



Tips for Socializing a Fearful Kitty

This kitty is what we call shy, undersocialized, or fearful. That means that she may be sensitive to loud noises and/or fast movements. Cats can become fearful in a few ways:

- 1) due to insufficient exposure to humans/things during kitten-hood
- 2) traumatizing events that teach them to react fearfully, or
- 3) recently entering the shelter environment (it can be scary for any kitty)

We can help them with patience and gentle handling so they learn that people are trustworthy. Here's how:

- Always sit away from the cat and let her approach you before petting. You can talk softly, hum, and/or sing. Just remember never to stare directly at the cat as this can make her uncomfortable.
- After a few minutes, extend your finger and, if the cat is accepting, make small movements to rub cheeks and head. Use slow, rhythmic petting and gentle movements to build trust.
- Encourage play using small, quiet toys that twitch or make small movements around objects.
- If at any time the cat retreats to a cat tree or other hiding place, stop petting and wait for the cat to tell you she wants more attention before petting again. Cat trees and other hiding places should always be a place where the cat can retreat when uncomfortable.
- Instead of trying to socialize, read a book while you're in the room