

Episode 11 | What's Really Holding You Back

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The Joyful DVM
PODCAST

with Dr. Cari Wise
Veterinarian
Certified Life Coach

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Bluebirds, birdhouses, and why circumstances really do not keep us from achieving our goals and dreams, that's what we're talking about in Episode 11.

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. Hey everybody, welcome to Episode 11.

Some of you guys might know that I live on a farm in Missouri and that's relevant because today, as I was writing out the notes to record this podcast episode, I was sitting out on my deck. It's the middle of summer. It's really hot, but I was up early and I was just sitting out there writing some notes and watching the birds. Yeah, I've turned into one of those people that really likes to watch the birds. And particularly, I like to watch the Bluebirds. This really got me thinking about the Bluebirds and how it turned out that I was enjoying watching them as much as I was. This is a little bit of a silly story, but I want you to stick with me because it actually has a really good lesson in it.

So let me tell you the story of these Bluebirds. This all started last summer when they took up residence in this gourd birdhouse. So this birdhouse, it was made out of a gourd by some of my cousins, two summers before that it had been painted and it was in really, really bad shape. It was still just out on my deck because I honestly had not done anything to get rid of it. But last summer, a pair of Bluebirds decided to take up residence inside this gourd birdhouse. I watched them all summer. I'd peek in the opening of the gourd birdhouse. I'd see the little hatchlings in there. Never did see them fully-fledged, which was kind of interesting. Didn't think about that at the time. And when the summer ended and I was cleaning everything up, this gourd birdhouse had had it, and I just threw it away. I didn't think anything of it at all, until this winter when it was cold and I saw the Bluebirds. Holy crap. I had no idea that they didn't migrate. It tells you how much I don't know about the Missouri state bird. And all of a sudden, I felt terrible because I had gotten rid of their house. I don't even know if they use those houses in the wintertime, but for me, it was kind of a big deal.

So comes spring, actually didn't even wait 'til spring. I immediately ordered a new birdhouse and I put it out there. I don't know whether or not they used it over the winter, but once spring came, I did find that birds had taken up residence in this birdhouse. The thing about it is it wasn't the Bluebirds. Sparrows had decided this was going to be their home. Again, I felt a little uncomfortable with this because here are the Bluebirds flying

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around and they don't have a house. I'd gotten rid of the other one. I'd bought them a new one and now somebody else had taken it over. So I immediately ordered yet another birdhouse. And I installed this one on the front of my house. So out in the front yard, near the pond is where this one was installed. Within a few days, they decided that would work and they took up residence there. They laid some eggs. They raised some young. And I decided that I didn't want the sparrows in this birdhouse, in the backyard that I had created for the Bluebirds. I didn't want the sparrows on the deck in this house specifically. I decided I wanted the Bluebirds to come back to the backyard for all kinds of reasons that probably don't even matter at this point. So what I did is I bought yet a third house and I put it on the back deck. So let me paint the picture of what's happened at this point. We've gone from one gourd birdhouse that had seen better days that I threw away, to having no birdhouses, to buying one in the wintertime when I saw the Bluebirds show up, to buying a second one, I realized the sparrows had taken over the first new one. So I bought a second new one, installed it in a different part of the yard, and then decided I didn't like it there and so when they were done raising that set of young, I actually had purchased a third birdhouse, put that one in the back as well. So now we have two birdhouses on the back deck and I've taken down eventually the one that was in the front. Now, all this craziness did lead to what I was hoping for - the Bluebirds did take residence in the third new birdhouse, out on the deck. The sparrows took the second one, which I'd moved further down, and I was able to watch these Bluebirds again this summer. I promise you, this is going somewhere, stick with me. So here we go. We've got these birds in this birdhouse and I'm watching, again. So I'm checking on them. I'm seeing their eggs. I see them hatched. And then all of a sudden they're gone. The hatchlings are gone. What the heck? They weren't old enough to be gone. Like I know enough to know that. They weren't old enough to be gone. So then I start the Google search and I find out that Sparrows will kill Bluebirds' hatchlings. Okay. We're not having that here at the farm. So what do I do? At this point, I go. I clean out both birdhouses again, because at this point now that they're gone, I noticed the next day that the Sparrows are getting into the Bluebirds' house. So I cleaned out both of the houses. I take the houses away for three days. I finally put them back out there, give them a few days. And the Bluebirds have again taken over house number three. There are eggs in house number three again. This is fascinating when we consider the facts of the situation. So here are the facts. The facts of the situation are that the Bluebirds had a house and it disappeared. So the house disappeared. Then they got a new house and it got taken over by somebody else. Then they got yet another new house and then their offspring were killed.

Three kind of horrific events, if we think about circumstances and we think about what we would do as human beings in this situation. But not for the Bluebirds. For the

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Bluebirds, no matter what happens, they have already decided on some things. This is their territory. So when their first house disappeared, they just went and found someplace else in the local territory to take up residence. They've always stayed together no matter where their house is, the two of them are always together. And they're determined to try to raise these offspring. So all the times last summer that now in hindsight, I'm guessing they never actually managed to get full fledglings out of what was happening in the back deck because of the Sparrows, probably around at that time. And the two batches this year, the one in the front, I don't really know about the second one, I know for sure they didn't survive, but they keep trying. They're determined to keep going.

