, a cave in here. And just get through these few hours that it takes to get.

JVN [00:34:44] The stress. Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:34:43] To where you're going. But if, if there, if it's a totally stressful thing all the way through, then, you know, you can't make a cat do something that a cat doesn't want to do. The other suggestion I have is if you want to have cats with you, you could train them, if they want to be trained, on a harness, because-

JVN [00:35:01] How do you train a cat on a harness? Because I've tried, they hated it.

HANNAH SHAW [00:35:04] Well, you just have to do it in a very gentle way. So, you know, I, my cats are trained on harness.

JVN [00:35:09] What if it's an old cat?

HANNAH SHAW [00:35:10] Well, you know, it's, it's up to the cat. Every cat is different. There's a lot of different ways to be a cat.

JVN [00:35:15] Harry Larry like developed how to, like, bend his knees in a way I've never seen a cat bend their knees when I got a harness, and he literally jumped vertically in the air and then turned over on his back and was like back flopping on the concrete. Like I was like, you're going to hurt yourself.

HANNAH SHAW [00:35:25] Yeah.

JVN [00:35:26] And he was just really big and I, he just wanted to kind of drag. Like he wanted me to drag, he wasn't into walking.

HANNAH SHAW [00:35:32] So slow and steady, for sure. You know, you can put it on them and then give them their favorite treat indoors and then just take it off. So they're like, oh, cool, when I put this on, I get a treat. And this is, you know, positively reinforcing that the harness is a good thing. It's not scary. And then maybe the next, you know, once they're comfortable with that, you put the harness on them and you walk outside for two seconds and go, that's what the outside looks like, Larry. And then go right back in. And he's like, OK, I'm fine. And then, you know, you work, you work up from there. So it's like a challenge line.

JVN [00:35:59] He's a harness cat.

HANNAH SHAW [00:35:59] You're always doing a little more. Maybe, but also maybe not. And I think, you know, you just want to go liek, meet them where they are. But of course, if you get kittens, you can harness train them from the beginning. And then these guys could be little adventure cats for whoever they go to.

JVN [00:36:13] Are you my harness cats?

HANNAH SHAW [00:36:14] I don't. You'd have to get like a hamster harness for them at this age.

JVN [00:36:18] Because they're so little. So what do you cats see? Like when they're babies, like are they co-, like are cats colorblind? Like what are they hear? Like what do cats think about?

HANNAH SHAW [00:36:26] Yeah. So there's a whole section in my book all about the biological development of kittens because, you know, it changes so much. If you get a two week old kitten and you're going look over here for the photo. They can't like their eyes might be open at that point, but they can't see anything. So when they're born, their eyes are closed, they're sealed shut, and you just leave them shut. You don't open them. You know, they open on their own between eight to twelve days. And when their eyes open, they really can't see very much. They can't focus. Their pupils don't really dilate to light. So they really just are meant to be sleeping and incubating at that period. But right around this stage, the ones in your arms, they're, you know, they just turned four weeks. Between three and a half and four weeks, everything starts to change. So you start to see more of the iris as the pupil dilates more and you start to see that they actually can track movement in space. So all of a sudden, only in the last two days, you look at the kittens and they are looking back at you. Before now they couldn't look back at you. So that's why I said you're like the first person that these kittens have really laid eyes on because they mostly just nap and they can't see anything until right now. So now they're starting to be curious about the world around them. They can track objects in space. They can try to reach out to different objects. They're also becoming more coordinated at this age. So until now, they couldn't walk and now they're starting to be able to walk. So they can see something and say, I want to go over there and engage with whatever it is, which means they're just about old enough to start having toys. They don't play yet, but they will in about the next couple days.

JVN [00:38:00] And like hunting someday because they can see stuff.

HANNAH SHAW [00:38:03] Yes. So at four weeks they get their canines. If you look in their mouth. Here, I'll open their little teeth for you. Check this out. The cutest teeth in the world. You see those little tiny fang teeth? The canines. So those just popped through in the last like two days.

JVN [00:38:20] Are you teething babies?

HANNAH SHAW [00:38:22] And those canines are what they use for hunting so they don't have their premolars yet. If you look at the side of the mouth, they just have gums. Those are the teeth that are for actually eating meat.

JVN [00:38:32] And in the wild, they like meat. They like, what are they? They just like everything-vores?

