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HAPPY  
CATS

10-step plan to tackle  
any house soiling issue

by Anneleen Bru



# Anneleen Bru

Lover of happy cats

Cat Behaviour Counsellor at Felinova (2008 – present)

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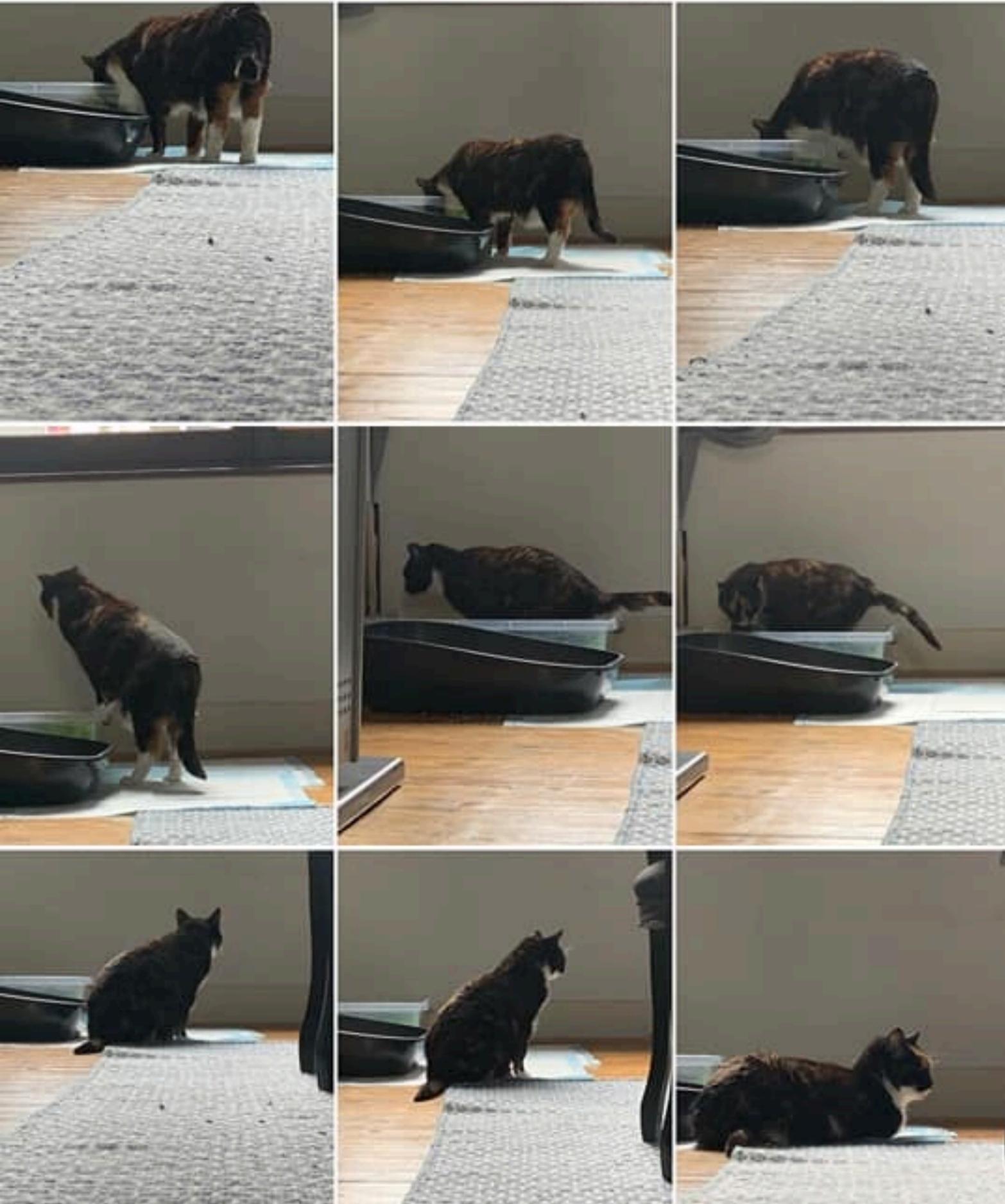
MSc in Communication Science (*UA, BE*)

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*Photo credit: Irmy Coeckelbergs*



Before  
we dive in

Photo credit: Sabine Castelein

# Questions to ask ourselves



Is it urinating or urine marking?

