

Since the boys and I have to share one bathroom in our small house, I find it somewhat unfair that the cats (fosters and fails) have more places to use the bathroom than we, their humans, do. Not to mention that they don't have the added responsibility of cleaning up after themselves.

Most of the time, they use the nice blue boxes filled with cool stuff they can dig in or cover up with but on occasion, they choose alternate locations, and, well, let's just say that "unhappy" is not quite the word for how I feel when I find out.

I came in from work one day and knew immediately that one of the furry children had pooped somewhere close (and I should point out the litter boxes are in the basement, not "close" to the back door). I yelled, "Where's the poop?!" and the boys responded with, "What do you mean?" "I mean where is the poop?" "Mom, I don't smell anything, but I had Doritos for a snack so that's probably it."

Now, I don't know about you, but if I thought Doritos smelled like cat poop, I would never eat another one – ever. I replied that it was definitely not Doritos I smelled and started looking for the source. My keen eye spotted a smudged spot on the floor, and then another one, and another, and at that point it didn't take an advanced degree to know that someone had stepped in the poop and was tracking it all over the house. And of course, the child who swore he couldn't smell a thing was wearing the offending shoe. He was more upset about having poop on his shoe than he was about having tracked it through the house. Needless to say, I couldn't trust clean up to the kid who was oblivious to poop on his shoes.

As annoyed as I am by poop, cat pee is worse. I've thrown out an area rug, a book bag, a pair of shoes, several doormats and probably some other things I can't remember, all because a cat thought that item was better than his or her little box. Of course, I was convinced that said cat was sending me a message and what better way to voice his or her displeasure by peeing on something that belongs to me. Not too long ago I was ready to cry when I was stripping my bed at midnight, probably doing some cursing as well, because one of the fosters had peed on my comforter – for the 5th night in a row. I was tired. I was tired of doing laundry at midnight. I was tired of sleeping on a blanket because it was too hot for the flannel sheets. I was tired of worrying if my washing machine could handle the bulk of the comforter.

And then it dawned on me that maybe it WAS a message, just not the kind I thought it was. Maybe something was wrong. Sure enough – a urinary tract infection. Antibiotics and a day later, the little guy was back to the litter box, but I still felt horrible. How could I have been so slow to pick up on that? I was taking it personally when I should have been paying attention to the cat and the fact that it was personal to him. "Help me, I don't feel good" is a whole lot easier to have compassion for than "I'm a jerk and I'm going to pee on your bed right before you get in so you have to do laundry instead of going to sleep."

I'm learning. Slowly maybe, but I'm getting there.

Oh yeah, it's time to clean the litter boxes.