HANNAH SHAW [00:38:36] Well these guys are carnivores. But at this age, they're nursing. So what happens is the teeth, the tooth development actually really indicates what they are able to do. When they're born, they have no teeth. So they might even, you know, they can even hiss at you that young. But they hiss with this little gummy mouth and it's like the cutest thing in the world.

JVN [00:38:54] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:38:54] Three weeks, they get their little incisors. Those tiny, tiny teeth at the front. And those are not used for anything other than grooming. Have you ever seen a cat kind of like gnaw at their paw?

JVN [00:39:02] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:39:04] To clean. So that's the incisors. Those come in at three weeks, then at four weeks they get these little canines and the canines are for actually like stabbing, for hunting.

So that's why at four weeks they start being like, wait a minute, I have these little stabby teeth and I can see stuff and I can walk.

JVN [00:39:21] Yes.

HANNAH SHAW [00:39:21] I should try to bite something. So that's four weeks. Five weeks their premolars come in. Those are the teeth on the side of the mouth and that's when they can start eating meat. So in the wild, mom cat right now would be bringing like weak prey to her babies and they wouldn't be expected to eat it. They would just be expected to like, take a couple bites and be like, you know, oh, OK, I'm learning how to hunt. But next week is when they'll start weaning.

JVN [00:39:45] Mom would bring them like an almost dead mouse?

HANNAH SHAW [00:39:49] Yeah. Icky.

JVN [00:39:50] Ew.

HANNAH SHAW [00:39:50] I know, we don't do that in my house.

JVN [00:39:52] No, no.

HANNAH SHAW [00:39:53] We just give them little, like rattle mice and a little crinkle balls and stuff like that.

JVN [00:39:57] Much cuter.

HANNAH SHAW [00:39:58] Yes.

JVN [00:39:59] Are, are, can kittens see color?

HANNAH SHAW [00:40:02] They can see some color, but these guys can't. They're still not really able to see very much. You know, they can kind of see movement better than they can see color.

JVN [00:40:12] But what about when they can, get older? Or when they do? Are they colorblind when they're older?

HANNAH SHAW [00:40:17] They can see some color, but they mostly see in movement. So, like, they are very, very good at observing something that is moving. Like if there's stillness and then suddenly there's movement.

JVN [00:40:30] Yeah.

HANNAH SHAW [00:40:30] 'Cause if you think about like a lion on the savannah and it's still, they need to be able to see when an object starts moving in the distance so that they can chase after and hunt. So that's I, I imagine if you're a cat, if you're a kitten, you know, and you're, you're looking out at the world, you're really seeing a lot of the motion. And that is what gets them, you know, hunting and getting really excited about playing with you. That's why kittens sometimes bite hands and feet because your hands and feet move.

JVN [00:40:57] Yeah, like under the blankets especially.

HANNAH SHAW [00:40:58] Oh, yes. Yeah. Do you have cats that hunt your feet?

JVN [00:40:59] Yes. Yes. Major, like Larry was a major foot hunter. And Bug the Second also is.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:06] Yeah.

JVN [00:41:06] Major foot hunters.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:07] Yeah.

JVN [00:41:08] So what, like through your years of being a kitten baby advocate and expert like, and I'm sure so many people come to you with so many cat issues.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:15] Sure.

JVN [00:41:15] What are like the biggest, like, cat parent issues? Like, like, like fighting cats or like cats that fight, or like cats don't get along or like a timid cat. And they want to be like, what are like the things that people struggle with the most?

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:29] Well, I mostly am working with people who are saving baby kittens, so I get a lot of the same questions with that, with foster parents or with people who are interested.

JVN [00:41:40] Don't suck his peepee, weirdo.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:42] Oh, I'm so sorry. They might be hungry.

JVN [00:41:44] Oh my gosh. I think he was nursing for his peter.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:47] She's looking for-.

JVN [00:41:48] That's not your mother's breast.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:50] She's looking for their bottle. So we can, we can have you feed her.

JVN [00:41:53] Oh, let's feed. Oh wait, let's do it on Instagram because I want people to see.

HANNAH SHAW [00:41:55] Sure. Yeah. OK. OK.

JVN [00:41:57] No. No. Poor you.

HANNAH SHAW [00:42:00] This just got X rated.

JVN [00:42:01] So X rated. Poor you, I know.

