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6 Ways to Make Your Cat Feel Safe in Your Home

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Your home is a safe space—a place where you and your family build memories and feel comfortable, relaxed and at peace. The same should be true for our pets.



But some cats may have a difficult time adjusting to your home, or they may experience stress due to a variety of situations such as moving, remodeling or entertaining company.

“**Signs of stress** include hiding for prolonged periods of time, decreased water and food intake, excess vocalizing, marking and gastrointestinal upset,” says Dr. Jim D. Carlson, holistic veterinarian and owner of **Riverside Animal Clinic & Holistic Center** located in Chicago's northwest suburbs.

If your cat is displaying any of these symptoms, make sure to visit a veterinarian to rule out a medical condition. “It is very common for cats to change their behavior or begin to hide in response to illness,” **Dr. Rachel Malamed**, a Los Angeles-based veterinary behaviorist.

If your veterinarian gives your cat a clean bill of health, but he is still displaying signs of stress or fear, try these six veterinarian-recommended tips:

Learn Cat Body Language

In order to help your cat adjust to certain stressful situations, you need to understand how he's feeling. The best way to do this is by learning **cat body language**, says Malamed.



“Pet parents should have an understanding of feline body language and some of the more subtle cues that indicate stress,” she says. “Avoidance, aggression, crouched posture, ears flat or back and dilated pupils are just some indications of fear and stress.”

If your cat is displaying these behaviors, give him some space and slowly work on building positive associations with stressful situations through desensitization and counterconditioning methods.

“Creating positive associations can be used to try to promote a positive emotional response in association with a trigger,” says Malamed. “A veterinary behaviorist can help you work on some of these issues.”

Stick to a Routine

Humans enjoy daily routines to help keep their lives orderly and organized, and cats are similar. “Providing consistency is the key to reducing stress in an anxious cat through routine scheduling of feeding, litter box care and bonding time,” says Carlson.



Carlson adds that it's helpful to set a consistent work schedule so that your cat gets accustomed to when you'll be in and out of the house.

Provide Vertical Spaces

When cats feel threatened, climbing up on a cat tree, cat tower or cat shelves can help to alleviate that fear.



“Cats like to survey their environments from above and be on the lookout for prey and potential threats,” says Malamed. “For multi-cat households, where there may be inter-cat conflict, perches allow cats to get away or feel more safe when they are high up.”

Enrich Your Cat's Environment

Your home should provide your cat with plenty of opportunities to express normal feline behaviors, says Malamed.



“**Enrichment** has been shown to reduce stress in cats,” she says. “Provide ample toys, perches, scratching posts and other forms of enrichment so that they are less focused on stressors in the environment. Interactive feeding toys are recommended instead of bowls as this provides mental and physical stimulation.”

Provide a Quiet Space

Hiding behavior is common in scared cats, so pet parents should try to provide safe places for a cat to comfortably hide if the home environment becomes too overwhelming.



“Some cats like to be alone and prefer to go to their ‘safe’ place to unwind after a long kitty day,” says Carlson. “Set up this quiet space away from busy areas of the house. A small unused room is an ideal spot for them to have a private area with a perch, kitty condo, various toys and treats.”

While dedicating a room—like a laundry room or bathroom—to your cat is a nice gesture, your cat may be perfectly content with something simpler. “A simple cardboard box with holes in it is a great hiding spot for cats,” says Malamed. “There are also many cool furniture pieces that are aesthetically pleasing but are designed to provide cats with cozy hiding places.”

Try Calming Pheromones

If your cat is fearful, Malamed says that calming pheromones—used in conjunction with enrichment and desensitization and counterconditioning methods—may help cats feel more comfortable.



“Feline facial pheromones such as **Feliway** have been shown to help cats in stressful situations,” she says.

These products are available in easy-to-use diffusers and sprays that cat parents can distribute throughout the home for a calming effect.