Now, any one of these circumstances, if it had been us who had a house disappear or had a house taken over by somebody else or had our offspring killed, any one of those circumstances would have stopped us, humans, in our tracks. The emotional impact of it would have been overwhelming. We probably would have withdrawn and retreated from our own lives just a bit, but not those Bluebirds. They know their purpose. They stay focused on what they're meant to do. They're resilient. Their circumstances do not influence their dedication and commitment to their goal. It's fascinating to watch. I don't know if birds experience emotion, but I do know this. I know they're intelligent. So there is at least some bird level thinking going on here. And we know that with us, thoughts create feelings that drive actions. It's this think-feel-act cycle that keeps us moving. So what's happening in their think-feel-act cycle? What do we know? Well, we know there is some kind of thinking going on at the bird level and there's obviously some visible action that we can prove. So to the extent of whether or not the feeling or the emotion even exists for them, we do know that action still takes place despite whatever the circumstances might be. That their bird level thinking doesn't lead them down a path that gets them to stop trying. They didn't give up taking over new houses. They didn't give up trying to lay eggs and raise offspring.

As humans, we probably can't say the same. Like the Bluebirds, we have purposes and we have goals. We work toward them. And then when our circumstances change, what many of us do is we stop. We pull back. We retreat. Why? It's the influence of the emotional impact. Thoughts create emotions. Emotions drive actions. It is the emotional impact and not the change in circumstances that stops us. Emotion is a strong influence and very much underestimated. I can see this clearly in the example of the Bluebirds and their circumstances. Their circumstances don't drive their actions. It's what they're already believing about the situation that does. Their commitment to their goal.

But what's also fascinating about this is to consider how their circumstances impacted

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me. Their circumstances didn't impact them at all. They stayed focused on their goal. They stayed committed to what they were going to do. They were going to find a place to nest and they were going to attempt to raise offspring. They were committed to their goal. But their circumstances kept changing, right? Their gourd birdhouse disappeared. Their second birdhouse ended up getting taken over by somebody else. Then in the third birdhouse, their offsprings were murdered. Their offsprings were killed, and yet they keep going. But what's really fascinating is to think about the thought patterns that I had about their circumstances. Same circumstances, I had completely different thoughts. Well, of course, I did. I'm not a bird. But let's look at this a little bit more closely. It's really fascinating just to see how thought patterns drive our actions. We know this, but this was just such a clear example of it I had to share. So last summer, the gourd house, just a circumstance. Bluebirds nesting in the gourd house, out on the deck last summer. The emotion that I felt was happy. I really enjoyed watching them all summer. I was careful around their house. So what was I thinking about that created happiness? If I'm honest, I'm probably thinking, I was probably thinking that I was proud that they had decided this was a safe place to nest. Probably where that happiness came from. And from that happiness, I watched them all summer and I took care of them. And then when the season was over, I also had a thought that that gourd birdhouse was completely worn out and it needed to go. I felt very certain about that and from that certainty, I took away the gourd birdhouse. I threw it away and it was gone.

Now let's fast forward to seeing the Bluebirds out there this winter with no house at all. Immediately, I felt horrified and a little bit panicked. But why? Because I was thinking they have nowhere to go. I destroyed their house. That thought created the emotions of horrified and panicked. What do I do? At that point, when I was feeling horrified and panicked, I told my husband about it. And quite frankly, I just worried about it quite a bit. But then I also had another thought. "I can fix this!". That thought created determination. And that determination led me to take the action of ordering a new birdhouse.

So now, let's fast forward to the spring. That new birdhouse is taken over by different birds not intended for them. I felt horrified and panicked once again. Why? Because I'm thinking I didn't protect them. The actions that I take from feeling horror and panic, is again worry, and I talked to my husband about it. But then also once again comes the thought, "I can fix this!". And so from there, creates determination and I order yet another birdhouse and I put it up in a different area of the property.

Let's fast forward once again to that second birdhouse now being occupied by them. They're raising their young in this second birdhouse. I'm feeling very successful at this

