

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT



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FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 1

How the stories we tell ourselves about money, time, and clients become joy stealers in Veterinary Medicine, that's what we're talking about in the second part of this three-part series here in Episode 17.

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 17. Today, we're going to keep going in our three-part series on Vet Med Joy Stealers. This is part two of that three-part series, and today we're talking about Scarcity. Specifically, we're talking about Scarcity Mindset when it comes to clients, money, and time. Our beliefs around these things really can steal a lot of our joy in our careers. But when we understand what's really going on, we can actually find some opportunity to create some power around all of those things.

So let's start out and take a look at our clients. I think this is really super important for us to consider because of the nature of Veterinary Medicine and the nature of veterinarians and veterinary technicians and even practice managers. Oftentimes we believe that we have to serve everybody. That if somebody comes to us for help, that we are required to help them. And that is just not true.

Have you ever noticed that you have those clients in your practice that you consider to be your best clients, and then you also have those clients in your practice that you consider to be your worst clients? Does that mean that the clients who are your best clients are better people than the ones who are your worst clients? No, not at all. But what that tells you is that there's a particular type of client that is ideal for your practice. And there's also a type of client that just isn't a good fit.

When we try to serve the people who are not a good fit for our practice, we don't help anybody. Those clients tend to be very frustrated because the service that they desire is not a service that you provide. We, on the other side of it, as veterinarians, veterinary technicians and receptionists, and practice managers, we are also very frustrated because the way that we are educating people to take care of their pets is not in alignment with the way that those clients want to take care of their animals. It's not right or wrong, good or bad. It's just different. And it is that difference in philosophy that creates a gap in expectation.

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 2

Whenever there's a gap in expectation, there's always frustration that results. What we need to be better at is just identifying the type of client that we want to serve. What is it exactly that we're trying to do here? Many of us believe that we have to see all the clients that come to us, but we don't have to. The other side of that, many of us believe we need to see all the clients that come to us because of a financial obligation. This is where scarcity really comes into play.

If you believe that the only way that your practice is going to survive is by seeing every single person that requests your service, I want you to recognize that you will always be at the demand of what the other people want. You're going to have a very hard time building a practice that you actually enjoy and working within that practice if you don't believe you have any control over what you do, day in and day out.

Many of us miss that if you focus on exactly what you want to do, you will attract the right kind of clients to you. Now, I know if you've never heard this before, that can sound a little bit far fetched, but I want to tell you firsthand that this absolutely works. And it works not only in Veterinary Medicine but in any business that you want to create. If you're super clear on what it is that you do there, the services that you provide, the philosophy that you have when it comes to Veterinary Medicine, then you will attract the clients who also share those same ideals. That's a marriage made in heaven when it comes to a client-patient-doctor relationship. It's so easy to help those people. Those interactions are simpler because everybody's on the same page. I'm not saying we're not going to educate. I'm not going to say they're not going to decline things still. Of course, they are, but it doesn't become as personally insulting whenever they decline or if they just don't follow through, all of the things that can happen. It doesn't become so personal. Why do we not do that?

Well, first off, if we've purchased practices that existed, a lot of it comes with just kind of inheriting the culture of the practice as it existed when you bought it. When you're an associate, it's kind of inhabiting the culture of the practice that you work for. But even as an associate, what I want you to see is that you still have a personal decision on how you practice medicine. And for every single one of us, whether you're a veterinarian, associate veterinarian, or practice owner, you've got to be clear on how you want to do this job.

How do you want to practice medicine? This is the practice of Veterinary Medicine. There are a million ways to do the same thing, and you're going to develop your own style. As you develop your own style and you get into your own groove, what I want you to see is that you can actually practice within your style, even when you work for somebody else.

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 3

Now, there may be some moments where your style goes against the kind of hospital philosophy and policy, and you're going to want to have conversations about that. Sometimes the gap is too big to be overcome, and it's just not a good fit for that associate to be in that practice. But oftentimes there's flexibility there. That has been my personal experience. And the magical thing happens when you actually define your practice style. You actually start to attract to your own clients. Even if you're an associate in another practice. Once you have defined and really have started to practice and lean into your own practice style, you will attract clients who value the same things. You can build a client base that's very loyal to you because you consistently show up the same way. It's super powerful to see that happen. And as that happens, the other side effect of that, the better side effect of that, is you actually become more fulfilled in your role. You actually start to believe that you're making a difference. The truth is you are always making a difference, but if you're trying to make a difference with clients that just aren't aligned to your practice style, it becomes a little bit harder just because the gap between expectation and reality is bigger. Not saying it's impossible, but if you are constantly frustrated by that gap between what you recommend and what they agree to, when there's a differing thing, then you're going to have a lot of frustration there.

