

Feline Socialization



Key Points

- Early exposures to sights, sounds and smells
- Interaction with humans and other species
- Exposures to a variety of people and environments

Transitional Stage

At about a week and a half to two weeks of age, kittens enter into the transitional stage of life. This stage lasts for only about a week. During this time there are rapid changes happening in the brain that will affect mobility and sensory development. Ears open at 5 days, eyes will open at 1 week of age, walking at 2 weeks, and voluntary bathroom breaks start around 3 weeks of age. During this stage it is crucial that kittens are exposed to a wide variety of stimuli and should include exposure to different smells, tastes, sounds, sights, handling, and manipulation of body parts. This all contributes to healthy brain development.

Socialization Stage

By definition, socialization is learning how to interact and relate to humans and other species. This period begins at 2 weeks and ends by 7 weeks of age. Now Social Experiences have a stronger influence on future behaviors. It is imperative for human contact to be imprinted as a **positive** memory by 7-10 weeks of age. This stage is considered to be the most important period of learning how to live with a human family.

Socializing at a young age

Kittens need to be handled by as many different people as possible at a young age. This would start in either the rescue, foster home, or vet clinic almost immediately after they are born or as soon as possible. Cat-to-cat socialization should ideally happen between 3-6 weeks of age. This would typically happen within their own litter groups.

Environmental exposure

Exposure to new and unique environments or situations is a very important task for young kittens. Some kittens may be more bold or outgoing simply due to their genetics but can also be influenced by exposure prior to 2 months of age. Play time with other kittens is extremely important, this is where they will learn social cues and bite inhibition, also how to hunt for prey. If they are deprived of this, they will be more likely to display aggression and fear towards other cats later in life.

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