Your Talkative Cat

Vocalizing is one way for your cat to communicate with you and with other animals. Some cats "talk" more than others, but most cats do make noise some of the time. We're all familiar with the meaning of hissing and growling, but there are also many other sounds that your cat is capable of, and a variety of reasons for vocalizing. If your cat is hissing or growling, please see our handout: "Understanding Cat Aggression Towards People."

Medical Reasons

If your cat's behavior changes suddenly, the first thing you should do is take her to your veterinarian for a thorough health examination. Cats often hide symptoms of illness until they're seriously ill. Any change in behavior may be an early indication of a medical problem. A new vocalizing behavior, in particular, may indicate physical discomfort stemming from an urgent need for medical attention.

Breed Tendency

Oriental breeds, such as the Siamese, are known to be very vocal. If your cat has a pointed face and a long, lean body, chances are she has some oriental heritage, so "talking" may be a part of her character. Avoid giving her any attention when she is vocal because this will only encourage the vocal behavior. Instead, give her attention when she is quiet.

Attention-Seeking Behavior

Some cats "talk" because they know they'll get a reaction. People may talk back, feed her, yell at her, pick her up and lock her in another room, or pick her up and soothe her. All of these responses will encourage an attention-seeking cat. To discourage this behavior, simply ignore your cat when she does this, and when she is quiet, pour on the love, feed her or give her some treats. This will teach your cat which behaviors you would like her to continue.

Your Cat Wants to go Outside

If your cat was previously an outdoor cat and you plan to keep her inside, then good for you! Following are some suggestions to help make the transition easier on both of you.

- Spay or Neuter: Spaying or neutering will rid your cat of those hormonal urges to go out and seek a mate This will result in a calmer, friendlier cat.
- Play Schedule: Schedule play times during the times your cat would normally be outside. This will distract her from her normal routine and establish another, safer routine.
- Window Seat: Be sure your cat has a view of the outdoors and a sunny place to lie. Cats like to watch birds, so putting a bird feeder outside this window is likely to make it a favorite spot for your cat.
- Scavenger Hunt: Give your cat a game to play by hiding bits of dry food around the house. Hide the food in paper bags, boxes and behind open doors. This will give her exercise and keep her busy so she doesn't think of going outside. This is especially good to do right before the family leaves the house for the day.
- Attention: Try to give your cat extra love and attention during this difficult transition.
- Aversives: If your cat still won't give up meowing by the door, try an aversive. Leave strong citrus scents by the door or hide behind a wall and shake a pop can filled with coins to interrupt the behavior. When she is quiet, walk out and give her a food treat and encourage her to play or cuddle.

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Grief

Sometimes after the death or departure of a person or animal in your cat's life, she will vocalize to express her grief. This can be a normal part of the grieving process. The best thing you can do for her is keep her schedule the same (or as close as possible) and spend some extra cuddle and playtime with her. With time, this problem should take care of itself.

Transition

If your cat is new to your home or has just gone through a change (move, new person/animal in the household, person moved out) and has just started her talkative behavior, be patient. This may be happening due to the transition and will stop on its own if the behavior is not encouraged. Remember, even scolding can be perceived by your cat as attention, and thus encourage the behavior.