Help! My cat isn't using the litter box!

I received a request recently for help in KJ's Cat Club. It was unfortunately, a very common request: ***Help! My cat is peeing and pooping outside of the box and I don't know what to do!***



I applaud and have all the gratitude for anyone who seeks help about this issue. You shouldn't be embarrassed. You've decided to learn how to help your cat! That's a good thing for both of you!

I've been where you are. You love your cat. You want them to be happy and healthy. It's hard when you're constanting cleaning up messes and feel like it's never going to end.

Here's the thing: A safe cat is a happy cat.

When your cat is going outside the box, she is communicating "Please help me. I don't feel safe." Remember that. It's not petty, vengeful or any other negative emotion we humans feel. Your cat trusts you with her life and she is asking you to help you with hers.

Let's start with a few ways proven to help our cats. Step #1 is always the same and cannot be skipped.

#1: Go to the vet. The first thing we need to know is this: Is the cat you brought into your home to love and enjoy and care for forever in pain? Pain is a big reason cats avoid the litter box. It may hurt to go. The litter may be hurting their feet. These are a few of the big ones but we don't know until we see a vet and start with "Can I help my cat get out of pain?" If you can, chances are she'll return to her litter box.

#2: Seek assistance from a cat behavior specialist. Cats are not dogs and, finally, after many years of having them as pets, we are realizing we really don't really know how to have cats. The good news is that we now have many passionate cat lovers who have done tons of research and have proven ways to decode cat behavior and help YOU and your cat. Sometimes it can be as simple as adding a new litterbox, changing the litter you use or giving them more safe spaces.

#3 Consider anti-anxiety solutions. If we truly can't get to the heart of the message, we know one thing for certain: Your cat is stressed. Talk to your vet about anti-anxiety medications, seek an integrative veterinarian to evaluate more options or consider calming remedies like pheromone diffusers, CBD, calming treats or other similar options. You'll be amazed at how many ways you can help your cat and get her back to feeling safe and back in the litter box!

#4: Ask "What's Next?" We are still learning about cats and each cat is different so when something doesn't work, it's not the end. If blood results come back fine, ask "What's Next?" If changing the litter box doesn't help, ask "What's Next?"

In my quest of asking that question, I tried EVERYTHING. And out of all of that trial and error, I actually created my own blend of calming remedies called Storms and Melodies that we diffuse in our house on a regular basis.

Below is an excerpt from my book, *Raised by Cats: Behind the Mic and The Meows* that chronicles my first experience with a cat going outside of the box. My sweet Rhodey Bear (RIP) taught me so much and each time I answer the 'my cat is peeing outside the box' call for help, I thank him for teaching me WHY I needed to understand it, what to do it about it and how to help YOU do the same.

From Raised by Cats: Behind the Mic and the Meows, Chapter 7:
We went a long time without a pee problem we couldn't solve but Rhodey was up for the task. Rhodey was nicknamed our "Joy Boy" as his happy demeanor and constant expression of "This is the best moment of my life" was a welcome and wonderful addition to our family.

After a period of time where my sister and her five cats needed to stay with us, Rhodey just wasn't quite the same. He had lost Riley and Nandi, gained two new baby sisters and now FIVE more cats in a year. Our Joy Boy lost his joy. And then he started peeing outside of the box. So, what did we do? Well, we got stressed. I'm embarrassed to say, we got mad. We did, however, take him to the vet. We were told he had an infection and we were grateful that with a round of antibiotics, he'd be better and back to peeing in his box.

Well, he got better.

He didn't, however, go back to peeing in the box. Have you been there? We got stressed again. You want to just yell "Come on! Just pee in the box!" You may even yell that. You may even yell other words I won't use in this book. We did that too. So embarrassed. I know he won't ever read this book but know Rhodey, we are so sorry. Again, we do the best with what we know until we know more.

Again, I dug into the research. What else could we do? We got the calming diffusers, the calming collars, the calming chews, the sprays, the cleaners, all the things. Nothing worked. His stress increased. Our stress increased. His stress increased. Our stress increased.

Round and round we went. Then back to the vet. Our lesson is something I have since been trying to shout from the roof tops, mountain tops and in any Facebook group I can find. Here goes: When the vet finds nothing physically wrong with your cat, ask WHAT'S NEXT???

Please, please, please ask what's next. If I had a dollar for every person I've had tell me,"the vet says there's nothing wrong" I'd have a fortune. Your vet rules out as best possible, if there's anything medically wrong. Please don't take your cat home, deflated that there's nothing left to do and both of you have to live like this. Ask what's next.

We are fortunate to work with several vets who very much understand and want to assist in what's next and that is understanding and addressing the BEHAVIOR. Rhodey was my JOY BOY. Did he really just decide one day to just

pee all over because it brought him joy? No. Was I relieved that there was nothing physically wrong? Yes. Did he and I have a confused staring contest on multiple occasions? You bet. But, we kept trying to understand him and kept trying to bring him back to that rule we know to be true: A safe cat is a happy cat.

When the vet said, “Would you be willing to try some anti-anxiety meds?” I said, “Wait. You have those for cats??? Yes, please!”

We worked with our dear friend and pet communicator Cindy Huff who helped us identify the deep seeded issues that had arisen from the many changes and grief Rhodey had experienced. It helped to know but acknowledging it wasn’t enough. We had to help him. We had to give him a chance to return to joy. It took some time and some trials to get it right but on medication number 2 and adding in hiding spaces, alone time and a plan to make him feel safe, there it was . . . JOY.

Be an advocate for your cat. If your vet doesn’t work in the area of behavior, ask for a recommendation or find a vet that does. You can also find cat behavior specialists and holistic pet care almost anywhere you live these days and if you join my group, **KJ’s Cat Club**, there are great resources to help you solve the “why is my cat peeing outside the box?” mystery.

How sad would it be if you were unable to communicate that something is wrong and the person you loved the most and depended on completely gave up on you? Don’t give up. Cats want to be peaceful. You’re their peacekeeper. You’re their EVERYTHING. Keep asking what’s next.

Get the full book “Raised By Cats: Behind the Mic and the Meows” here

I hope reading my own struggles has given you some hope. Please join my group to continue to get more support (and cute cat pics and memes!) here: https://facebook.com/groups/kjscatclub

Remember: A safe cat is a happy cat.

Pawsitive vibes to you as you seek the happiness you and your cat deserve together!



KJ is a longtime trusted media personality, TV producer, author, entrepreneur and proud cat mom to seven rescues. She is the Kitty Correspondent for Pet Pals TV, the founder of the Kinda Nerdy Network which features the KJ TODAY Show, the Kinda Nerdy Girls podcast and The Cat Conversation podcast. She is also the author of the book "Raised by Cats: Behind the Mic and the Meows" which was an instant Amazon #1 New Release in 2022 on National Cat Day. Follow KJ and her House of Cats on social media here.