

# Episode 32 | The Decision To Quit Vet Med - Part 2

## FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT



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The analytical framework you can use when making a decision regarding your job and future in Veterinary Medicine and really any area of your life, that's what we're talking about in Episode 32.

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 32. Today's episode is the second part of a two-part series about leaving your job in Vet Med. And last time, we talked about all the reasons why most of us would give for thinking about leaving our jobs or leaving our profession altogether. And if you've not listened to that, Episode 31, that I definitely recommend that you go back and check it out, because you'll be able to identify where a lot of the confusion comes from.

In this episode, Episode 32, we're going to actually put some structure into the decision-making process. We're going to take a look analytically at our jobs and stop making the decision from a purely emotional standpoint because the decisions that we make purely from emotions are not going to create the outcomes that we ultimately want. This is why we tend to make the same decisions over and over again, or rather end up with the same results time and time again, no matter how many times we changed jobs, or maybe even ultimately leave the career. The same results just keep showing up.

So why is that? It's because we haven't considered analytically why we want to leave the job. We realize that the job does that make us happy; that we're frustrated or angry or disappointed, all kinds of things, but most of the time when we are at work. And we think that if we get out of that job or get out of the profession, then we're not going to feel that way. Now, it's true. We will probably feel better for a while, but we need to ask ourselves why is it that we feel that way in the first place.

Now, like I said, back in Episode 31, it's very quick and easy for us to start to blame the things outside of us - so everything to do with the organization itself; everything to do with even our own performance - and we evaluate those things on a scale that we've never actually defined. The analytical approach to deciding whether or not to stay or leave a job is much simpler. And the amount of drama that it requires is just simply non-existent.

If we can step away from our opinions and we can step away from the way that we feel about our jobs and the people that we work with, we can then analytically consider the position and determine in a more strategic way, whether or not the job that we are in is the right fit for us. That's ultimately the question that we need to answer - is this job the right fit? In absence of answering that question,

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we end up answering a different one - whether the job is right or wrong - and there is no right or wrong. Let's just start there. A right job or the wrong job is again just simply an opinion, and what may be the right job for you may not be the right job for me, and that's okay. And what's the right job for me may not be the right job for you, and that's okay too. But unfortunately, when we're in the thick of it, we look around at the other people, working at the job who seemed to be happy, again, just an opinion that we make, and when we aren't, we often conclude that there's something wrong with us.

Now, if everybody's unhappy, the conclusion that we draw is that there's something wrong with the job, but we're always wrong in every one of these situations. The only thing that's happening is that the job itself is not the right fit. If the job truly was the problem, then the business wouldn't exist. We forget that part.

If it is the animal hospital itself or the organization itself, that was as terrible as many of us believe that it is, then how would the business exist at all? How would it have clients? How would there be patients to take care of? How would so many people continue to work there? This little bit of reality is something that we often just kind of ignore when we are looking at our own situation within the organization and whether or not to stay there. And this is only because it's a whole lot easier to leave any situation if we can blame the situation for our decision to go. It's much easier to justify it if we can find fault in the thing that we are leaving.

This is true for jobs, as well as relationships, and pretty much any situation that we were involved in that we're thinking about getting away from. Unfortunately, though, it doesn't actually solve the problems and what often happens is as we blame the situation that we're getting away from, we often give the responsibility of the decision to that situation. What I mean by that is that we don't intentionally move towards something different that we want. Instead, we simply make a decision to get away from something that we currently have. What's funny about this is that we're then often surprised when where we end up isn't where we want to be. We seem a little bit disappointed that the place that we go to next doesn't meet the expectations that we have. But we shouldn't be disappointed or surprised because if we're making decisions from a perspective of getting away from where we started, then how could we possibly have expected to actually end up where we wanted to go. Now, if we make a decision based on where we want to go, then of course we're much more likely to actually land there. And that's the kind of decision-making I want to introduce here in Episode 32.

So how do we decide whether or not to stay in a job or to stay in the profession? The first thing that we have to do is we have to decide how we want to practice medicine. So whether you're a Veterinarian or a Veterinary Technician, you need to ask yourself, "How do I want to do this job?" If

everything is possible, "How is it that I want to serve in the veterinary world? How do I want to serve clients? And how do I want to treat patients?" You're going to want to ask yourself that question and get as detailed as possible. Decide for yourself in a perfect world, what would the organizational structure be? Would it be privately owned? Would it be corporate? Would you own your own business? What would the support staff look like? So what is the leverage? The staff to doctor ratio, what would that look like? How would the staff be trained? Who would they be? Would they be registered Veterinary Technicians? Would they be assistance? Would they be on-the-job trained laypeople? Would it be a combination of all of those? How would they be paired up? Ask those questions. Get those detailed answers, and then ask yourself why. What would they be able to do for you? Like as if you're the Veterinarian, what is it that they would actually be doing to contribute? How many responsibilities will you delegate to them? How many do you want to delegate? What kinds of things do you want to delegate? If you're the Veterinary Technician, how many things do you want to do?

