

Cat Read to Calm How-To

Purpose: Read to calm is a way to help decrease stress, anxiety and fear in sheltered cats.

Procedure: Open to any cat comforting level, including JV as well as staff. Any reading material is okay to read.

1. **Choosing a cat:** There will be a list of cats in the individual observation binders for each area.
 - a. Note: All of the same comforting restrictions apply. Make sure that you only get into a Blue Dot condo if you are a Blue Dot comforter. If you are not a Blue Dot comforter and want to read to a Blue Dot cat, sitting outside of the cage is just fine.
 - b. You may choose to read to any cat in the adoptable area, however, keep in mind that the cats that benefit most from being read to are listed at the cat comforter station. Please make these cats a first priority.
2. **Setting up:** For cats in cages, you can sit on a stool outside of the cage or stand and read, if the cat is in a top cage. If you're Blue Dot approved and are working with a Blue Dot cat in a condo, sitting on a stool is the best method. If working in a communal space, sitting on the floor or bench is the best method. A stool would also be acceptable in the communal areas.
3. **Begin to read** aloud (quietly or at regular volume is okay).
4. Do not pet the cat, look at the cat or address the cat in any way, even if they come over to lay next to you while reading. The idea for these cats is that we teach them they can safely explore their environment, come be by people and take risks without consequence. This is especially important for the fearful cats. If we do not give them attention when they ask for it, we have no way to set them back. They are learning they can be bold and come be by people without the pressure of being pet and being talked to (which we do almost every other time we enter their cage). For the frustrated cats, it teaches them that pacing, pawing and vocalizing does not affect the person's actions.
 - a. Keep in mind for the frustrated cats that they often times experiment to see what can get your attention off of your book and onto them. They'll often continuously vocalize, pace and paw at you. Try to just keep reading at a steady pace and allow them to calm down. By ignoring those behaviors and continuing to read, we teach the cat that calm and relaxed is what we want from them and it feels better than being hyper
5. You can spend 10 to 30 minutes per cat, whatever your time allows.
6. You can leave them treats once you're done reading to them, if desired but only if they are calm and relaxed.
7. Note your session and any comments in the appropriate binder observation sheet for that cat. Communally housed cats commonly do not have observation sheets.

Guidelines

1. Place a barrier between you and the floor/wall when sitting. This can be a towel, chair or stepping stool.
2. Blue Dot guidelines and other guidelines apply to each cat.
3. Do not speak, or sing to the cat. Only reading please.
4. Do not touch the cat.
5. Read continuously, slowly and steadily to relax and calm the cat.