

Episode 3 | Tips for New (and not so new) VetMed Grads

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Defining our role in vet med, calling out the three things we're doing to create our own career regrets and sharing two concepts that will turn it all around. That's what we'll be talking about in episode three. Welcome to the Joyful DVM podcast. I'm your host veterinarian and certified life coach, Cari Wise. Whether you're dealing with the challenges in vet med, struggling with self confidence or you're just trying to figure out how to create a life and a career that you actually enjoy, you'll find encouragement, education, and empowering concepts you can apply right away. Let's get started. Hello, my friends.

Welcome to episode three. Today I'm going to be sharing my tips for the new and not so new grads and as we get started I think it's very important for us to understand our actual purpose in a veterinary hospital. Our purpose as part of a veterinary hospital, whether we're veterinarians or veterinary technicians, practice managers or assistants, our purpose is to serve clients and treat patients. That is all that is why veterinary hospitals exist. Unfortunately, most of us spend an abundant amount of time focused on things that do not fall into the purpose of our roles.

Simply put, we don't stay in our lane. Here's what it looks like.

You'll know you're not staying in your lane when you're gossiping. Did you hear Susie called off for being sick? Jackie thinks she's really going out of town but didn't have any time off, left to use and I know the manager knows, but since they are good friends, Susie gets to do whatever she wants. And what about career commiserating? You know, you're not staying in your lane when you start participating in career commiseration. Commiseration is expressing sympathy and sorrow for the misfortune of others. So in our case, expressing sympathy for the misfortune of being in the career of veterinary medicine. Poor us. This shows up as as complaining about the vet med villains.

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These villains are things like entitled clients, cranky coworkers, greedy bosses, low pay, terrible schedules, crushing student loan balances and things like that. We spend a lot of time commiserating about those things, expressing the sympathy and sorrow for our misfortune, having to become a member of this career. That is another indicator that you're not staying in your lane. And the third one is judging.

"If Mrs. Smith would have just listened to me and put Fluffy on heartworm prevention, then he wouldn't have gotten the heartworms". Or how about this one? "That new thing that practice owners want us to do. It's not about taking care of animals, it's just another way for them to make money."

It's very easy for us to jump into judgment mode where we really start judging what the clients do, what our bosses do, even what our coworkers do.

And judging along with commiserating and gossiping, those the three main indicators that you're not staying in your lane when it comes to your role in veterinary medicine. So we've got these things that we do when we're outside of our lane and we justify these activities as part of just letting off steam and decompressing. But that is not at all what actually results. To understand what happens, we must first remember the purpose of our role, which is to serve clients and treat patients.

When we consider the impact of the gossiping and commiserating and judging on our ability to fulfill our role, there are three very clear but undesirable consequences. The first one is wasting time. We like to complain about not having enough time to see appointments, to write our records, to make our callbacks, et cetera, but we don't recognize that we're spending a significant part of our time in ways that does not directly support serving clients and treating patients.

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This results in staying late or coming in on our days off to get our work done, which actually contributes to the lack of work life balance that we crave. It's not that we don't have enough time, it's that we waste it and then steal more time from other parts of our lives to make up the difference. When this becomes our pattern, we then conclude that it's impossible to have a career in veterinary medicine and achieve work life balance. This becomes a self created no problem and a self fulfilling conclusion.

The second undesirable consequence is compromising client service and patient care.

What we focus on grows because our brains are designed to find evidence to prove our thoughts true. When we embrace the opportunities to gossip, commiserate and judge, our focus is not on clients and patients. It is on ourselves and we can't focus on two things at once. Furthermore, because of the way the brain works, as we start doing this, we will find more opportunities to keep doing it.

The problem is that it becomes a vicious cycle that further distracts us from the entire purpose of our role, which is to serve clients and treat patients. The third undesirable consequence of a gossiping and commiserating and judging is that it actually creates career regret. Yeah. It actually creates career regret.

Our emotions are created by only one thing, my friends, and that is our thoughts, which are just the sentences in our minds, so when the bulk of our attention and thoughts during the Workday or about the terrible things other people are doing are about those vet med villains that I described earlier and about the client decisions we don't agree with.

Then the emotions we experience will be primarily negative. What then happens is we do start to recognize that we feel awful a of the time and we draw a conclusion that our job is creating our misery.

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This then becomes a self fulfilling conclusion because remember our brains work to find evidence to prove our thoughts true. What's fascinating about this is the thing that's creating our misery is actually not our job at all. We conclude vet med is a bad career choice for reasons that don't have anything to do with our actual career. Remember our job is to serve clients and treat patients.

The negative emotional state that many of us experience begins and is compounded from the thought patterns that we have that have nothing at all to do with either of those two things. So how do we fix it? Or in the case of our new grads, how do we keep it from happening? There are two things we must intentionally keep in mind.

