

# Crochet for Your Comfort



*Plus 30 Patterns to Pamper Pets*

*By Linda Kastiel Kozlowski  
Founder, Comfort for Critters*

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***How crochet helps pets, and you!***

*By Linda Kastiel Kozlowski*



*By purchasing this book, you are supporting the Comfort for Critters program, which donates free handmade blankets to comfort homeless pets living in 400+ animal shelters across the US. While these pets await adoption, the blankets provide a comfortable bed year-round. When they are adopted, their blanket goes with them, providing something familiar as they adjust to their "forever family."*

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*This book is dedicated to every CFC volunteer and supporter.*

*Your kind notes of encouragement often came at just the right time for my mental health.*

*You may not have known it, but you were a powerful tool in His hands.*

# **P**ATTERNS INSIDE

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# HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Comfort for Critters was born in 2007, with the adoption of a kitten named Anna. As I made my choice at the DuPage County Animal Shelter, in Wheaton, Illinois I had dozens of eyes upon me, each asking to join me on the ride home. Those “looks” and my Christian faith, told me I had to do something for all the critters which I couldn’t bring home that day.

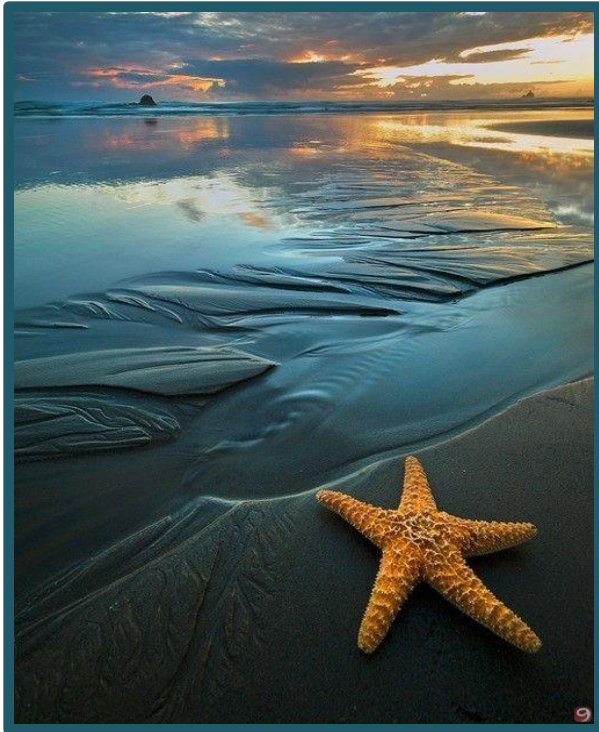
As the shelter worker explained that I could bring in old towels, to be used in the cats’ enclosures (giving them something soft to lay on), I immediately felt the nudge and knew what I was being prompted to do. I asked if they’d accept crocheted blankets instead. The shelter, in urgent need of bedding, agreed. I ventured a bit further and asked if the blankets could be sent home with the pets, so that they each would have their own “blankie” for life. I remembered how my own children became attached to their baby blankets, and how comforting they were to them in times of stress.

The shelter completely agreed, saying that having the scent of the shelter on the blankets would provide comfort to the pets as they adjusted to their new surroundings in their forever home. This was the first of many pieces which fell into place for Comfort for Critters, keeping us going and helping us donate over 125,000 blankets (so far)!

## *Can a single blanket make a difference?*

The most common question I’m asked is, “How can you even hope to make a difference, when there are millions of pets in shelters?” When I get this question, I often recite this favorite story of mine. When I heard it in 2007, it was yet another piece, falling perfectly into place.

## ***The Star Thrower***



*One day a man was walking along a beach. The sun was shining, and it was a beautiful day. Off in the distance he could see a young boy going back and forth between the surf's edge and the beach. Back and forth the boy went.*

*As the man approached, he could see that there were hundreds of starfish stranded on the sand as the result of the natural action of the tide. The man was struck by the apparent futility of the task. There were far too many starfish. Many of them were sure to die.*

*As he approached, the boy continued the task of picking up starfish one by one and throwing them back into the sea. As he came up to the boy he said, "You must be crazy! There are thousands of miles of beach covered with starfish. You can't possibly make a difference."*

*The boy looked at the man. He then bent down and picked up one more starfish and threw it back into the sea. He turned back to the man and said, "But it made a difference to that one."*

With that beautiful ending in mind, I'd like to very briefly recap all the blessings these simple blankets bring. This information is covered more fully in my first book, "Crochet for Critters", if you care to read more!

