

## WORKING WITH A FEARFUL ADULT CAT

*Not all cats are well socialized as kittens, and not all cats are comfortable around humans, especially new ones. That doesn't mean that with patience and work you can't get an adult cat comfortable around you, even if they are extremely scared at first! Please use this guide as a tool to help adjust an fearful adult cat to your presence in your home (if your cat is **less than** 3 months old, please see our Socializing Kittens guide first).*

### 1. CREATE A SAFE ROOM

- 🐾 Identify the common hiding places your cat likes to hide and clear the space underneath so you have easy visual and physical access to them during socialization exercises outlined below.
- 🐾 Provide ample hiding spaces in the rooms they spend time in.
- 🐾 Place a couple of carriers or hidey beds in the room your cat spends the most time in and make them very comfortable. We want to encourage them to hide in these places if needed.
- 🐾 It may be helpful to restrict access to one room again to make them feel more secure.
- 🐾 Whichever room you choose, you may enter and exit like normal but be mindful of sudden movements and loud noises to avoid startling them.

### 2. ENGAGE IN QUIET SOCIALIZATION SESSIONS

- 🐾 Use their meals for the day to complete the exercises
  - >>Do not free feed. Feed only in meals.
  - >>1 or 2 short sessions a day (10-15 min in duration).
- 🐾 Remain quiet and sit on the ground nearby (find a healthy balance between sitting nearby and giving the cat space). Essentially, you are looking to quietly coexist with them.
- 🐾 Maintain calm body language—avoid sustained eye contact, calling to your cat, sit facing away.
- **GOAL 1:** Get them to eat in your presence easily during the day.
- **GOAL 2:** Once they eat in your presence during the day, we want to slowly lure them out of their hiding spot with food
  - >>He/She may be too fearful to eat right now but keep trying!
  - >>If you notice significant signs of anxiety or stress, try placing the food down on the floor and retreating a few feet. You may have to go to the other end of the room at first. Once they are eating food at a particular distance, retreat to a short distance next time. Continue incrementally decreasing the distance you retreat to until your cat is eating with you sitting nearby.
  - >>Note: What a cat considers “high value” can vary from one cat to another so feel free to experiment with different kinds of treats like baby food, wet food, tuna, etc.

## DURING THE FIRST MEETING 🐾

### TEACH GENTLE HANDLING

Show your child how to gently stroke the cat and provide guidance on proper handling to avoid accidental scratching.

### POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS

Encourage your child to offer treats or engage in play to create positive associations between them and the cat. This helps build trust and a bond between them.

### MONITOR AND ASSESS

Continuously monitor the interactions between your child and the cat and assess both their comfort levels. Make adjustments as needed to ensure a positive dynamic.

## MORE TIPS 🐾

### EARLY SOCIALIZATION IS IMPORTANT

If you have a kitten, expose them to various people, including children, from a young age to help them become comfortable with children's presence.

### SEEK PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

If you encounter any issues or concerns with the cat's behavior around children, consult with a professional cat behaviorist or veterinarian. They can provide guidance and solutions to address specific challenges.