

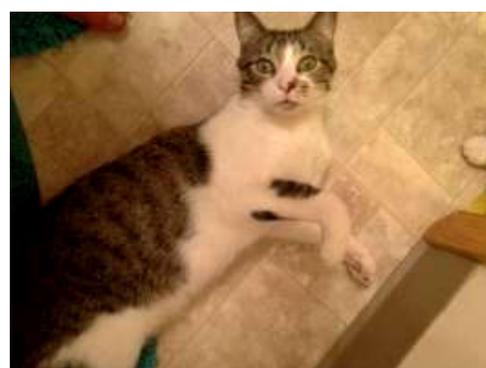
Lauren Fahl

Psychology 502

Fall, 2013

Misbehaving No More

Please meet Jack and Burton. These brothers came to me desperately needing love, attention, and a home, when only a few months old. I took them in not knowing about their lives.



For nearly a year, everything was picture-perfect until I discovered that neither slept much at night. Usually they would not disrupt me, except for sitting beside my bed and crying until I attended to them. Every night I would get up, check their food and water, pet them, etc. until I thought that they would leave me alone for the rest of the night. When this stopped working I began locking them out of the room. This produced louder crying and scratching at the door and my throwing all of my laundry by the door to block them. Soon they burrowed under the laundry and entered the bedroom. Eventually, I sprayed them with water and locked them in a different room. This has been going on since.

As I studied behavior analysis I became eager to see if I could make Jack and Burton stop misbehaving. Ways to stop misbehavior were often discussed in class. The day that Dr. Tiger spoke to the class about extinction was the day I knew I had found my answer. He gave us the example of the child who woke up in the middle of the night and received parental attention. We learned that to stop such behavior we could implement extinction: the parents could no longer enter the child's room and provide attention and would have to tolerate extinction bursts.

So, I went home ready to ignore my cats! The first few nights were terrible as I would lie awake listening to their crying. After about a week, I discovered the joy of earplugs! I would insert them before bed and not be woken up.

Jack and Burton now misbehave quite infrequently. When they do act up, I just grab my earplugs from the night stand and sleep soundly again.

As we learned in class, not every procedure is suitable for every situation and so one must determine which procedure fits and can be safely used. For me, extinction worked better and more effectively than all the other procedures I had used. Now to use these procedures on my next subject . . . the boyfriend.