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*Strengthening the Human –  
Animal Connection*

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## Feline Body Language

Does the presence of two cats in the same room mean that they like each other? Not necessarily. Hissing, spitting, growling and swatting are clear signals that “Kitty” isn’t content, relaxed and happy. Purring is a clear sign of contentment. But what if both cats are silent? Most of feline communication is in the form of body language. Cats have a multitude of body signals with which to convey their feelings, be they “happy” or “stressed” or downright “angry”. These signals involve just about every body part in one way or another: Tail, ears, whiskers, eyes (direction of gaze, pupil size), hair (piloerected or flat), body posture, etc.

### A “happy” or relaxed/content cat will look something like this:

1. **Ears** erect and facing forward.
2. **Whiskers** fanned out to the sides or even forward.
3. **Pupils** will be slits unless the light in the room is low.
4. **Tail** will be held high, perhaps slowly flagging back and forth, or curled into an inverted “U” over the back if the cat is playful. *The higher the tail – the better the mood.*
5. A happy or content cat will also facial rub against things and purr.

### A fearful of stressed cat will look something like this:

1. **Ears** held to the side show discontent or that the cat feels threatened. Ears held back with the body low shows “caution” or reluctance. Ears out to side and flat show fear. If ears are completely flattened against the head, the cat is very angry or terrified.
2. **Whiskers** are held back against the face when the cat is afraid.
3. **Pupils** will be dilated when cat is angry or when facing an opponent (or dim room).
4. **Tail** held low shows caution or fear, tucked if extreme fear. If tail is held down in an inverted “L”, the cat is on the offensive.

Piloerection (hair standing out from body) occurs first on the tail and then can spread to the rest of the body when aroused. It occurs in response to adrenaline or epinephrine.

The commissure of the mouth can also indicate emotion. Lips drawn back show fear and can occur if the cat is on the defensive. A puckered mouth (commissure forward) shows Offense (cat is pursuing another cat).

Cats can show mixed signals when they are conflicted. As they gather more information about what is going on in their environment, their body signals will change.

