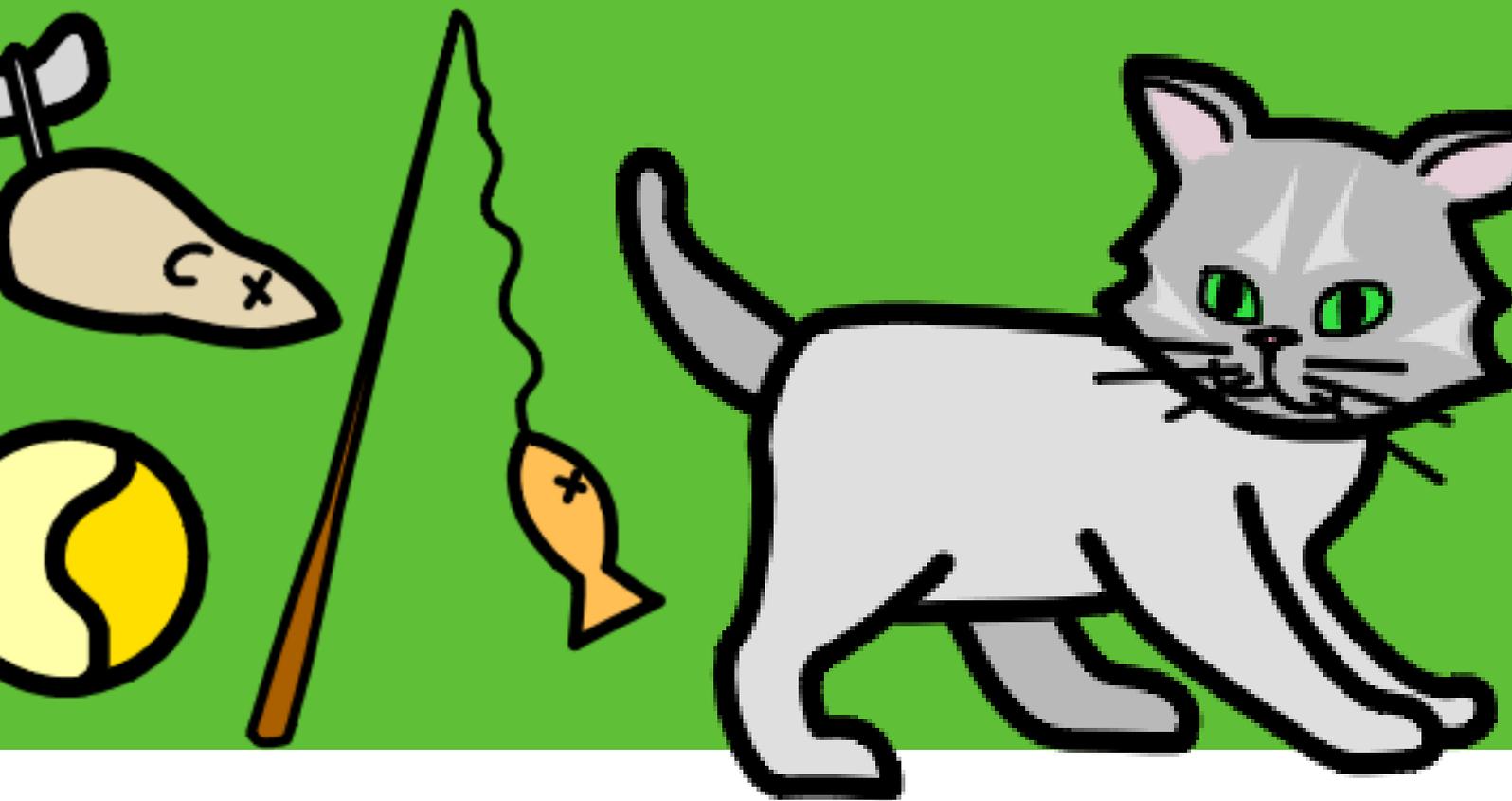


3 Reasons why cats make good companions



The love and affection of an animal can do wonders for our mental and physical health, but did you know that cats in particular make great companions for people with autism? This International Cat Day (8 August), we take a look at three reasons why.

Caring for children with autism can have its challenges, and parents and carers are always looking for new ways to calm their child's anxiety and encourage them in developing their social skills.

In 2021, the Human Animal Bond Research Institute (aka HABRI) carried out an 18-month study that paired autistic children with shelter cats that had been pre-screened for a calm temperament. The results showed that the interactions between the two had a number of benefits, including:

1. It brought the whole family closer

Although the thought of adding a new member to the family may be concerning, the study showed that both children and carers developed a strong bond with the cat almost immediately. This bond only got stronger over time, meaning that the novelty never wore off, and the presence of a feline companion had consistently positive effects.

2. It improved the child's emotional health

Learning how to interact with and care for a cat had a positive impact on the child's emotional health. Their ability to empathise improved significantly, and they experienced much less separation anxiety. They also exhibited fewer problem behaviours, such as externalising, bullying, and hyperactivity or inattention.

3. It had positive effects without adding undue stress

Most people see adopting an animal as a daunting commitment, that will take plenty of time, effort, and energy. For carers of autistic children, the idea of piling additional responsibilities on top of an already busy family life may seem like something they'd prefer to avoid. However, besides feeding them and changing their litter, the amount cats improve life for autistic children far outweighs the work they require.



Another way to help autistic children build meaningful connections

Autistic and non-verbal children can find it difficult to express themselves, preventing them from building meaningful bonds with family and friends. To help, we developed app2vox, a completely free app designed to improve the lives of children and adults who struggle to communicate with others.

Our comprehensive tool includes useful features like text-to-speech, sound cards and icons, phrase building, and more - helping people to better understand the world around them and make themselves heard.

