



KITTEN SOCIALIZATION

What is kitten socialization?

The process of familiarizing kittens to the world around them in a positive fun manner so they are more friendly/social, easier to handle and quicker to adapt to changes in their environment as an adult cat. Starting at two weeks of age, kittens begin a critical period for socialization in which they are less fearful and more open to new experiences. Even though this window of opportunity starts to narrow between 7-9 weeks of age (often before adoption), the window doesn't close completely. Ongoing positive exposure focusing on the quality of experiences will greatly benefit your kitten as they are developing.

Guidelines for appropriate socialization

- Be proactive by creating a positive experience, do not wait for your kitten's initial reaction
- Start at a far distance away Allow kitten to approach/investigate on his own, do not force or bribe
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- Associate with something your kitten loves such as treats or toys throughout the entire experience
- Observation is key! Recognize fearful body language and adjust to make kitten more comfortable

How do I know if my kitten is fearful or uncomfortable?

<i>Ears back/flat</i>	<i>Eyes dilated</i>	<i>Hunkered down</i>	<i>Tail tucked close to body</i>	<i>Won't eat treats</i>
<i>Look away</i>	<i>Lip licking</i>	<i>Puffed up fur/Arched</i>	<i>Limbs close to body</i>	<i>Won't play with toys</i>
<i>Freezing</i>	<i>Moves slow</i>	<i>Moves away/hides</i>	<i>Shifting weight back</i>	<i>Hissing or spitting</i>
<i>Shaking</i>	<i>Won't take eyes off of the 'thing'</i>			

What to do.

- Use jolly tone and call kitten away/lure with toy (and/or decrease the intensity). Get to a distance where they can refocus on you again and take treats or play with toy or remove him/her from the situation.
- Use higher value rewards. Start at the last distance your kitten seemed relaxed.
- Decrease time of exposure. Anything your kitten is unsure of should be encountered in pleasant short periods of time.
- Encourage your kitten by rewarding him when looking at or moving calmly towards something they are unsure of. Verbal praise can be helpful as well.

Training Tip: Be your kitten's advocate: Monitor cooperation from friends, family and strangers to ensure good experiences and remove your kitten from frightening experiences.

Training Tip: Never force your kitten to experience something new or interact with a person or other animal. Avoid holding or placing next to novel item. This can cause increased fear and distress.

Contact us regarding any socialization challenges, we can help you create better experiences for your kitten!