

Cats and Night Crazyies!

"Can someone please help me? My cat is driving me crazy! She won't let me sleep!"

Cat owners nerves can quickly unravel as their cat/kitten draws them nightly into sleep depravation. You can just feel their frustration as they discuss the options they are using; shutting the bedroom door, arming themselves with squirt bottles or squirt guns. Some even proclaim that if it doesn't stop soon, their significant other is going to make them choose between their relationship, or the one they share with their cat.

In order to understand why cats are so active at night it is helpful to remember where they came from. Your cat, no matter how calmly she sits in your lap during the day shares a kinship with her wild cousins; that includes the bobcat and the puma. Just like her wild counterpart, your cat will be active late at night and early in the a.m. This is when prey is available for them. Females are the most prolific hunters and they will prowl your home for anything that moves; spiders, ants, beetles or even a small rodent, nothing is safe when it comes to a cat in high prey mode.

Since the prey drive is activated, starting in the early evening hours and continuing to morning, your cat may race across the top of your chest as you are sleeping, bounce on your pillow, run up your drapes, or simply sit at the foot of the bed and holler at you to get up and play with her. She could be hearing bugs in your wall, a mouse under your home. Outside cats could be setting her off, but she is following instinct. She is not in your life to drive you crazy. She is being...a cat. She is equipped with super-sensitive hearing, and the ability to see in the dark by using any sort of reflected light source. In the dark, she is Queen, so what do you do to dethrone her and enable you to get some sleep?

Play With a Purpose- according to Jackson Galaxy, Cat Behavior Consultant for www.littlebigcat.com : "In terms of re-setting your cat's circadian rhythm, there is almost no more crucial element that play therapy, done at a predictable time every day. Preferably, try playing one-and-a-half to two hours right before your bedtime.

Remember the rules of cat play: Stalk, Run, Pounce, Catch, Kill, and EAT! Give your cat a high protein meat snack right after the playtime. I love meat baby food (not personally, but that is besides the point)...remember to stick with a Stage 2 baby food, because these have substance to them, but no onions added (onions are bad for cats).

The cat really only needs 2 or 3 tablespoons of the snack, enough to signify the full cycle of play has been met. Then they can shift into their cat life routine which is grooming and sleeping.

Of course there are more specifics to play therapy, but if you want to sleep at night, your purpose is to wear out your cat(s) before bedtime naturally, so they (and you) will sleep through the night. Sounds simple, and really, it is as long as you stay consistent and don't give up. You may not see the results you want in a few days time, but remember, it's like a bad case of jet lag. It can take your cat ten days or longer to reset their body clock to this new "time zone."

One of the most effective prey toys is "da Bird" also known as the 'cat teaser.' Aerodynamically designed too imitate a bird in flight. A desirable toy for both cats and their owners, this toy is highly recommended by veterinarians and cat behaviorists alike. Using da Bird late at night will stimulate your cat into a higher prey mode and allow both of you to enjoy the interactive play. Over time, your cat will begin to sleep through the night and the stress in the household on both cat and owner will be greatly reduced.

Also look into Play-n-Squeak a cat toy that has a subtle squeak of a mouse, by virtupets, the kitty tease, and the cat dancer. You need to use interactive toys that keep your hands away from the claws and teeth of your hunter. Your goal is to engage this cat both physically and mentally by replicating the natural movements of a cat's prey (a mouse, a bird or a lizard). This way, very soon both of you will be able to sleep the night away in uninterrupted comfort. Now wouldn't that be nice?