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point. That success is coming from my thought they are safe now. I fixed it. But then along with that thought came another thought I want them in the back. I want to be able to see them when I'm sitting on the deck. And so I felt frustrated because what was real was different than what I wanted. Even though I also believe they were safe and that I had fixed it, I wanted them to be different. And so, I set up another birdhouse in the back. I wanted to control things. I ordered that other birdhouse. And as once they had fledged the young from that birdhouse in the front, I took that one down and basically forced to their real location. They had the opportunity to now come back again to the backyard and they did. I was happy about that for sure. It worked. That's where happiness came from. Let's fast forward once again, and now to this third birdhouse where they have occupied it. And they've laid eggs and they're, they've hatched those eggs and we've got hatchlings. And now all of a sudden those hatchlings have been killed and the Sparrows are trying to take over yet another birdhouse from the Bluebirds. And once again, horror and panic. Where's it coming from? The thought I didn't protect them. I'm horrified and feeling panicked, feeling guilty. What do I do when I'm feeling that way? I worry. I talked to my husband about it. But once again, that thought, "I can fix this!", pops up. And so what do I do? I dumped the Sparrow's nest out of their box. I dumped the Sparrow's nest out of the Bluebirds' box. I cleaned both houses. I remove them for three days. Then I put them back. But when I put them back, I put them further apart from each other and I keep an eye out. I keep watching the Sparrow's house and I keep dumping their nest, hoping that they'll go away. They have, by the way. And then I also keep monitoring the Bluebirds' eggs. Make sure that they're okay. I'm also, I've ordered a Sparrow spookers. So as soon as those eggs hatch, that Sparrow spookers going up to help protect them a little bit more. I'm taking action to try to protect them because remember I'm believing that I didn't, but I'm believing more so that I can fix it. And that belief, that I can fix this, creates confidence and that's how I take the action. Here's what's so fascinating about this entire story. Same circumstances, from the Bluebirds perspective, they just keep going. I also just kept going, but with a lot more drama, right? Presumably, I don't know what the bird's thinking. I definitely don't know if they have any emotions, but I can recognize that it looks a whole lot more dramatic when you look at what happened from the human perspective. But not every human in the world would keep going when circumstances like this pop up. My determination to see the Bluebirds brood and raise a successful hatch was much stronger than my horror and panic, every single time it didn't work. That horror and panic were from my belief that I was responsible. For someone who may have never even had the gourd replaced in the first place they probably never would have bought another birdhouse. So somebody else could have had a gourd birdhouse that wore out. They threw it out. They saw birds around after that, and they never would have considered that there were birds without a house. They never would have then went and purchased

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another house. Their thought patterns would have led to different actions. But why? Because it never occurred to them that they needed another house. Or maybe if they got one in a different species, moved in, it never would have occurred to them that it was a problem that there were Sparrows instead of Bluebirds. They might not have even noticed. Ultimately what happens is no matter what they might've been thinking, somebody else might not have had that underlying belief that they were personally responsible for what was happening.

Same circumstances, even a different human, could have a completely different experience throughout the entire thing. So what are the lessons here? It's really all comes down to what really holds us back.

Thoughts and feelings, not circumstances are what keep us moving or stop us from moving forward. We can figure out why we do the things that we do if we will sort out enough to consider what we were thinking about at the moment. That thought will reveal the emotion and it's that emotion that ultimately drove the action or inaction. So we could also figure out why we don't do the things that we really want to do if we can identify the feeling. A lot of the time, if we can identify the feelings that are keeping us from doing things, we can then ask ourselves, "Why are we feeling that way?" And whatever the answer to that is, that is the thought about whatever the circumstances at hand. It's that thought that's holding you back. That thought's creating an emotion that keeps you from taking action. Once we've identified that we can start to then consider alternative perspectives. When we can find and purposely think the thought that produces action-driving emotions, so we find the alternative perspective. That alternative perspective creates a different emotion. When we, can then intentionally remind ourselves of that alternative perspective, then we are purposefully generating the emotion that will keep us moving forward.

See my friends, it's not an either-or. It's not either horrified and panicked or confident and motivated. It's both. I was able to be horrified and panicked, and I was also able to feel determined at the same time. "If I didn't protect them, I'm responsible for what happened to them" thoughts were the only perspective that I had chosen, then I wouldn't have taken any action. I would have been spinning in worry. I wouldn't have been able to sit out on my deck this morning and write out this podcast and reflect and enjoy watching them while also understanding the lesson that they taught. Instead, my horror and panic didn't become a problem for me because I didn't allow that perspective that created those emotions to be the only one I considered. I considered a different perspective. I considered "what else?" Yes, horror and panicked, because I feel responsible, but what else? And also I have the opportunity to try to fix this. "I can fix

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this!", that thought created the confidence that I needed to keep moving. That same opportunity is always available to all of us. It's not the circumstances that stop us.

That is what this so beautifully illustrates. It's never what's happening around us, that is the problem. It is the story that we tell ourselves about it. Those stories will create emotions within us. That's the worst of all of it is the way that we feel. And when we allow those feelings to have us retract from our lives, to have us step back and withdraw, that's the really worst-case outcome because we stop experiencing the human experience. We stop moving forward. But instead, if we can just remember that life is 50/50 comfortable and uncomfortable emotions: that the uncomfortable is not a problem; that the uncomfortable can exist and the comfortable can exist at the same time. If we can remember that, then we can look at every single situation, every single circumstance, and consider an alternative perspective. We can embrace the alternative perspective on purpose to create the emotions that we need on purpose to keep us moving forward toward the things that we want to create in our lives on purpose. That's where all the magic is. It's in learning to consider all the alternative perspectives so that what you think about and the emotions that are created are not just at the effect of the things that happened around you.

What a beautiful illustration that was today, watching these silly Bluebirds and considering that their circumstances, horrific to us as human beings, we're just non-issues for them. They just kept going. They stayed focused on their goal. They knew what their purpose was. And as the circumstances changed, the things they couldn't control changed, it did not take them off course. They simply adjusted and went again. We can learn a lot from these Bluebirds. See you next week.

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