

Attention, Please!

Could Gracie the Cat Have ADD?

By Peter Gerstenzang

Posted: May 22, 2008 6:30 p.m. EDT

Not long ago, I saw a headline that posed the question, "Does your cat have attention deficit disorder?" I then went off and made myself a sandwich. About halfway through, I remembered I didn't bring in the newspaper, so I went and got it. Then, I wondered aloud, "What was I thinking about?" It was then that I realized that I had attention deficit disorder.

But back to my cat — did my beloved Gracie have this condition as well? There was only one way to find out. I decided to observe her for a day, keep a written record and see if any of the telltale signs showed up. The following is the day I recorded. Now, what was I discussing again? Uh oh.

8:02 a.m. I give Gracie a catnip toy. She plays with it for 5 seconds, then abandons it and starts playing with a pipe cleaner. Maybe she does have attention-span problems.

Then I remember she did the same thing last week. I forgot she hates catnip toys! Now you can add memory loss to my list of problems.

Another dilemma? Gracie plays with the pipe cleaner for two hours. Now, I'm concerned she has obsessive-compulsive disorder!

10:43 a.m. The cat is done bending the pipe cleaner into every shape possible, including one of the vice president, complete with devil horns. So, she doesn't have OCD. But she does have a strong opinion about the current administration.

12:00 p.m. Gracie naps. But, she moves her legs like she's trying to swim. Is this involuntary? Or is she, even during sleep, distracted and doing several things? This sounds like a Zen question. I must ask someone in touch with this mystical practice. After lunch, I write a letter to Richard Gere. I feel much better.

2:36 p.m. Mealtime. After several bites of her Whiskas, Gracie stops and has a drink of water ... then scratches the floor... and goes back to her meal. I've never seen such compelling evidence of a short attention span before. OK, once. When I watched that show about Tommy Lee and he talked about the space shuttle, drumming, college and Pam Anderson in 4 seconds. Gracie repeats this pattern: eating, drinking, scratching. I am ready to call the vet. But I don't. After all, I recently left my dinner halfway through, went to paint the hallway and never returned. So, who am I to talk?

4:10 p.m. Gracie is playing and is suddenly so tired she goes to sleep without warning. More worry. Next time, we'll discuss the topic, "Can Cats Have Narcolepsy?"

7:00 p.m. My cat goes to the scratching pad and works it for an hour, like a boxer. This has made her very strong. Plus, she doesn't stop for a second to do anything else. Eureka! She's OK! Anyway, her paws and limbs are so strong, even if she has trouble concentrating, I'm not going to try to get her into the car to go to the vet. One thing you can say about me: I know my limitations.

Back to The Cool Cat by CatChanel humor columnist Peter Gerstenzang.