Number one, where our role has actual influence and responsibility in the different stages of the veterinary appointment cycle. And number two, why we chose this career. In the first place. Understanding the veterinary appointment cycle is critical, so I'm going to take a few minutes here to review the four stages. Stage one is the detailed medical history, thorough physical exam and sound medical recommendation.

This is what happens when a client comes into an exam room and we have that initial assessment period. This is stage one. The veterinary health care team is involved and responsible for this stage, detailed medical history. This requires us to ask a lot of questions. Now keep in mind the answers that you get from the owner. It's not up to you.

They're going to answer however they want to answer. Our role is to make sure that we ask enough questions so the medical history is critical. The thorough physical exam, that's another thing that we are responsible for. We've been trained in doing physical exams, so we do that exam and then together what we do as we, the history, the information we've gained from that, we take the information that we've gained from a physical exam.

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We've put those two things together, we analyze it and we come up with a sound medical recommendation. That medical recommendation is then presented to the owner in the form of an estimate? This is where stage two starts. Stage two of the veterinary appointment cycle is where the owner decides how they want to proceed, right?

Your only role here as a veterinary professional is to answer questions and perhaps provide alternative treatment recommendations. If the initial recommendations that we made weren't authorized in stage two there's a little bit of back and forth as the owners figure out exactly how they want to proceed. Ultimately, the main thing that happens in stage two is that the owner, it makes a decision and we don't have any deciding power at all.

In stage three we implement the owner's wishes, so it's back in our court. In stage three. In stage three the health care team proceeds with whatever diagnostics and treatment that the owner has authorized and then we all move into stage four which is where we all stepped back. The entire veterinary health care team and the client. We all stepped back and we wait and observe how the patient response to that treatment in stage four.

None of us have any control at all. It is so important to remember these four stages because where we get it wrong is we get involved in the parts of this that actually are not within our role. Our role is to treat patients and to serve clients and there are multiple parts of a veterinary appointment cycle that do not actually require us to do anything at all.

Like when the owners deciding what they want to do and when we all have to wait to see how the patient responds. Nowhere in there in that and those four stages, nowhere in there does it say the we're supposed to create a treatment plan based on what we think the owner can afford. So if we go back to stage one where we make a sound medical recommendation, notice that it doesn't say make us our medical recommendation based only on what you think the owner can afford.

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Also nowhere in here does it say judge the client for the decisions that they make or become offended if they declined treatment. Those things are not part of the stages of the veterinary appointment cycle, but we often do them. And then finally, how about this one?

It doesn't say anywhere that we should feel personally responsible or blame the owner when the patient doesn't respond to treatment as expected. I remember my friends, whether or not a patient responds to treatment is a hundred percent dependent on that patient's physiology and we don't control physiology. Many of us forget that we don't have any control over whether or not the individual patient in front of us is going to respond.

We just aren't that powerful. These are the things though my friends that make us feel miserable and none of them are the required components of our job. Now, the reason we do these things though is actually pretty simple. Most of us don't understand that our emotional response is something that we alone control and so we try to control other people and the things around us in order to feel better.

It doesn't work, but as we really focus on what our role really is and start to let go of the extreme sense of personal responsibility for client reactions and patient outcomes, then we stopped trying to control the uncontrollable and we automatically begin to feel better. If we can learn to do this and keep front and center our personal reason why we pursued this career in the first place, then we are equipped to create the job and the life that we love.

This is exactly the type of thing that we do every single day inside of Vet Life Academy. And so if you want to learn more about how it is, you can start to let go of these things that you are feeling hyper responsible or right now, and if you want to learn about how you and you alone create your

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emotional response in any situation, I invite you to check out my free webinar at joyfuldvm.com/webinar. My friends, here are the final take homes, whether you're a new grad or a not so new grad number one stay in your lane. Remember where your role falls in the veterinary appointment cycle and let go of the rest. Number two, deliberately avoid gossiping, commiseration and judging. It's only going to make you feel terrible and it won't help you serve your clients or treat patients.

Number three, be a leader when gossiping, commiseration and judging are keeping your team from being effective. Don't be afraid to speak up and encouraging everyone to refocus on the purpose of your hospital. A simple sentence delivered in a kind tone can go a long way. Hey guys, I understand your frustration, but we're all here to serve clients and treat patients.

So how about we readjust our focus and get back on what we can do to help? And finally, number four, remember your personal why. When you intentionally keep it front and center, why you pursued vet med in the first place and the impact you wanted to have in the world. Letting go of all the little stuff becomes a whole lot easier.

That's going to wrap it up for this episode and I'll see you next time. Thanks for listening to the Joyful DVM podcast. To check out additional episodes or grab a copy of our latest free resources, please visit our website at joyfuldvm.com and if you enjoyed this podcast, please consider leaving a review on iTunes and sharing it with your friends. We can change what's possible in Vet Med together.