# HOW BLANKETS HELP PETS

The most obvious, and practical, reason is that they simply soften the ground, or the enclosure, in a shelter. We like to make our blankets thick, whenever possible, so they provide a soft, comforting surface to lay on, rather than only a concrete floor or stainless-steel cage. But as I've discovered over many years, they provide so much more!

- **Blankets boost adoption rates!** *This happens because the families now see the animal as a "pet" on a handmade blanket, not as a "stray". In addition, having their own "blankie" relaxes the pet, which makes the whole interaction so much better!*
- **Blankets are transition objects!** The blanket carries the scent of the shelter, which is something familiar and safe. Having a "security blanket" for the pet, as they make the adjustment, truly does ease their transition into their new, forever home.
- **Blankets as comfort objects!** Blankets comfort the pets who may be laying on a cold floor, or a hard enclosure, but they also provide something to play with, roll around on, knead, and even carry when they visit a family or the veterinarian. They are truly a comfort toy!
- **Blankets help the shelters!** Shelters are in constant need of bedding, so providing a comfy blanket gives them one less thing to buy. It's also a message to the shelters that people support their work and support the pets they are caring for!
- **Blankets are treasured by the families!** Blankets provide a very practical use, making carriers much more comfy for the ride home. I've also heard from countless shelters that the families admire the handmade blankets (not everyone knows how to crochet!) and that they become cherished keepsakes of their pets, kept long after the pet is gone.



# HOW CROCHET HELPS YOU

You may not have considered the variety of ways a simple blanket can benefit a shelter pet and an animal shelter. I know I didn't! I simply felt compelled to help, and the pieces fell into place. In much the same way, I didn't truly think about the effect crochet would have on volunteers, least of all, me. Before Comfort for Critters, I'd crochet sporadically, which is to say when one of my sisters or I had a baby! Once I started CFC, I was crocheting almost every night after work. It quickly became something I was drawn to do, at the end of a long day. When CFC began, I was working outside the home and raising 7 and 9-year-old boys. Needless to say, many of my days were busy. Despite my schedule, I would try to find some time, even 10 or 20 minutes, to unwind and craft. It made me feel better, of that I was certain. I also noticed it's absence, when I couldn't squeeze in a little crafting before bed. Crochet, for me, was a de-stressor. And stress, has always been my Achilles' heel.

Migraines, Colitis, Shingles (in my 40s!), ulcers. Virtually every serious or chronic condition I've battled, was caused by "stress". I consider myself to be fortunate with my health, but I've never found a long-term way to keep stress from impacting my body and my life. Maybe you've experienced this as well?

Given my history, I've read dozens of books on stress, covering its effects on the body and providing mitigation techniques. To be sure, not all stress is bad. Sometimes it helps you meet a deadline or perform at your best. There's actually a term for that, it's called "eustress". It's the

Throughout this book my focus is on crochet, since crochet patterns are included. If in my research, knitting was specifically mentioned, I do list it, but truly any reference to crochet or to knitting are interchangeable. Crafting, in all of its forms, brings comfort to those who enjoy it!

chronic, unabating stress (called “destress”) that’s the problem. Believe me, this simple, 6 letter word can do some strange things!

A common area to feel the effects of stress, and one that I’m quite familiar with, is the gut. From the start, to the “finish line” of the digestive tract, stress can seriously mess things up. It can make you eat more, sometimes way more, or make you eat less or virtually nothing. Either way, it’s not healthy.

Stress also makes itself visible via your hair and skin. Stress exasperates many skin conditions and can even lead to hair loss. It can, and does, cause real, physical pain. It can cause your muscles to tighten up, often leading to localized or overall soreness. It tends to move through the “tension triangle” (shoulders, head and jaw) causing knots and even spasms. It pushes your heart to beat faster, and can cause both shortness of breath and rapid breathing.

Overall, stress weakens your immune system and can really do a number on your mental health. On top of everything, if you’re dealing with most any chronic condition, stress can make it worse. Once it worsens, this can drive up your stress, and the cycle begins anew. Argh!

“This effort has been a special reward during the global crisis we are in. Helping is a form of gratitude, for whatever blessings have come my way. What better purpose could I have at this time?”

Debby K.

As I battle the stressors in my life, I consider their effect on me physically, mentally and emotionally. I’m happy to report that crochet can impact each of these areas as well!

### ***Crochet as a tool, not a cure***

I wouldn’t for a moment, suggest that crocheting is a cure for anything. It can however, be a useful tool in your toolbox, when it comes to dealing with stress. It’s inexpensive, has virtually no side-effects, is available to everyone, and it results in some beautiful creations!

