

# *Tiny Tigers Feline Rescue, Inc*

*Libby 978-582-7828*

*Madeleine 978-448-6029*

## **Cats and Kids**

There is nothing cuter than cats, kittens and kids. But it can turn into a disaster without proper planning and precautions. Whether you have children and are adopting a furry family member or kitty is there and you are bringing home a baby, here are some tips for creating harmony.

First and foremost your cat must have a sanctuary, a place where he feels safe and can get away from the mainstream activity or a rambunctious child. Toddler gates help with children too young to understand that kitty needs a rest. Older children should be told that when kitty goes to his place, it is time to rest and leave him alone. Creating high perches or a cozy corner for your cat in an out of the way place will help a new cat settle in and reinforce that there are still special places that are all his when the new baby arrives.

Always set aside daily playtime for your cat. Supervised playtime with the children helps to reinforce the human pet bond. With a new baby in the home, the cat needs special time with you alone to give her time to adjust to the new arrival and not feel neglected. As much as possible try to stick to your cat's old routine especially for feeding and playtime. Cats dislike change and if you can keep some things consistent they will be more content.

Contrary to some old tales still hanging on to this day, cat's do not "steal the baby's breath and lay on them and smother them. However, a warm cozy bassinet might be an attractive nap spot, whether the baby is occupying it or not. So it is a good idea not to leave your cat in the baby's room unsupervised. Always close the door when baby is sleeping until the child is old enough to turn over or crawl away if the cat decides baby makes a nice pillow.

Scratches are another concern. The quick movements of young children or the waving of little arms and legs in the air might elicit a paw swipe from a playful cat or kitten. Keep the nails trimmed. Even little kittens can have their nails trimmed. It is easy to do once you learn how. Clip kittens' nails every one to two weeks, older cats' nails every three to four weeks.

Sometimes children beg their parents for a cat or kitten and promise to take full care of it. Most children have good intentions, but let's face it - they are children and they may lose interest in the kitten as it gets older, or they just forget to do the chores. There is some balancing here because having a pet can teach a child responsibility, but if the chores are onerous or if there is constant conflict, then there may be resentment. Before you acquire a pet, sit down with your children and discuss the aspects of being responsible pet owners. Emphasize that caring for a pet is like caring for a baby. You must take care of it whether you feel like it or not. Get the children to agree to accept the chores that they can handle according to their age and level of responsibility. And then, as a parent, be prepared to be the primary caretaker yourself, or to monitor the children closely, because that is what usually happens unless the children are exceptionally motivated and responsible.

There are many success stories out there of the bond that develops and grows between cats and kids. Nurturing that bond and setting a good example for them will teach them lessons that they will benefit from all their lives, and it will help them to be responsible pet owners and caretakers when they have children of their own.