

My Cat Gets Bored When I'm Not Home

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, offers some tips to keep away boredom and stress.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: How can I keep my cat from being too bored or stressed when I am not home?

A: I think cats suffer from separation anxiety just like the rest of us, though it is less likely in homes with multiple cats. However I did see a two-cat household once where one kitty had no real opportunity for exercise and I believe that manifested itself into being scared and timid.

It was my first visit to care for Squeaky and Yammy while their owners were away. When I opened the door, there was Squeaky ready for attention. Yammy, however, was nowhere to be found. I will always make sure all cats are safely in their homes so I started a search. As many cat people know, the harder you search, the deeper cats go into hiding and this is what happened with Yammy.

Finally I sat on the floor motionless, like a yoga teacher. About 20 minutes later Yammy came out from who knows where and a not a minute too soon because my leg was starting to cramp! Anyway, he must have thought I had left because he took one look at me and raced back to his excellent hideout, but at least I knew he was OK. The next day I arrived with a fishing pole toy, which Yammy took a keen interest in (I guess Squeaky told him it was safe). He seemed thankful for some fun and games. I think part of Yammy's problem was lack of stimulation. The house was small and cluttered, plus there was not much opportunity for exercise or play.

It is my feeling cats need something to occupy their time. They tend to like interactive play and can miss you when you are away even for a day. I have a friend whose neighbor's cat howls when she leaves for work, poor thing. Make a window available (with secure screens) and keep the shades up high enough for her to look out. If you can fit a carpeted cat tree-house into your home, it's a good investment. Make sure you place her favorite toys around to play with and try leaving the radio on at a low volume and tuned to your usual station. Familiar sounds can be comforting. When you come home, spend some quality play time together. Sometimes putting balls in a bathtub can be fun for your cat, but not unsupervised, please. As always, I welcome your stories and comments.