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CATS BODY LANGUAGE: UNDERSTANDING YOUR FELINE'S NON VERBAL SIGNALS AND BEHAVIOURS
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Sometimes, understanding your cat’s emotions can feel like a mystery. The key is to pay attention to 4 parts of their body: their ears, eyes, whiskers and tail. Once you understand how to read your cat’s body language, you’ll be able to decode their mood, and recognise when they are curious, scared or happy. It’s a great and simple skill to help strengthen the special bond you share together.

Cats are often misunderstood to be aloof and emotionally unresponsive, but this couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, cats can form deep attachments to their owners and families. While the emotions of a cat are different from humans, they still experience a range of complex feelings; it’s just the way they express these emotions is different. In this article,

we help you understand your cat’s body language and the feelings behind it. Not only will this help you respond to their cues better, it will also support their emotional well-being and gradually deepen your relationship.

Exploring cats body language

There have been many scientific studies on the topic of cat’s emotions, leading to expert opinions that cats experience different types of emotions. They convey these feelings through small but distinctive changes in their body language and facial expressions.

Cats can experience happiness, fear, curiosity and even anxiety, and you’ll be able to distinguish between them from their cues. For instance, a cat that is content may blink at you slowly, have a relaxed posture and purr gently. You may even notice some other behaviours, such as kneading, which shows they are feeling extremely comfortable where they are.

The Emotions of a Cat: What Science Says

Observing the emotions of your cat helps you to understand them better. Most pet parents will verify that cats are responsive not only to other cats’ behaviours and emotions but also to the emotions of humans. Cats naturally react better to interactions with people who approach them slowly, using a calm voice and gentle gestures. Compare this to a person who has a loud, abrupt, or unpredictable approach towards them, where you’ll see your cat with an avoidant and cautious reaction instinctively. A good example of this is the age-old saying that cats gravitate towards people who don't want to interact with them. Perhaps this is because cats are independent creatures who appreciate space and feel less threatened by someone who isn't overly attentive.

When you know what to look for, cats can make their feelings quite clear. For example, if a cat's ears are erect or forward-facing, it suggests they are curious and content, versus ears that are flattened or backwards-facing which shows they are feeling threatened and therefore in a defensive position. Cat's tails are also a key indicator of how they're feeling: upright tails normally mean they are happy, whereas a twitching tail, often accompanied by a deep vocalisation, means they are annoyed. They may even fluff up their tails to make themselves appear larger, which tends to be a dominance response to them feeling threatened, frightened or startled.

Eyes and whiskers can also indicate a cat’s mood. If your cat is blinking slowly at you, it shows they trust you and feel content, while if their pupils are dilated, they may feel excited or scared. On the other hand, relaxed whiskers show a calm cat, but if their whiskers are pointing forward, they may be feeling curious. It’s important to observe any visible signs of discomfort so you can support your cat in a difficult situation.

Cat Body Language: Decoding Emotional Signals

Your cat’s body language can help you understand how they’re feeling. Each posture and movement they make may signal an emotion. By understanding your cat’s emotions, you’ll learn more about their mood and what they need or want at that time.

You’ll know your cat is happy if they have a relaxed posture, their tail up and ears forward. You may also hear gentle purrs or soft meows. If they’re particularly curious or excited,

their tails may be quivering and whiskers forward, as well as chirping or trilling.

On the other hand, if your cat is feeling anxious or scared, or they're feeling defensive, you'll see your cat's body language change. A conflicted cat may have an arched back, puffed-up tail and flattened ears, and they'll likely be growling or hissing.

Does My Cat Have Feelings? And what can you tell about their mood by their body language

Although we've explained that your cat has emotions, it can be difficult to fully comprehend these with our understanding of human emotions. Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human traits to animals, and it's common for us to assign human emotions to cats. However, it's important to remember that cats don't experience the same emotions as us, nor do they express it the same way.

Instead, cats use body language to express how they're feeling. If a cat appears relaxed and purring, they're likely content, whereas if they're arched and hissing, they're feeling on edge. As long as you observe your cat closely, you'll learn more about your cat's emotions and can handle the situation accordingly.

What Feelings Do Cats Have?

Cats are known to express different emotions, including affection, irritation, or anxiety. Your cat may show you affection by purring around you, slowly blinking, head-butting you, or even kneading in your lap. These behaviours suggest your cat feels comfortable and content in your presence, perhaps even enough to go to sleep on you.