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Is it this cat? Or possibly another cat?  
Or both? Or other cats?



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Does it happen all the  
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Is it urinating or urine marking?



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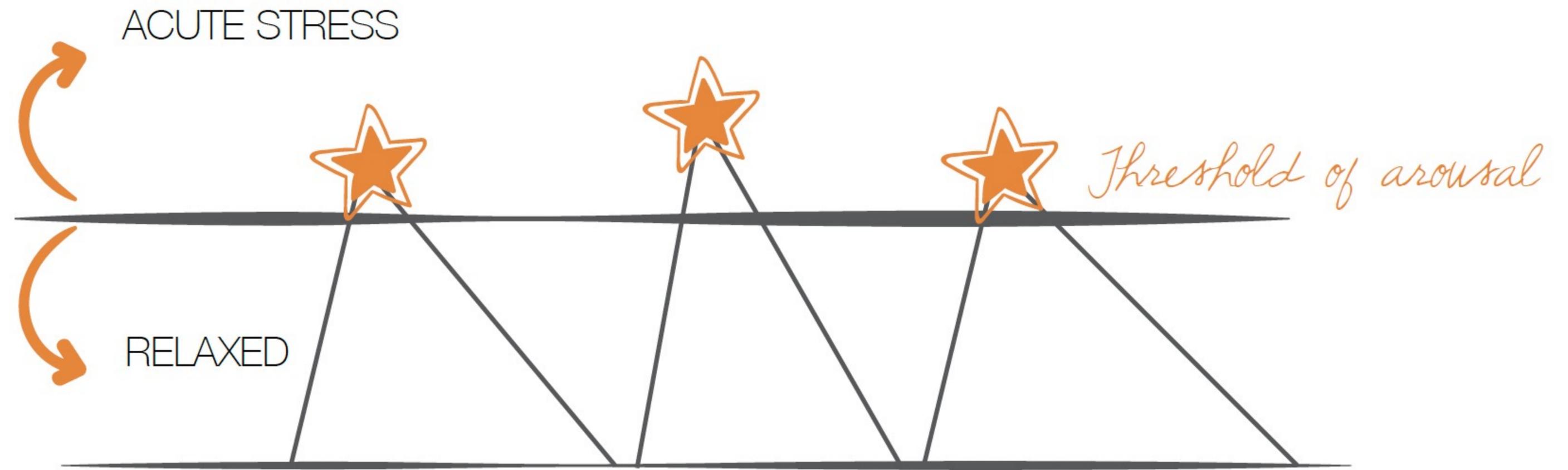
What are the  
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Is it urinating or urine marking?

What are the general  
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# Acute stress



