

Play Time: More than just Games

Managing Your Cat's Rough Play

Play therapy is a method of interactive play which is a very powerful tool used to help your cat in a variety of situations. It can help nurture bonding between cat and owner, creating and repairing relationships between cohabitating pets, acclimation to new situations and places, exercise, stress relief, and more.

Play is more than just waving a wand style toy around which can frustrate your cat and make behaviors and relationships *worse*. All cats are programmed to stalk, hunt, catch and consume prey. Domestic cats do not have the need or opportunity to hunt which can lead to heightened levels of stress which can show in a variety of ways including behavior problems and illness.

How do I do it?

Find out what really gets your cat excited in terms of his hunting style – ground, aerial or a combination? A wand toy with a small mouse at the end is great at simulating ground prey while a toy mimicking aerial prey can really get your cat moving. While your cat may enjoy fetching toys you throw, when they stop moving they are considered dead prey that is inedible and no cat wants that!

Remember, the goal is to work your cat physically *and* mentally. To be effective you must become one with the 'prey' and be in tune to what prey does including hiding, sudden movements and stops and playing dead. Drag the toy around corners of walls and furniture to watch the suspense build within your cat as he stalks and pounces on his 'catch'.

The movement of your cat will match the speed and intensity of his prey. Slowing down the movements towards the end of the 'hunt' will mimic an injured or dying prey and allow him to enter a calm, confident and satisfied state. Cats gain confidence with each capture which is one of the reasons play therapy can aid in resolving a multitude of behavioral issues.

Reward your cat with a tasty catch he can actually consume, such as his dinner or a few tasty treats. Using play therapy before meals triggers the natural cycle of stalk, hunt, catch and eat which engages his natural hunting instinct – fulfilling his role as a cat.

While no to cats are the same the majority cats will benefit from one or two 10-15 minute sessions a day. Tailor your play sessions to meet your schedule and your cat's needs and you will see an improvement in behavior, relationships and happiness of everyone within the home!



Fun for a short amount of time