



Understanding CAT Thresholds

All cats have a variety of threshold levels depending on the circumstances and occasionally the cat's colouration (tortitude). A threshold in this capacity is the level of stimulation a cat can experience before they start reacting or shutting down. Think of it like a Jenga Tower – the tower can only get so high before collapsing. Every little experience is like removing one of the lower blocks and placing it at the top; each cat can only experience so many little things before the tower is too unstable, and collapses. All cats have different base thresholds as well, so not all cats begin with a fully supported tower, meaning they can experience less and still topple faster and the opposite is possible as well.

Another example of a threshold may be time with (or away from) a stimulant. If you leave your cat in a room with a scary stimulant, like a dog, and their threshold is 10 minutes – after 10 minutes have passed, the cat will be triggered to react. Not all cats respond the same way when their thresholds have been crossed – some 'explode' and some 'implode.' When a cat's threshold has been crossed, the best thing to do is leave the space and allow the cat to calm themselves down.

Many cats have a 'contact' threshold as well. Contact in this setting is referring to petting. Some cats LOVE physical affection and can be pet for extended periods of time, others tolerate ONE pet and they are done. Some cats only tolerate a certain petting style (slow, long strokes or head scratches) while others enjoy a variety of styles. When you are interacting with your cat, pay close attention to 'calming signals' like tail swishes and lip licking. If you see these (or any other sign your cat is no longer enjoying the experience) STOP and allow the cat to leave or remove yourself. When first determining what your cat's petting threshold is, offer ONE pet and pause; if your cat stays with you or looks at you for more, pet TWICE and pause and so on. If at ANY point you notice your cat is uncomfortable, end the session.

Thresholds may change over time and with other stimulants or experiences, so even if your cat has been responsive to 10 pets before becoming overstimulated, if something else has happened (a pot crashed, new smells in the house, new animals in the house...) the petting threshold may be lower.

Each cat experiences things differently, so not all experiences affect each cat the same. It is important to get to know your own cat to learn what stimulants increase the instability of their Jenga tower and how to rebuild and stabilize it.

Support:

Georgian Triangle Humane Society

549 Tenth Line, Collingwood ON, L9Y 0W1 705-445-5204 | info@gths.ca | www.gths.ca Registration Number 86800 4185 RR0001



Our Behaviour Support Team can help to provide resources and tips if you experience concerns in the home environment. With your adoption the GTHS will provide an over the phone consultation in order to provide you with tips and resources to set your new dog up for success. In all cases of dog adoptions, the GTHS recommends hiring a professional dog training or behavioural consultant to ensure your relationship with your new dog starts off on the right paw! A list of local trainers is enclosed in your adoption package.

Our Behaviour Support Team can be reached at behaviour@gths.ca

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