***End of free sample. Please enjoy the two free patterns, included below.***

# Crossover Crochet



This is a great pattern if you want to use a skein of yarn that's not quite full. By breaking it up with another color, you can make a full blanket. The stitch is easy, fun, and quick to do. I like that it makes a "fluffy" blanket, but one without large holes. Be creative and blend in other colors, a wider border, or whatever else you come up with. Pet blankets are the perfect "canvas" for experimentation!

**Gather your comfort tools:** I suggest using 4-ply yarn and a "K" sized hook for best results.

## Get started helping pets - CH 56

**Row 1** – SC in second CH from hook and in each CH across.

**Row 2 - 6** – CH 2, turn, HDC in first SC \* skip next SC, HDC in next SC, HDC in skipped SC, repeat from \* across to last SC, HDC in last SC.

**Row 7** – In contrasting color, CH 2, turn, DC in each CH across to end.

**Row 8** – Continue pattern, doing 6 rows of crossed HDC, followed by 1 row of DC in contrasting color, until you reach the desired size (roughly square). *Note: For these repetitions you'll be putting HDCs into the top of DCs (not SCs) as you did the first time!*

"I wish I could record all the wonderful comments we get from adopters when we present them with the blankets you all make for each kitty to go home with. Thank you so much!"

ADOPT Pet Shelter

**Final row & border** – To finish the blanket I ended with a row of DC in the contrasting color and then continued it around the other three sides (putting 3 DC into each corner as I went). I then added a row of SC all around (3 SC in each corner) to make the border the “perfect” width!

**Key:**

CH- Chain

SC – Single crochet

HDC – Half double crochet

“Making blankets definitely helped me focus on something positive during the coronavirus quarantine. Crocheting has always been a stress reliever for me as well. I get to do something I enjoy and also make a difference. It’s a win-win for me!”

Holly R.

**It’s good to be blessed. It’s better to be a blessing. ~ Jerry Smith**



# Kitty Saucer



This is a unique creation in some ways (it has a “side”) and very basic in others (the base is a simple, round blanket). Many shelter pets love to curl up against something, for instance the side of their enclosure or inside a box. I wanted to include this pattern, so that we can provide some of these special creations to shelters. I made this pattern for each of my cats, and it’s one of their favorite places to hang out. It’s super-easy to make too. Enjoy!

**Gather your comfort tools:** Crochet Hook - size I and one skein washable yarn.

**Get started helping pets** - CH 5, SS to join into a ring.

**Row 1** – CH 2 (counts as DC), 11 DC into the center of the ring, ss to join to first CH

**Row 2** – CH 2, DC in the same stitch, 2 DC in all stitches from previous round, SS to join (you should have 24 DC, including the first CH 2)

**Row 3** - CH 2, DC in the same stitch, DC in next stitch, \* 2 DC, 1 DC \*. Repeat between \* around the circle, SS to join to first CH.

**Row 4** – CH 2, DC in the same stitch, DC into next 2 stitches, \*2 DC, 1 DC in next 2 stitches \*. Repeat between \* around the circle, SS to join to first CH.

**Row 5 to 12** – For each subsequent row, add one additional DC between each “increase” (ie. 2 DC in the same stitch). Making 12 rows will create a nice size “saucer.” You can add more rows if you like, simply adding additional DCs, as you did in the previous rows.

**Row 13** – (This row is the start of the saucer’s side). CH 2, HDC around the circle in the front loop only, SS to join to first CH 2.

**Row 14** – CH 2, HDC around the circle in both loops (as you normally would do a HDC), SS to join to first CH 2.

**Row 15 to 17** – CH 2, DC around the circle, SS to join to first CH2.

For the next step, you’ll make the sides nice and sturdy! Simply fold the side of the saucer outward, matching the top of the side with row 13 (where you worked into the front loop only). Work a SC around the perimeter, joining the back loop of row 13 and working through both loops of the DCs made in row 17. I used a contrasting color, just to add a bit of pizzazz!

**Final trim on sides** – Add one more row of SC into the top of the side. I did this with the same contrasting color. I just found the loops that were at the top of each stitch and worked the SC into those. I skipped every 5<sup>th</sup> stitch, to help the side curve in a bit, and therefore stay upright.

**Key:**

CH – chain

SS – slip stitch

HDC – half double crochet

DC – double crochet

ST – stitch

BTN – between

prev – previous

rpt - repeat

“Thank you for the lovely bedding that you have been providing for the ferrets. It is nice to have them in the cages and also we do send it home with the ferrets when they are adopted. Thank you for what you do and your love for animals in shelters needing some comfort.”

Greater Chicago Ferret Association



**There is no psychiatrist in the world, like a puppy licking your face.**

*~ Ben Williams*

# CONNECT ONLINE

We'd love for you to keep up-to-date on what we're doing to comfort homeless pets. Please subscribe to our free newsletter or follow us on social media!

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