If your cat is feeling irritated or overwhelmed by you playing with them, you might notice them flicking their tail or swiping at you with their paws to deter you. Anxious cats may also hide, crouch, arch their back, or raise their fur if they're in an unfamiliar environment or feel distressed by another person, cat, or animal.

Do Cats Feel Love for Us?

It's safe to assume that cats do feel love for us; they just show it in a different way than we do. Cats often seek comfort and safety in their owners, like how an infant would with their caregiver. Cats will show their affection toward their human companions by following them from room to room since they enjoy their close company. They may also slowly blink at you - a subtle way of letting you know they trust you. Other physical cues from cats would include kneading, head-butting, and rubbing against you, all of which are not just because they are comfortable, but it's also their way of marking their scent on you and therefore claiming you as their territory.

How Do Cats Show Their Feelings?

We've talked about how cats show their feelings through actions, but vocalizations are also another important aspect. Besides observing your cat's body language, such as their posture, tail, pupils, ears, and whiskers, you should also listen out for what they vocalise. Happy cats will purr gently or meow softly, while defensive cats may do a low growl or sharp hiss.

Besides the two extremes, there are also many different types of meows in between. Cats often chirp or trill when they're curious or excited, such as looking at prey from the window.

Cats that want something may meow more urgently or repeatedly to get your attention. By paying close attention to the sounds and movements your cat is making, you'll understand more about your cat's emotions and can respond accordingly.

Understanding the differences between Cat and Human Body Language

Cats and humans can be similar in some ways, such as how they show affection. Like humans, cats also like to cuddle, using head-nudging or rubbing as a way to get closer. However, there are many body language signals that are different for cats and humans and can lead to misunderstandings.

For instance, humans like to maintain eye contact to connect and show interest in the other person, while cats may find prolonged eye contact to be aggressive or threatening and use blinking or winking to break the stare. On the other hand, cats appreciate soft tones, hence why they meow very gently. But humans may be loud in their excitement, using high-pitched voices when showing affection. This can surprise cats, who may feel on edge rather than return the excitement. Make sure you know when to give your feline friend some space.

Cats body language simplified

So the answer to 'do cats have emotions?' is yes, absolutely. The emotions of a cat are just as real and valid as a human's - they simply express it in different ways to us. With a variety of physical signals and vocal cues, it's important to understand your cat's behaviour. The better you can interpret your cat's body language, the more you'll know how to behave with them appropriately, and ultimately strengthen your relationship.

Cats body language - FAQs

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1. **Do cats have emotional feelings?**

   Yes, cats can have emotions. Besides their instinctual reactions of eating, hunting, sleeping and surviving, and the signals that come with these, cats can actually experience deeper emotional states. It's possible for cats to feel happy and content, depressed or distressed, as well as anxious, aggressive or fearful. These emotions differ from their basic instincts because it's influenced by their interactions and environment, rather than needs. Learn more insights into key behaviours.

2. **Do cats have feelings for their owners?**

Yes, cats have feelings for their owners and can show their affection in different ways. Cats can develop a strong attachment with their owners, and seek out their company for comfort. For instance, cats may follow you around the house, rub against or knead on you, and of course, curl up to sleep in your lap. Although less extreme, humans show affection in similar ways, by wanting to be close to another person.

3. **Do cats get emotionally attached to you?**

   Yes, cats absolutely can develop an emotional and secure attachment to their humans. So developing a strong bond with your cat is essential, but it can take time. Cats need regular interaction through petting, playtime, and praise. If this happens often, cats can begin to feel more comfortable and the wonderful human-animal bond of companionship is formed.

4. **How to tell if a cat respects you?**

   It can take time to earn a cat's trust and respect, and it will require consistency on your part. A cat that is comfortable around you will have a relaxed posture, as well as other signals such as slow blinking and rubbing against you. Cats exposing their underside to you is also a sign of trust since it's a vulnerable position for them. You may also know if a cat respects you if they come when their name is called, follow your commands, and let you handle them with ease. Make sure to respect your cat's space in order to earn and maintain their respect.

5. **Do cats get hurt feelings?**

   Although cats may not feel hurt in the same way as humans, they can experience negative hurt feelings. This could include feeling ignored, scolded, or neglected, if you're not giving them attention or if you're yelling at them with harsh tones. They are able to pick up on this negative energy and may feel anxiety or fear. As a result, you may find your cat avoids you or withdraws from you. To mend a strained relationship with a cat after a negative incident, make sure to engage in plenty of positive interactions, including praise and playtime, as well as offering treats. You should still give them space until they are ready and choose to interact with you.

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