The bottom line here is you are never meant to serve everyone. I want to say that again. You were never meant to serve everyone. There are thousands of veterinary hospitals out there. There are dozens on any given street in a metropolitan area. They're all still in business. Why is that? Because different practices attract different types of people. If we can just allow that to be true, then we can stop trying to fit everybody in, in the second that they call. We can stop tacking onto our already busy days with unnecessary appointments. When we're doing those kinds of things, it's an indicator that we actually have some type of scarcity mindset around there. There's something that we're believing about what's going to happen if we say no to those clients. No is your best friend. It really is. But if you are believing that you're going to go out of business, if you don't get everybody in that asks or that somebody is going to be mad, and they're going to leave a bad review, leave a bad review online. If you don't fit them in, and you're making decisions from those types of energy, then you're going to create more of this Vet Med anxiety. It's going to steal your joy. It leaves you powerless because you are at the effect of what other people want. You're constantly just kind of at their beck and call. And my bet is, that's not the way that you want to live your life.

Now let's look at the same concept when it comes to the money. So, how are we being compensated?

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 4

The money that we make - so our salaries, our hourly wages, depending on what your role is - we can decide what we believe what we're worth, and then we can ask for that kind of money. Are we always going to be told, "Yes"? No. We're not always going to be told, Yes, but we're going to be told, No, a hundred percent of the time that we never ask. Can we just agree on that? If you never asked for a raise, if you never asked for what you really believe you're worth then you're never going to get it. But what many of us do is that we are so afraid of our financial situations that we just accept whatever is offered to us. And those of you who are practice owners out there, are you paying yourself adequately? Especially if you're a new practice owner. How many of you out there are still not taking a reasonable salary for your efforts? How many of you out there are not taking a salary and also taking an owner compensation on top of that? You know who you are. So you want to ask yourself, "Why?" Because if you're consistently underpaid for what you're doing, day in and day out, it is going to steal your joy. Eventually, it's going to be one of those things on the list of the reasons that you don't like this career. There are things that we've already added to it. You know, like patients that don't get better and clients who are unhappy. But on top of that, it's the scheduling, right? So now what we can add to that list. We can add to this, like a constant influx of patients at all times, or clients at all times, no matter when they call, they get in immediately. That "come on in" mentality. And we can also add low pay. What I want you to recognize is that you do still have a choice in both of those.

So if you would list compensation and scheduling as reasons that you aren't joyful in Veterinary Medicine, the opportunity for you is to ask yourself, "But what have I done to change it? Is there a conversation to be had?" Many of us who are employees would think, "Well, Cari, I don't can't do anything about this. I can't do anything about how the clients are scheduled and how the c'mon in philosophy is just the way that it is here. And I can't do anything about what I'm being paid, because this is what my contract says. And this is what I agreed to". That might be true, but you don't know for sure until you have the conversation. If you can recognize that there's an opportunity to schedule differently so that everybody has a little bit more consistency in what happens, day in and day out, then have that conversation.

Many of us as practice owners are so busy that we often don't see opportunities to adjust what we're doing, because we're just going, going, going all the time. I'm not saying every single practice owner is going to be happy to hear what you have to say. But what I do want you to see is that you have power in your ability to say it.

You have power in your ability to have a conversation, even if you're terrified. The same thing with compensation. If you're truly unhappy with the money that you're making, let's

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 5

understand why you're making it. Have you just agreed to take the salary because you're afraid of not having a job? Some of us do that. And then we're angry at the salary that we make.