# Chronic stress



# Questions to ask ourselves



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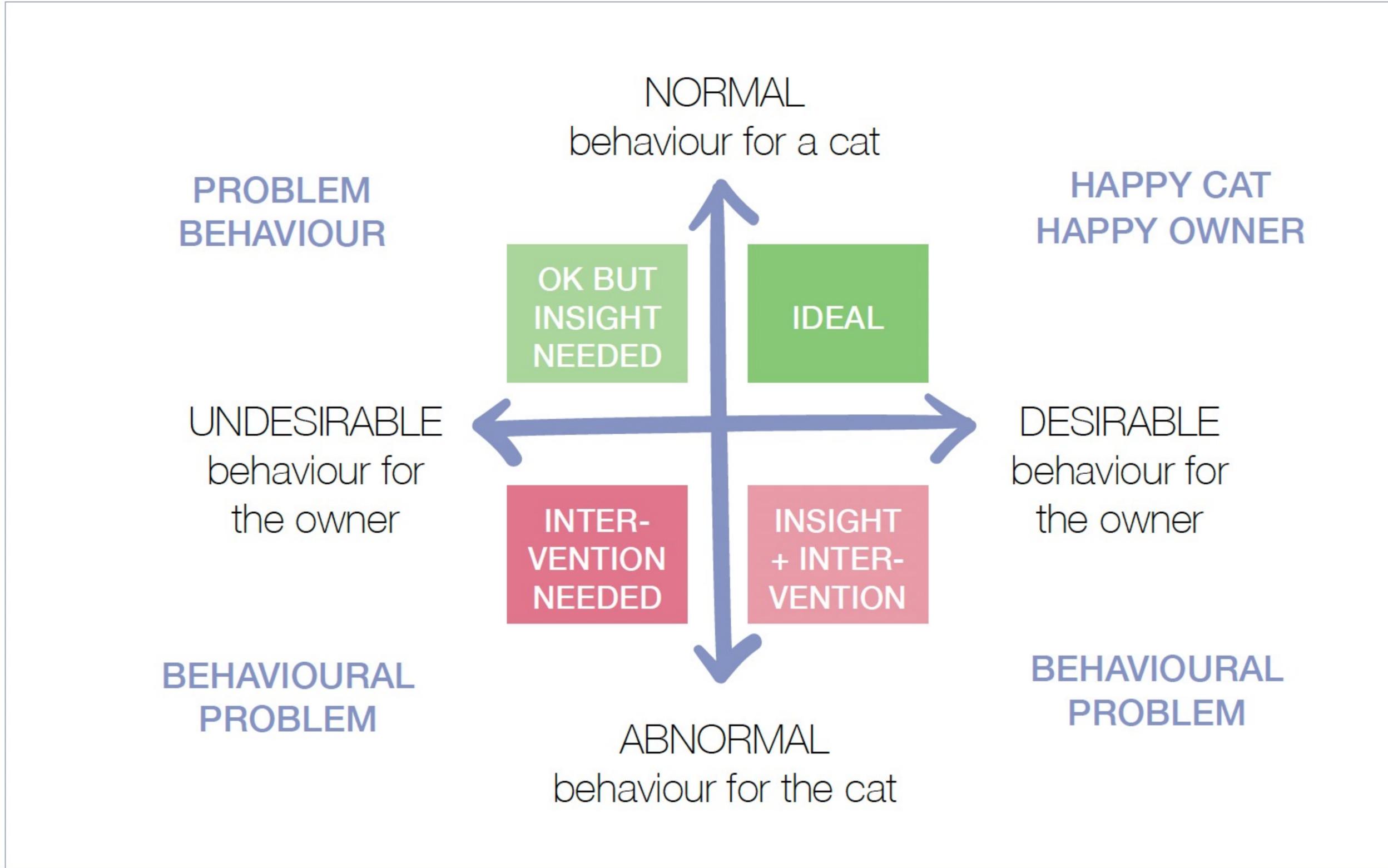
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issue?

What emotions does  
the cat feel during  
this behaviour?

When did it start?



# Causes of house soiling



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*Photo credit: Laura Daman – Cat model: Delphine*

1

## Medical issues

Pain, (previous) disease, irritation

2

## Number of litter trays

Insufficient number of litter trays

3

## Number of locations

Enough litter trays but positioned next to each other so count as one location.

4

## Closed litter tray

The litter tray is a closed litter tray and your cat does not like it.

5

## Low & open tray

The litter tray is a low open container and it doesn't not feel safe here

6

## Cat litter

Your cat doesn't like the cat litter in the tray, it's too hard for her very sensitive paws or the grains are too big.

7

## Plastic tray protector

There is a plastic cat litter protector in the litter tray, underneath the sand.

8

## Funny smells

The sand has a strange smells, like baby powder, lavender, vanilla ...



Causes  
of house  
soiling

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## Causes of house soiling

*Photo credit: Marleen Cassiers*

9

### Height of cat litter

There is too little sand in the litter tray (< 7 cm).

