

Who Else Wants To Avoid These Cat Claw Catastrophies?

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**By Romi Matsushita**

Don't get caught holding the bag when your cat decides to claw houseguests and unsuspecting members of your family.

Even after you have gotten your cat used to using her own personal scratching post to sharpen her claws on a regular basis, there are still times when your pet may suddenly lash out to claw people.

But before you rush to judgement and perhaps punishment, ask yourself to consider the motivation behind such acting out behavior. Cats, like most animals, will lash out when they are afraid. So when your cat suddenly claws people, before you play the blame game with your pet, try to consider both sides of the equation. Is it your cat's fault, or the people around her who have provoked her or made her frightened?

I was prime witness to just such a situation when the family who gave me my cat Abby dropped by for a spontaneous, unannounced visit. They had not seen Abby for about a year. As she had been an exclusively indoor cat, she had no contact with people outside my family. I could tell she was startled when a group of five people barreled into the house. Abby's first response was to dive under the dining room table. The children proceeded to try to yank her out from under the table. I could tell she was frightened. From under the table I could hear her hissing. A low rumbling growl which I had never heard before was coming from the pit of her stomach. The children kept poking and prodding her even though to me it was obvious she was distressed. They kept waving their hands in front of her face and then pulling them away. To make matters worse, they had also brought one of her littermates, who she now seemed to consider a stranger. In a panic, I rushed to open a sliding glass door so Abby could jump through before the two cats could square off against each other.

I remember thinking that this whole experience was so abrupt and traumatizing for Abby that I couldn't blame her when the claws came out. Yet I'm sure from the looks on the faces of my guests that day, that they blamed me and my cat for their claw marks. They assumed Abby was afraid of or didn't like children. I didn't think that was the issue, it was their sudden entrance which had startled both of us.

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There are some cats that are afraid of children, but I think most pets respond well to acclimatization. You can expose your cat to young children, like I did. Just wait a while before you let them loose around your cat. Sit the child next to you and feed your kitty treats, then gradually let the child take over. Do this for small stretches over several sessions. This worked well for me. Abby is now comfortable around the neighborhood children.

I'm grateful that Abby was able to get used to being around children, but I could detect that at times she would get jealous of the attention the children received, and would proceed to jump between us. Some cats do get jealous of certain people. Some cats start acting out and being mean to certain people too. If this situation persists, the only thing to do is remove the cat from the situation. When your cat starts growling or clawing, pick her up and take her to the bathroom until your guest is gone. You may also advise your guest that if they are also a pet owner, your cat may be responding to the scent on the person's clothes.

The worst thing is when your cat consistently claws a family member. If it's a family member, try a

commercially available cat repellent or lemon juice to keep the cat away, then acclimatization to get them used to the other person. If all this fails, you may be forced to consider declawing your pet.

Remember that when your pet acts out, there is usually a reason for it. When animals are frightened, they go into defense mode. In these situations, we can often forgive their clawing mistakes. To avoid cat clawing catastrophies, try the steps outlined above. Small doses of exposure to people will usually cure your cat of its' clawing outbursts. Then again, cats like people, can be finicky with their affections. If you have tried and tried for instance, to get your cat used to your mother in law, but to no avail, what can you do? How can you blame kitty for not liking her? After all, if the truth be known, it's not like you like her that much either.

Romi Matsushita works hard not to frighten her cat. Find great cat care advice, tips, and articles at

<http://www.cat-advisors-online.com>

### **Cat Claw Survival Solutions To The Rescue!**

**By Romi Matsushita**

Cats can be ill tempered and mean on their worst days, but even the most annoying problems have a remedy somewhere. If your cat is clawing your furniture, your carpet, and your legs with the same ferocity, understanding the how and why behind the behavior can help you redirect your feline friend's clawing instinct to be expressed in less destructive ways.

So why IS your cat clawing everything in sight?

Here's the jawdropper: a cat's claws never stop growing. Let me repeat that: They NEVER stop growing. When I found that out, a big light went off in my head. Just like a pet hamster that constantly

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needs to know on wood to keep their teeth from growing too long, what cats are actually doing when they sharpen their claws is removing the outermost layer of their claws. O.K. Kitty Cat, we finally get it!

So what to do? What to do?

The first thought bubble that forms is to scoop kitty up for a little declawing action at the nearest vet's office. But before you take such a drastic step, keep in mind that once those claws are gone, they're GONE. Take away those claws, and you're taking away your pet's primary form of defense. Even if you have an indoor cat like I do, chances are, sooner or later, a window of opportunity is going to open up just long enough for your cat to slip outside and be vulnerable to attacks from other animals and people.

O.K. So now you know why your cat is actually using you as a scratching post. Let's move away from the word "using". In a way, it's kind of flattering. That doesn't make it hurt any less. Let's get your cat to branch out. It's time to get a REAL scratching post, so that your pet can get into the habit of using it instead of YOU, whenever those claw sharpening impulses may strike.

So how do we get kitty to break her bad habits and start to use the proper place where she can scratch to her heart's content?

The answer lies in you.

That is of course, IF you are your cat's favorite person in the family.

If so, then try hanging an article of clothing that belongs to you on your virgin scratching post. The idea is to make the area smell familiar. A day or two should be enough for your cat to become accustomed to its new scratching outlet.

Don't want to part with something from your wardrobe? Time to get a little sneakier then. Catnip can be your secret weapon. Sprinkle catnip over the scratching post and watch what happens. This one may be even worth breaking out the video camera for.

This next option sounds a little weird, but believe me, it WORKS!

Try sprinkling the post area with powdered chicken bouillon. The idea is to get the cat to feel friendly enough toward the scratching post to attack it.

While your cat is making the transition to a designated area for scratching, there are several ways to make your cat's favorite scratching areas a lot less attractive. This will help ease the transition from the old spots to the new.

Sprinkle fresh lemon juice over them. Cover or wrap the areas in aluminum foil. Remember what it felt like when your fingernails went down the chalkboard? Ever try it again? Cats will experience the same thing and be deterred from using the areas. Finally, clean the areas well to eradicate any cat odor. This will go a long way toward removing the aura of familiarity that creates the habit of using the space.

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Also, just keep the doors closed to make those places inaccessible to the cat.

Now that you know more about the how and why of your cat's clawing instinct and behavior, take these simple steps and you'll soon see a resolution to the cat clawing issues in your household. With a little time and patience, your cat's claw sharpening activities should be limited to its favorite spot: the scratching post!

Romi Matsushita is a Cat Claw Survivor who has the scars to prove it. Learn more reasons your cat's claws come out at:

<http://www.cat-advisors-online.com>



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