Well, here's what I want you to see if you decided to accept that wage, then being mad about it after the fact, isn't useful. It's going to steal your joy every single time. Instead, if you really aren't happy with the wages that you're making, how about having a conversation and ask for more money? Is it a guarantee that you're going to get it? No, absolutely not a guarantee that you're going to get it, but it is a guarantee that you're going to feel better having had the conversation. And the other thing that's guaranteed is that you're going to have more information to work from. What you're going to learn in those conversations when you go and you talk about your wages, you talk about your, your overall compensation, you're going to understand better what is possible. So you're going to understand better. Maybe if you're a veterinarian and you're on ProSal, you're going to understand better how that's calculated and how you can adjust the way that you're doing things perhaps to increase your overall compensation. If you're a veterinary technician or other hourly worker, you're going to have a better idea of what like pop in wages possible and how to get there.

In the absence of those conversations we just draw conclusions about what it's possible for us financially. And oftentimes the conclusions that we draw are detrimental. We draw conclusions that are a bit catastrophic and hopeless, and that steals our joy in this profession. So instead, use those things that are bothering you as an opportunity to have a conversation with a decision-maker. At the very least, you're going to come out with more information. At the most, you're going to come out with a change in the positive direction toward what you want.

Now, the third area where the scarcity mindset pops up for us is the time. It's the story that we ourselves, about how much time we have. "I don't have enough time to do this. I don't have enough time to see that patient. I don't have enough time to go to the gym. I don't have enough time to go to lunch." And here's what I want you to see.

If you continue to look at your time as if it is something that you don't control, then you will never control it. It will always control you. And there will never be enough of it. You have to decide intentionally how you want to use your time. This can come back and also be related to the way that appointments are scheduled. But until you know, for you, what's important to prioritize in your life.

So maybe for you, it is a priority to get out of the building and go to lunch every day.

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 6

Maybe for you, it's a priority to get out of work on time so you can hit the gym. Whatever that priority is, until you know what your priority is, it's going to be very hard for you to have a conversation about the time that you're spending at work. Once your priorities are clear, then you know better what you're advocating for. That's going to help you to build up the courage again, to have those conversations.

But overall how these three things - clients, money, and time - overall, how these really tend to steal our joy in Vet Med is because of the stories that we tell ourselves about what is possible in regard to each of those things.

If we continue to tell ourselves that the clients are entitled, that they just expect too much from us and that they're rude because they show up late and then they expect to be worked into the schedule the last minute.

And if we continue to tell ourselves that compensation within this profession is crummy, that we're never going to be able to live, live a life of abundance and to be able to create any kind of wealth within our lives.

And if we tell ourselves that our time is not our own if you're in veterinary medicine, that you, the days you work are wasted days and that you can't prioritize yourself if you're also working. If those are the stories that we continue to tell ourselves, then it's no wonder we're going to be unhappy in this career.

What I want you to see now is that every time that story starts to play in your mind, it's an opportunity for you to ask yourself, "Okay, but what else? What else am I not considering here? What else is possible? Where do I have a personal choice? What can I do to adjust this toward what I want? What is it that I want in the first place?"

Many of us are very quick to be unhappy about these types of things, but we also do not have any clear understanding of what it is that we actually want. My friends, you can't work toward a goal that you haven't defined. You've got to take the time to step back away and ask yourself, "What is it that I want in my life? What is it that I want in regard to the type of clients I see? To the type of money that I make and the way that my time is used on the days that I'm at work, on the days that I'm not?"

Until we have some clarity around that it's going to remain in a scarcity mindset. There's never going to be enough time. There's never going to be enough money. And the client interactions are never going to be something that you can actually control. Those are just stories though. Those are not absolute truths. Those are not permanent realities. But until

Episode 17 | Vet Med Joy Stealers - Part 2

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 7

you define for yourself what you want in those areas, they will remain joy stealers for you.

So my final take-home: take yourself a little bit of time to consider what you want for your life and your career. Set that goal, and then start intentionally focusing on it. You'll be able to take the actions to start creating it for yourself immediately.

Alright! That's gonna wrap up part two of this three-part series on Vet Med Joy Stealers. I'll see you next week with part three.

Thank you for listening to the Joyful DVM Podcast. If you'd like to learn more about the concept and ideas discussed here, and how to apply them to your own life to create confidence and empowerment for yourself, you'll love Vet Life Academy. To check it out and learn more, visit joyfuldvm.com/vetlifeacademy. And if you're loving this podcast, I'd appreciate it, if you'd share it with your friends and leave us a review on iTunes.

We can change what's possible in Vet Med together.