10

### Edges of litter trays

The edges of the tray are too high, which makes it difficult for some cats, such as seniors (+ 7-10y) and kittens

11

### Too far away

The tray is positioned too far away, which is often an issue for kittens who don't get to the tray in time.

12

### Hygiene

The litter tray is not sufficiently clean. Treat it like a diaper!

13

## Size of litter trays

The litter tray is not big enough.

14

## Learned behaviour

Any situation in the past that caused the cat to relocate might still cause the cat to choose to not go there (other cats, pain, etc.)

15

## Unsafe locations

The litter tray is positioned in an unsafe location (in your cat's mind) and she decides to pick a safer and more secure location.

16

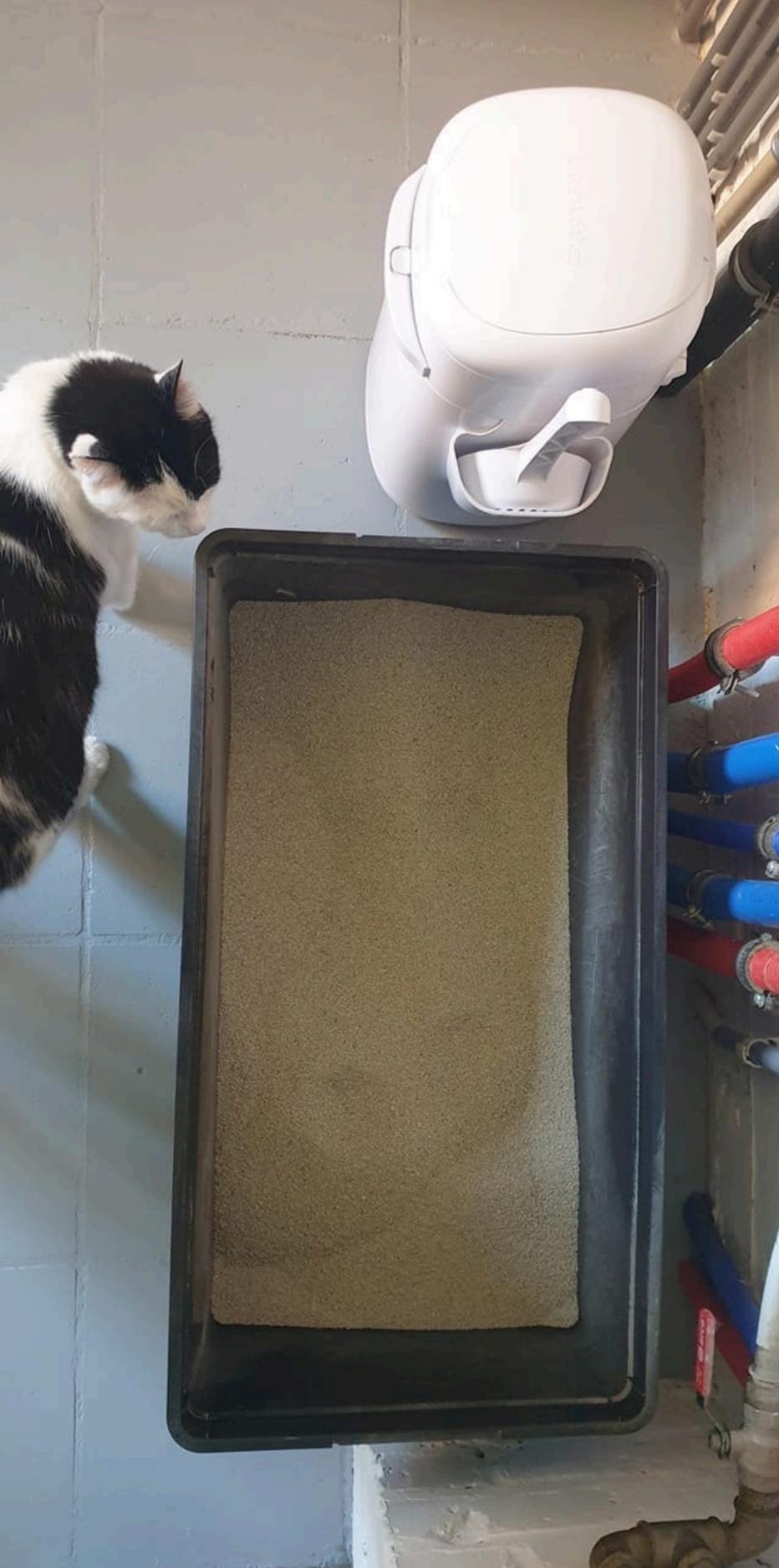
## Unpredictable access

The litter trays are not easily accessible, e.g. via a cat flap, deal with territorial behaviour from another cat, or accidentally closed doors



# Causes of house soiling

*Photo credit: Anna Hendrix*



# Causes of house soiling

*Photo credit: An-Sofie Depoorter*

17

## General stress levels

Cat is stress on a daily basis because of unpredictability in the environment and insufficient choices

18

## Stress releasing

The cat doesn't have enough stations around the house and around litter trays to release stress

19

## Play, hunting & exploring

Your cat doesn't have enough options to play or hunt during the day

20

## Unpredictable owner

Cats become stressed when the owner is unpredictable



# Solutions to house soiling

*Photo credit: Liesbeth Buys - Cat model: Topsy*

Step 1:  
See a vet

*Photo credit: Patricia Pardo - Cat model: Hero*



## Step 2: Increase resources

Reduce frustration , fear  
and anxiety through  
optimisation of resources  
(N+1)

# Step 3: Optimise hygiene

*Photo credit: Auré Lie*



# Step 4: Reinforce desirable behaviour



1

## LET IT BE

Approving the use of locations your cats want to use

3

## OPTIMISING EXISTING TRAYS

Rewarding desired behaviour by optimising the existing litter trays

2

## CHOICES ARE KEY

Enabling the desired behaviour by offering choices and start when they're kittens

4

## PROMOTE NEW LOCATIONS

Stimulating the use of new perfect locations and giving your cat lots of choices along the way

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*Photo credit: Cindy Cin'lla - Cat models: Charlotte & Mary'Lou*

