



Adopting A Shy/Fearful Cat

Fearful behavior in cats can be caused by: insufficient socialization as a kitten, a traumatizing event in their lives, or some cats can be genetically predisposed to being fearful.

Going to a new, strange environment will cause some cats to regress. Remember your new cat knows us, the routine, and the environment because we took the time to build that relationship. The amount of time it takes a cat to settle into his new home varies from individual to individual; it may take a week or it could take months. You must be ready to give your cat as long as he needs to feel safe and confident – don't give up on him! Many fearful cats bond to their caretaker(s) and make wonderful pets, but will always retain that shyness and hide when strangers are over.

Tips to bring your fearful kitty out of his shell

- Provide your kitty with an appropriate "safe room."
- Always talk and move slowly around the cat. Avoid staring, since that is often perceived as a threat.
- It helps to get down at the cat's level instead of towering over him when you are trying to interact.
- Never underestimate the power of food to help develop your bond!
- Never attempt to pull your cat out of hiding or force him to be held. You may end-up with bites and/or scratches if you, plus your cat will become more frightened of you. Your cat will come to you when he is ready. Until then, pet him gently in his hiding places.
- Encourage play with interactive toys, but make sure the toys you are using are not big and scary!
- Try not to startle the cat. If you have to vacuum, move furniture, or are having a party, etc. confine your cat in his safe room.

Socialization Tips

- Move slowly and talk softly when approaching the cat; get down closer to his level when possible.
- Use food to make friends – you will be amazed the power of some canned food or kibble!
- Use toys to build confidence.
- Handle the cat often, but no more than what he is comfortable with - don't "force" your love on him!
- Gradually introduce your cat to the rest of your home under supervision after he's learned to trust you.
 - One new room at a time is best; if he's overwhelmed, bring him back into his safe room.
- Gradually introduce him to new people, instructing them first what to do and what not to do. Make sure you don't traumatize your cat by overwhelming him with visitors.
- Make the carrier a nice place.
 - Keep your carrier out so he can get used to the carrier.
 - This way the carrier will be a familiar, safe, and relaxing place to be, so vet trips won't be so traumatizing.
- An undersocialized cat is still a cat! Once comfortable (and often at night) they will be just as playful and active as any other cat so make sure you have cat-proofed his safe room and your house (assuming he is comfortable to be exploring your home on his own).
- Do not encourage play-biting by wrestling or using your fingers as toys.
- Socialization takes time. Give your cat at least 20 minutes of socialization time several times a day.

