

Understanding Your Pet's Behaviour: Signs of Happiness and Contentment

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Is my furry friend happy and content? Does my pet enjoy my company? Do they love me? You're not alone if you often get these intrusive thoughts and wish your pet could communicate everything with you directly! Many pet parents, whether new or experienced, are in the same boat as you, often struggling to understand their four-legged companions.

Here's the thing: While your pooch or kitty does not have the power to express their feelings verbally, they say it all using body language, sounds, and behaviour. Once you learn to recognise these tell-tale cues, you'll never have a problem decoding canine and feline language.

Without further ado, let's dive straight into understanding what your pets are trying to tell you! By the end of this blog, you'll be able to assess if your pets are happy and, if not, what you can do to get them in that state.

What are the signs of a happy dog?

Dogs are generally quite expressive animals, so it's easy to tell when your little buddy is in a cheery state of mind. From head to tail, here is a complete breakdown of how your pet dog behaves when they are over the moon!

Their ears are floppy: The position of your dog's ears can indicate a lot about their mental state. You can safely assume they are happy if they are loosely hanging and resting against their head.

Their gaze is relaxed: Are your dog's eyes open and relaxed? Are they blinking often? Are they making soft, brief, and calming eye contact with you? Then, they are likely pleased without a worry in the world.

They appear smiling: Yes, your four-legged companion can smile, too! When their mouth is comfortably open, the corners of the mouth turn up, some parts of their teeth are visible, and their tongue hangs, it means they are happily smiling.

They wag their tails: You cannot go wrong with this most common social signal in dogs! When your pooch moves their tail back and forth rapidly, they are feeling jolly, excited, loved, and all the related emotions on the happiness spectrum.

They wiggle their whole body: If your dog takes tail-wagging up a notch and wiggles their entire body into a happy dance, give yourself a pat on the back because you've truly made their day!

They show their belly to you: Dogs expose their belly, one of their most vulnerable body parts, only when they completely trust their owner. If your furry friend does that before you, they feel safe and comfortable in your company! You can also take it as an invitation for a light belly rub.

They behave well in different situations: A happy dog is more likely to be well-mannered. That means they will politely greet strangers and other pets during their daily walks, refrain from destroying your home furniture, and behave well in new social situations such as playdates, grooming sessions, or vet visits.

They like pets, cuddles, and leaning into you. If they enjoy your company, your dog will often make affectionate body contact with you. They'll ask for pets, extend their paws, snuggle on the couch with you, and rest their body against yours.

They play-bow: Happy dogs love playtime! You often see them get into the playful stance, lowering their chest to the ground and perking up their bottom in the air. They will enthusiastically wag their tails and look at you with endearing puppy eyes, inviting you to play, chase, or wrestle with them!

They enjoy walks: If your pet gets excited upon the sight of their leash, it indicates that they have had positive outdoor experiences and enjoy going on strolls with you.

They get the zoomies: Does your pup get hyper and run around in circles multiple times wildly? While you may find it strange, this behaviour is typical in happy dogs. When they are euphoric, they naturally have a lot of energy. Running is a way they choose to burn it off!

They have a good appetite: Dogs who eagerly wait for their mealtimes and lick off their bowl clean are most undoubtedly happy and healthy. Any changes in their appetite can indicate a ton of things, from anxiety and stress to severe illness and pain.

They sleep well: Sleep is another measure of overall well-being. Typically, a healthy puppy must get about 18-19 hours of sleep per day, while an adult dog needs 12-14 hours of sleep daily. If your dog is not sleeping much, something is likely amiss.

What are the signs of a happy cat?

Felines are generally subtle when it comes to expressing happiness compared to their canine counterparts. That's why they often get stereotyped as arrogant and mean, but that's not true! Cats experience joy, too, and with careful observation of the little signs they exhibit, you can tell if your kitty is enjoying life!

Their ears are neutral: Your cat's ears will change according to their mood. If they are slightly facing forward, they are happy and relaxed.

They slowly blink or wink: Have you ever wondered if cats smile or kiss? Yes, they do, but through their eyes! Happy kitty cats make soft eye contact with people they adore and slowly blink at them repeatedly. The day your fur baby does that with you, consider yourself lucky.

Their tail is upright: Cats communicate their emotions with their tails too! A cat approaching humans and other pets with their tail high up in the air with a crooked tip, appearing like a 'question mark' is saying, "I am delighted to see you".

They talk to you: While not all cats are vocal, many become chatty when content. Meowing, chirping, trilling, and purring are all happy cat sounds. That being said, excessive vocalisations might indicate an underlying issue, so it's better to talk to your vet if you observe such behaviour.

They rub against you: You come home after a long day of work, and your kitty goes around your legs, lightly caressing their body against you. What does it mean? It's a heartwarming way of saying, "Welcome back home" and "You're mine".

They knead or make biscuits: If you see your cat kneading a blanket, pillow, your body or some other soft thing with their paws, it suggests that they are in a really good mood. This behaviour may be accompanied by purring or drooling.

They are curious: The phrases 'as curious as a cat', 'curiosity killed the cat', and 'a cat has nine lives' make it clear that inquisitiveness is an innate behaviour in cats. As long as your feline friend loves exploring their surroundings, it's safe to assume they are living a happy life.

They enjoy playtime: Does your kitty enjoy chasing a toy mouse? Are they in love with their scratching pad? Do they take an interest in jumping and catching food off the fishing rod? Kitties that gladly engage with toys and participate in games are likely happy and healthy.

They cuddle: Cats are social animals, and like sharing their space with people and animals they love for the sake of bonding. So, if your queen or tom snuggles up with you, it's their way of saying they are grateful for you in their life.

They use the litter box: The way cats use the litter box can say a lot about their state of mind. When cats use the litter box correctly, they are generally at peace. However, if they urinate or defecate in other places they are not supposed to, it could mean they are either stressed or unwell.

They have a healthy routine: Happy kitties love their everyday routine. It includes eating well on time, grooming themselves, and getting adequate hours of sleep! Any changes in these usual behaviours can be a matter of concern, and you should consult a vet.

How can you keep your pets in a good mood at all times?

In the canine and feline world, happiness is a simple concept. It does not take much for our pets to be in good shape and have a fulfilling life. Here are some ways you can contribute to your pets' overall well-being:

- Ensure they are eating nutritious meals.
- Give them access to clean water daily.
- Surprise them with tasty treats.
- Spend time with them through daily strolls, games, training sessions, conversations, pets, massages, and cuddles.
- Groom your pets regularly.
- Create a cosy corner for them in your house.
- Help them socialise with other humans and pets.
- Take them for annual vet checkups.