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*Photo credit: Marjan Seynaeve*



*Photo credit: Charlotte Filippini*

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*Photo credit: Linda Bogaerts*



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*Photo credit: Romana Witte*



56 x 70 x 46cm

Photo credit: Romana Witte



*Photo credit: Liesbeth Buys - Cat model: Tipsy*



*Photo credit: Martine Vos- Cat model: Ermes*



*Photo credit: Sonja Das*



*Photo credit: Nancy Poortmans – Cat model: Whoopie*



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*Photo credit: Tamara Vanhees – Cat model: Felix*

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*Photo credit: Laura Daman – Cat model: Delphine*

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Photo credit: Auré Lie

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Photo credit: Patricia Hendrickx – Cat model: Amelia



Photo credit: Sonja Das



*Photo credit: Marjan Seynaeve*



*Photo credit: Veerle Van Den Broeck - Cat model: Pomerol*

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*Photo credit: Sarah Dekeyzer*



*Photo credit: Judith van der Linden-Lam*



*Photo credit: Sara Criel*

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*Photo credit: Cindy Cin'lla- Cat models: Charlotte & Mary'Lou*



*Photo credit: Kathy Roland*



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*Photo credit: Leen Luyten*

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*Photo credit: Esther Dubbeld*

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*Photo credit: Esther Nobels*



*Photo credit: Geert Van Temsche*





Photo credit: Veerle Van Den Broeck



*Photo credit: Inge Frieling*



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*Photo credit: Kaatje Zegers*

# Step 5:

Discourage the use of the undesirable urination area

1

Making unwanted urination impossible

2

Barricade the area

3

Remove the rewarding factor

4

Make the undesirable behaviour unpleasant



*Photo credit: Charlotte Filippini*



# Step 6: Secure passageways

Step 7:  
Using the litter  
tray = super fun

*Photo credit: Martine Verbraeken – Cat model: Pearl*



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Step 8:  
Make it  
possible to  
hide and  
release stress  
around litter  
trays and  
passageways  
to litter trays