HANNAH SHAW [00:42:04] Poor Mountain Gem needs to have his bits protected.

JVN [00:42:10] No.

HANNAH SHAW [00:42:12] OK. So common things that people ask about kittens. Well, the first I would say is people just have a lot of misconceptions about what like what, whether they're able to foster. I get a lot of people who are like, oh, well, I wish that I could do what you do, but I can't because, you know, I don't have enough room in my house or something like that. And that's when I show them something like this. It's like you have room to do this. Absolutely. There are a lot of misconceptions about barriers that people perceive to being able to do this work. So they

think maybe, oh, I hear all the time if I had a million dollars, if I win the lottery, I'll start saving animals, and I'm like, you don't have to have a million dollars to start. You don't even have to have a hundred dollars to start. This is a thing that the shelters sponsor your ability to do this. So you sign up to foster and they cover all your vaccines, your spay neuter if they get sick and they need medical care. Really, you know, a big part of my message, especially in the book, is teaching people that, you know, all that you really need to provide, is, is love and attention and a safe space to be. There's a couple skills that you need to have, some things you need to know. Like, for instance, these kids need to be kept warm. They can't thermo regulate. So, you know, for the first four weeks of life, they cannot control their own body temperature at all. They need a heat source. So that's an important thing for people to know. It's important for people to know how often to feed them and how to help them go to the bathroom.

JVN [00:43:41] What do you do if you find a cat?

HANNAH SHAW [00:43:43] If you find a cat or a kitten?

JVN [00:43:44] Kitten, I mean.

HANNAH SHAW [00:43:44] If you find a kitten then yeah. You want to start to assess the situation and say, is this kitten under five weeks or over five weeks?

JVN [00:43:51] How did, how do we know that? Eyes opened or eyes closed.

HANNAH SHAW [00:43:53] If they're running around and they're pouncing on stuff.

JVN [00:43:57] That's over five weeks.

HANNAH SHAW [00:43:58] Then that's probably a five, five plus week old kitten. These guys, we want to, you know, take them in to foster care so that they can be socialized for adoption. Under five weeks, you want to do what we talked about earlier, try to reunite them with mom. But I have all of this stuff in the book and people can learn really everything from rescue to adoption and everything in between. How to cope emotionally while you're doing it, how to have fun while you're doing it. So.

JVN [00:44:24] How do we cope emotionally?

HANNAH SHAW [00:44:26] There's an entire chapter in here.

JVN [00:44:28] Where is the one about the, I want to see the color of poop that you mentioned.

HANNAH SHAW [00:44:30] Oh, well, while you were talking about Liza.

JVN [00:44:35] So let's go over that, I want to talking about Liza's poop.

HANNAH SHAW [00:44:36] Let me find— there it is. This is just something I thought that you might get a kick out of if it's the color wheel of poop. And this is all about—

JVN [00:44:41] And red's blood. So that's not good.

HANNAH SHAW [00:44:43] This is all about "Getting Curious" about kitten poop, which is a very important thing, because your, your cat's poop is like their report card. It kind of tells you—

JVN [00:44:52] Oh, my God. She, Liza's was very beige. Very beige. So listen to beige, you guys. "Pale poop is often a sign that the kitten is failing to absorb nutrients from her food". Literally, that's what it was, because she had IBS and she wasn't absorbing the nutrients. A probiotic or predigested enzyme can help support kittens with malabsorption concerns. We had that. Oh, my God, I wonder if she did give prematurely weaned. Overfeeding was not our case.

HANNAH SHAW [00:45:20] Yeah, yeah. So there's and of course, this is just a guideline.

JVN [00:45:22] Multitude of reasons. Yeah, of course.

HANNAH SHAW [00:45:24] But it's something for people to have. So, you know, everything in this book, it's meant to be, you know, fun, but also a thing that if, if you're fostering or you're taking care of a kitten and it's the middle of the night, you don't know who to talk to. You have this resource. And, you know, I also have like literally hundreds of videos on my YouTube channel talking to people about how to do this stuff.

JVN [00:45:43] So very active on YouTube. Very active on the Gram.

HANNAH SHAW [00:45:45] Yeah. So if you just go on, if you just search Kitten Lady, you'll find my videos. And then it's meant to be kind of an inviting and accessible form of education for people who are interested in taking care of kittens and also helping the cats who live outdoors in our communities.

