



Poppy's Behavioral Wellbeing Insights

Insights

Key Focus Areas: Supporting Poppy's comfort and happiness as she ages, specifically addressing her anxiety, confidence, and interactions with the other cats.

Given your exceptional knowledge and experience with enrichment and training, my goal is to offer thoughtful guidance that complements your existing efforts. Rather than prescribing specific solutions, we'll focus on refining your current approach to address Poppy's unique needs.

Understanding Poppy: Based on our conversation, it's clear that understanding Poppy's unique personality and preferences is key to her wellbeing. What makes Poppy feel safe, confident, and deeply connected? What types of interactions and environments help her thrive? You've established wonderful engagement with Sage and Rosemary, and Poppy likely thrives in different ways. Poppy may have her own preferences when it comes to feeling safe, confident, and engaged.

Refining Enrichment: Something I've noticed in many behaviorists' recommendations is a common trend in feline behavior work that could benefit from refinement. While enrichment activities like food puzzles and vertical space are excellent options, they may not be truly enriching for every cat. It's not just about providing enrichment; it's about ensuring it's meaningful and tailored to your individual cat's needs.

My goal is to guide you in refining these activities and help you personalize them to Poppy's preferences and ensure they truly benefit her. I want to help you create an environment that not only enriches Poppy's life but also deepens the bond you share.

Considerations + Recommendations

Health, Pain, & Cognitive Decline: I'll briefly touch on Poppy's health, as I know she's under regular veterinary care for her diagnosed medical conditions. However, it's always important to consider health, especially when we see changes in behavior in senior cats. Pain and illness can increase stress and reduce a cat's ability to cope and their resiliency.

I'm particularly mindful of pain in older cats, as it's often hidden well, and conditions like osteoarthritis are frequently underdiagnosed. Cognitive decline is another possibility with aging, but it's a diagnosis of exclusion. While I'm confident you're already attentive to Poppy's physical health, I wanted to share these resources for your reference:

- [**Osteoarthritis Checklist**](#)
- [**Cognitive Assessment Checklist**](#)
- [**Feline Grimace Scale \(Pain Assessment\)**](#)

Feel free to review these checklists and discuss any concerns with your veterinarian.

Social Connection & Bond: Poppy's evening affection-seeking and preference for routine suggest a potential benefit from increased social interaction. You've discussed your efforts with enrichment activities, and it seems Poppy may thrive with a focus on deepening the bond she shares with you.

Let's explore ways to expand on the positive moments in Poppy's day. Could you extend the time dedicated to affection and connection, or incorporate them more frequently into her routine? You can even make these interactions a more structured and anticipated part of her day, much like a training exercise. For example, you could schedule short play sessions with Poppy's favorite toy before mealtimes or incorporate a dedicated brushing session into her evening routine.

Enrichment that is Enriching: While we don't want to overwhelm Poppy, exploring different enrichment types could offer valuable benefits. I'm not sure if you've tried scent enrichment, but it might be worth exploring with her.

- **Scent Exploration-**

- Snuffle mats are a great option. You can use cat-friendly herbs like valerian root, skullcap, rosemary, catnip, silvervine, dill, or thyme. They can also be used with treats!
- A simple DIY option is to place a pinch of an herb or a treat on a piece of paper and then wad it into a ball. It's surprisingly engaging for many cats, offering additional sensory elements like batting it around or tearing and shredding the paper to get to the scent or treat.

- **Nosework for Cats-** You might also be interested in "[Nosework for Cats](#)." This scent-based activity, inspired by canine nose work, is tailored specifically for feline preferences. It taps into her natural instincts and offers a rewarding bonding experience.

- **Understanding Play Preferences-** I highly recommend Mikel Delgado's book, "[Play With Your Cat](#)." It offers excellent insights into the benefits of play and provides guidance for discovering Poppy's unique play style. One helpful aspect is the adaptation of the "Big 5" personality traits for cats, which can help you tailor enrichment to her individual needs.

- **Tailoring Enrichment-** Additionally, I suggest exploring the [work of Dr. Kristyn Vitale](#). Her research on cat social behavior and preferences is insightful. Her [preference experiment](#) could be particularly useful in determining Poppy's preferred enrichment types.

Multi-Cat Household Dynamics:

It's completely understandable to feel a bit overwhelmed when tensions arise in a multi-cat household. For the most tailored and effective recommendations, a feline behavior consultant who can spend time observing these behaviors may be better suited to help in this area. They can offer in-depth, personalized guidance based on their direct observations. However, let's explore some fundamental principles together to help you gain a better understanding of the dynamics at play in your multi-cat home.

A common source of friction between cats is related to resources and how easily they can access them. Even though your cats seem to have ample resources and individual spaces, it's always worthwhile to re-evaluate their environment with fresh eyes. One aspect often overlooked is ensuring easy entrance and exit points to those key resources and spaces. Think about whether there are any high-traffic areas, bottlenecks, or "choke points" where a cat might feel trapped or vulnerable. If so, creating alternative routes or pathways can significantly reduce stress. For example, you could add a second cat tree in a different room or rearrange furniture to create more open spaces.

Another approach is to focus on Poppy's specific needs. By identifying activities and enrichment that truly engage and satisfy her, you might see a decrease in the conflicts you've been observing. Additionally, exploring activities that all your cats enjoy together can foster positive associations and build a sense of camaraderie.

If interested in delving deeper into inter-cat relationships, I highly recommend consulting with my colleague, [Tori Schlosser of Purrsuasion Cat Training](#), she has extensive experience helping cat parents navigate these dynamics and create a harmonious home for all their feline companions.

Conclusion: It's my sincere hope that this information offers valuable guidance as you continue on this journey with Poppy. I'm confident that with your dedication and a deeper understanding of her needs, you'll create an environment where she thrives. If you have any questions or need clarification on any of my insights or recommendations, please don't hesitate to reach out! Wishing you, Poppy, Sage, and Trouble all the best!