# Step 9: Playing against stress

*Photo credit: Martine Verbraeken – Cat model: Wolf*



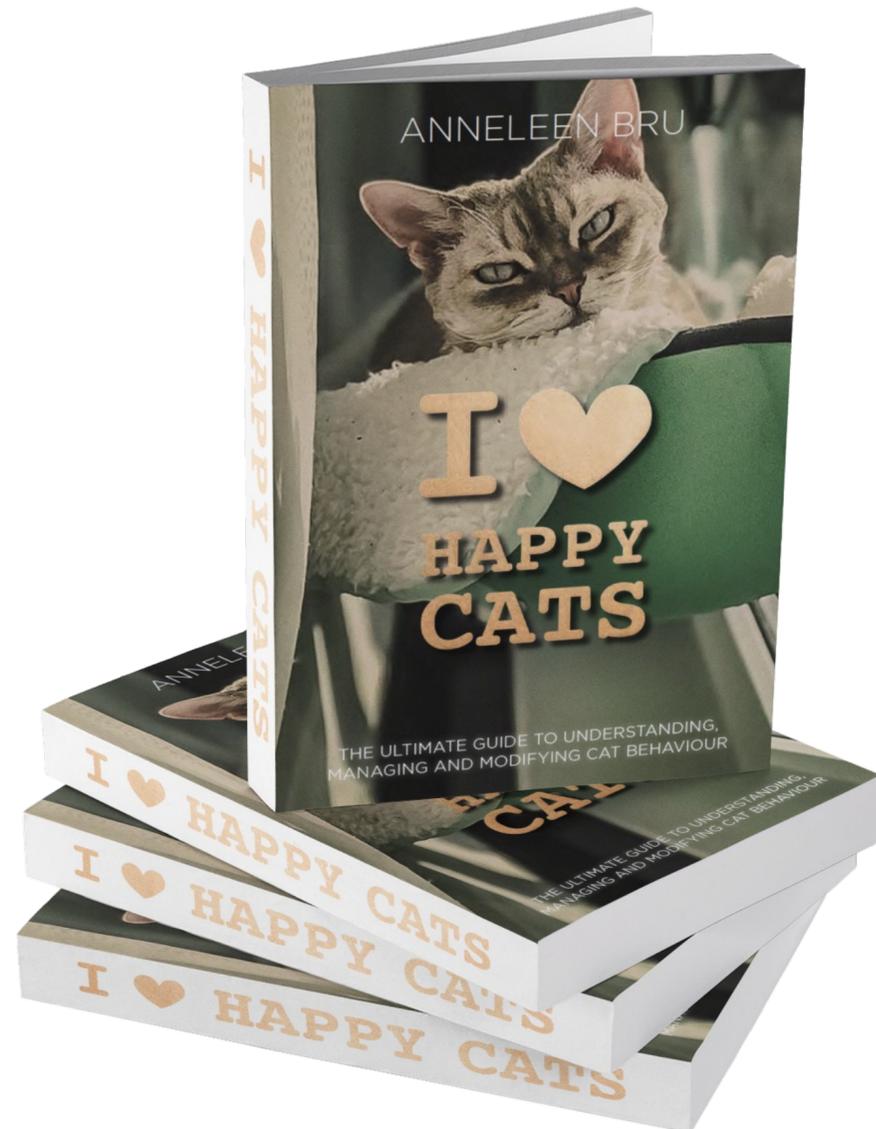
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*Photo credit: Shutterstock*

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Step 10:  
Making contact  
in the right way



Download the full chapter about  
'House soiling' from the  
Happy Cats E-book  
'Cat Behaviour Problems' for free

[www.happycats.com/cp](http://www.happycats.com/cp)

Thank you for your attention ♥

Any questions?

