

10 Habits That May Break Your Kitty's Spirit

Are you guilty of these common cat-owner habits? If so, you could be crushing your cat's strong will and independent spirit slowly but surely, one day at a time.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- It's possible to break your cat's spirit by not tending to her physical and emotional needs
- To foster an independent, happy kitty, clean her litter box regularly, give her fresh water daily and be attentive to signs of pain or illness
- Avoid shouting at or punishing your kitty; this will only teach her to be afraid of people and will not stop problem behaviors
- If you'll be gone for an extended period, have a trusted friend, neighbor or pet sitter come to your home for once or twice daily visits
- Cats use multiple methods of communication and will actually follow your lead in terms of how much involvement the two of you share

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Cats are adored for their strong will and independent spirit. It's what makes cats cats. But despite their seemingly aloof nature, cats are not unbreakable physically or even emotionally speaking.

If you value your cats' spirit, you'll want to avoid the following habits. As Pet360 shared, these are surefire ways to zap your kitty's true feline nature.

10 Habits That May Crush Your Cat's Spirit

1. **Not cleaning the litter box** — Virtually all cats demand a clean litter box. If you neglect to clean yours regularly, your cat may very well find a new place to do her business. And can you blame her?

While cats vary in how particular they are about a clean litter box (some won't use it if there's any feces in it while others will tolerate it), all cats deserve a clean "bathroom."

Scoop all feces and urine clumps, and removing any litter or urine/feces stuck to the sides or bottom of the box with a damp paper towel, twice a day. Dry any wiped areas thoroughly before scooping dry litter back over it.

This regimen of keeping the sides and floor of the box clean and dry may help extend the time between full box clean-outs. Even so, you should dispose of all used litter and clean the box out entirely at least once a week.

It's important to wash the container thoroughly to remove as much odor as possible. This lowers the chances that your kitty will become averse to using her litter box due to a lingering smell.

The box should be washed with plain hot water. If you use soap, choose a natural, fragrance-free variety. Avoid any cleaning product that is scented or contains potential toxins.

2. **Shouting** — Most cats are very sensitive to loud noises, including the sound of a human yelling. Many cats will run and find a place to hide if yelling ensues, even if it's not directed at her. For your cat's sake (and everyone else in the household), keep yelling to a minimum.
3. **Punishing** — Punishing your cat for bad behavior is likely to backfire. Your cat probably won't understand why you're scolding her, but she will learn to be afraid when you do. If your cat has a problem behavior, you're far better off getting to the bottom of it than attempting to punish the behavior.
4. **Ignoring her pain** — Cats are excellent at masking feelings of discomfort and pain, so it takes an observant, attentive owner to spot a kitty in need. Signals of acute pain in cats include changes in posture, activity level, attitude, vocalization, appetite, facial expression and reaction to being touched or handled.

There may also be noticeable changes in her eyes, ears and whiskers. Changes in behavior, especially a cat that retreats or hides or loses her appetite, should be checked out by a veterinarian.

5. **Leaving her in the dark** — Cats can see much better in the dark than you can, but they cannot see in total darkness. Plus, a cat left alone in the dark may feel lonely or abandoned.

If you'll be gone for an extended period, have a trusted friend, neighbor or pet sitter come to your home for once or twice daily visits. You may want to leave on a nightlight or even a quiet radio or television to give your kitty some additional companionship while you're away.

6. **Teasing** — This should be common knowledge to cat owners, but you'll want to avoid teasing your cat or treating her like a toy (this goes for children too). So, no pulling her tail, ruffling her fur, blowing in her face or even picking her up if she dislikes it.
7. **Grooming her infrequently** — Cats are fastidious groomers, but they still need help to maintain their coat and nails. How much grooming your cat requires depends a great deal on the type and texture of the fur, as well as your pet's age, lifestyle and health status.

Older cats may have trouble grooming themselves, for instance, while cats with "pushed in" faces (such as Himalayans or Persians) may need the folds of their skin cleaned to prevent infection. Your cat also needs regular brushing and may even need an occasional bath.

8. **Hurting/intimidating** — Hurting or intimidating your cat in any way — hitting, kicking, swatting with a newspaper, etc. — will teach your cat to fear people and will quickly break her spirit.
9. **Changing her water bowl infrequently** — Cats should have access to fresh water daily, but some cat owners will leave a bowl of water out for days on end without changing it or washing the bowl. Your cat likes clean, fresh water just like you do. Some cats also enjoy taking a sip of water from the running tap as well (make sure you filter your tap water).
10. **Ignoring her** — Cats can be independent but most still love regular attention, affection and playtime.

Cats use multiple methods of communication and will actually follow your lead in terms of how much

involvement the two of you share.¹ So if you take the time to regularly give your cat love and attention, she'll reward you with the same in return.

Sources and References

[Pet 360, 10 Ways to Unknowingly Crush Your Cat's Spirit \(Archived\)](#)

¹ [Schweiz Arch Tierheilkd. 1991;133\(2\):63-70](#)