JVN [00:45:59] And if you have a cat or a dog and you find like a, like a stray kitten or cat, it is important, if you are gonna bring them into your home, like, let's say, it's the morning and you have to go to work and you, like, want to bring their cat inside just to get them out of harm's way or whatever, like put them in a separate room in your house until you take them to the vet in case they do have like a contagious disease. You don't want your current animal to get.

HANNAH SHAW [00:46:18] Yeah. Two weeks minimum quarantine while you're getting them nice and sturdy and robust. And, you know, these guys have passed their quarantine now, which is why they get to be here in your loving arms, loving on your beard.

JVN [00:46:30] Okay. Well, Hannah Shaw, I hope that this wasn't me just petting a cat for 40 minutes. I feel like we got good information.

HANNAH SHAW [00:46:36] I loved watching you bond with them. I think that they love you. And I love hearing about your cats too. I can talk about this stuff all day.

JVN [00:46:45] Did we? This is the part, though, since we are wrapping up. Is there anything we missed that people really need to know? What can, what can? What do you want people to know about kitten adoption, about cat parenthood?

HANNAH SHAW [00:46:55] Oh, gosh. I mean, there's so much.

JVN [00:46:58] So rewarding.

HANNAH SHAW [00:46:58] Yes. Yeah. I mean, I encourage anybody who is interested in making a difference in the world to consider fostering kittens. It is a way that you can see your own power. And I think it spills out into so much of your life to, to be so empowered to realize the difference that one person can make. It's a really beautiful gift that you can give you're, you know, you're baby sitting for a couple weeks and it gives them the gift of up to 20 plus years of life. How often do we have these big problems in the world that are so solvable? Right? I think there's a lot of, a

lot of pain in the world, especially right now. And this is something that when you learn that hundreds of thousands of kittens are being euthanized in animal shelters, that can feel really overwhelming.

JVN [00:47:41] Hundreds of thousands.

HANNAH SHAW [00:47:43] But every single one of us can play our small part in changing that. So I would just say, you know, get out there, you know, save some kittens' lives. I have the tools to help you do it. So whether you want to learn through an audiobook, through a hardcover book, through a YouTube video, through Instagram. However you learn best. Like I am here for you. I love people who have the compassion to save these kittens lives. So I just, I love this movement so much.

JVN [00:48:10] So it's like if this speaks to you, like there's resources for you to get involved.

HANNAH SHAW [00:48:14] Yes, please. We need you. Absolutely.

JVN [00:48:16] My final question is, is five cats too much for me to raise? No.

HANNAH SHAW [00:48:20] It depends on the person.

JVN [00:48:21] I'm, I already know the answer. It's no, it's not too much. OK. It's enough.

HANNAH SHAW [00:48:24] Well, it depends on the person. It absolutely depends. And-

JVN [00:48:27] I might have to hire a cat nanny though, 'cause I'm a little busy.

HANNAH SHAW [00:48:31] Yeah. That's fair. That's fair. Yeah. I think that everybody knows their own boundaries and it's important to listen to your gut and listen to your heart and, you know, do what is right for you.

JVN [00:48:40] My heart and my gut and my cat ovaries are screaming to take these two home in four weeks.

HANNAH SHAW [00:48:45] No, I get it. I had like a cat uterus inside of me that aches when I don't have babies and I'm like, what is going on? I need more kittens.

JVN [00:48:51] Yeah. I'm feeling, me too, I'm feeling really like ooh. I'm feeling just off without kittens. I mean, I need more.

HANNAH SHAW [00:48:57] Well, you look very maternal with these babies and I know you have your little toothbrush so you can do some grooming with the babies.

JVN [00:49:05] We gotta go make this content.

HANNAH SHAW [00:49:07] Yes.

JVN [00:49:07] Hannah Shaw, thank you so much.

HANNAH SHAW [00:49:08] Thank you.

JVN [00:49:12] You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Hannah Shaw. You'll find links to Hannah's work and socials in the episode

discussion of whatever you're listening to the show on. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. Our theme music is "Freak" by Quin. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. If you enjoy our show, tell everyone about it. Introduce a friend. Show them how to subscribe. "Getting Curious" is produced by Emily Bossak, Julie Carrillo, Rae Ellis, Harry Nelson and Colin Anderson.