

No More Scaredy Cat Helping a Shy Cat Feel At Home

The first eight weeks of a kitten's life are very important for socialization with people. Kittens that are born outdoors with no human handling are called "feral". If these kittens are caught and socialized during this initial time in their lives, they can usually be tamed, but they still may be shy. It could also be that a kitten or cat was raised in a single environment and has not had to deal with adapting to different one. Regardless if the cat/kitten finds itself in new surroundings, it will take time for it to adapt.

If you don't feel that you have the time or patience to allow the cat/kitten to adjust at *its* pace, it would be better for you and the cat if you choose another cat that is more sociable. Giving a shy cat the time it needs to trust you and feel comfortable in the home takes time and effort. **However, when a shy cat does trust you, you will be rewarded beyond measure!!**

A Safe Place: When a shy cat goes to a new home it is absolutely essential to keep it confined to one room in your home a minimum of one week, and depending on the cat, it could be for a longer time (two to four weeks). Cats feel safe in smaller areas rather than larger areas. If you give your new cat access to your entire home before it is ready, it will hide more, making his adjustment much longer. Also, it will be more difficult to monitor whether it is eating and using the litter box. A cat will work up to feeling comfortable exploring its new home, so it is important to let it go at the pace it sets and not impose your own upon it.

A shy cat will choose a "safe place" in your home. This will be the spot it will go to when it becomes frightened for whatever reason, e.g. noises, company (human or animal). Most likely, its first safe place will be in the room where it was initially confined. This will also be the spot where it may feel most comfortable accepting attention from you. As it adjusts to your home, it may either increase the number of safe places or eliminate them altogether.

Play Time: It is important to play with your shy cat with interactive toys. Pole-type toys with feathers or other objects on a stick work well. Getting the shy cat to play enables it to focus on the toy and forget about its surroundings and fears. It is an important piece in its transition to you and your home.

Mealtime: Mealtime is another important time for a shy cat. He will associate pleasantness with canned food and also with you. Use this opportunity to pet it and talk to it, making sure to feed it in a safe place.

Introduction to Children: If you have small children a shy cat may not be the best choice for your family. Their quick movements and high-pitched voices will startle a shy cat, making the adjustment time longer and more difficult. Children will need to visit your new cat/kitten in its introduction room and allow the cat to approach them, rather than them approaching the cat until it is comfortable with them. Slow movements and calm voices will also help. Have your children sit on the floor and talk to the cat. They can also use interactive toys to get the cat to play with them. It would be a good idea for them to feed the cat his canned food at least once a day so it can associate this pleasant contact with them.

Conclusion: Shy cats will respond and begin to trust different people in different time frames. They will not respond to everyone the same way. The time, love and patience you give a shy cat will be a learning and heartwarming experience for you and your entire family. A little patience on your part will bring a lifetime of companionship, trust and love in return.