Now, I know very well the level of education that registered Veterinary Technicians have. It's extensive! The things that they're capable of doing and that they have to prove their proficiency, and in order to graduate from an AVMA accredited Veterinary Technician program is significant and many Veterinarians don't recognize that. And this is one of the reasons why there often becomes this frustration between veterinarians and Veterinary Technicians because Veterinarians tend to be control freaks because we think if we can control everything that happens, that we can control outcomes, and Veterinary Technicians become frustrated because they know how much they can help and they're frustrated because we won't let them.

Now, I'm not saying we just blindly trust everybody to do their jobs without any follow-up. That's not good! I don't care what role you have in the world and what job. It doesn't matter if it's medicine or if it's retail or what. You don't just blindly hire people and then put them on tasks and never check back up. That's not good for anybody. But what I am saying is that there's probably an opportunity there to use our support staff effectively for the betterment of the entire hospital. And so what you want to ask yourself, is in your perfect situation, how would support staff be leveraged? What would they do? How many would there be? How would they be divided up? Those kinds of things? Then you want to ask yourself questions, like in a perfect world, "What kind of schedule would I work?" So days of the week, hours per day. "What would the policy be around emergencies? What species would we serve? Is it a small animal? Is it large animals? Is it exotics? Is it a combination?" I would go into even details, like, what kind of vacation, continuing education opportunities, career advancement paths. All of these things are important because all of these things together make up your career. And it's all of these pieces that you begin to evaluate your position against when you're in a new job.

So let's just start out by knowing what we want. Now for you guys out there who are new grads, or maybe in your very first job, just know that you're not going to know this yet. You're not going to be able to answer. You're going to be able to answer some of it. You're going to have an idea. But it's not until we've actually been in the profession for a while that we can actually start to put some definition around the style that we prefer.

This is the journey. This is intentional. We only gain that clarity through the action of practicing Veterinary Medicine. And so it's totally normal to be in that first or second job, and to recognize the way that it is, is not the way that you want it to be. Where we get into trouble is where we think the solution is for the environment to change to become what we want it to be. The current environment is probably not going to do that unless perhaps you're able to buy the practice and then overhaul it to turn it into the way that you want it to be running. But that's not typically the situation for us in those first few years of veterinary practice. Instead, we are in the jobs that we've accepted and we're developing our own style as we're there. And as we start to recognize the discrepancy between the way that we want to do things and the way that they're done, then we become more frustrated. We become unhappy. We then very easily start to blame the job for being different than we think it should be. We get very judgmental and that just compounds our frustration; that just compounds our unhappiness. And it all feels very justified. We often end up leaving because of the way that we feel day in and day out at the job. But we haven't actually done this exercise that I've just started to walk you through. We haven't actually defined what it is that we do want. And so, because we haven't defined it, we hop onto the next job without considering whether or not that new job meets the criteria of what we want either. Because remember if we've never defined it, then how on earth can we be sure that we'll find it? We can't.

So the first step really needs to be for you to take that time to define what you believe that you want in a veterinary job. And this is useful, whether you're a Veterinarian or a Veterinary Technician. Brainstorm all the things. Make everything possible. Forget logic. Dream a little bit. Let's write it all down in a perfect world where everything could be available to you, how would you want this job to go? Make that list. That becomes your ideal job situation.

Now you've created data points by which to evaluate future opportunities. It also gives you data points by which to evaluate your current situation. And I definitely recommend that you start there. This literally would take writing down everything for your perfect ideal situation and then item by item, comparing it to what you're experiencing today. You're going to find some things that match up and you're going to find other things that don't. Once you get through the list, you're going to take a look at the things that don't match up, and simply you're going to ask yourself, "Are these deal-breakers?"

Now what so many of us would find is that the most important components of the ideal job light up just fine. This exercise brings a lot of clarity because when you start to determine the things like the schedule and the number of people who work there and the days of the week that you work, and maybe the money that you make, that those actually align with what you want, you could also then probably start to see where a lot of the frustration that you have around your current position is more about the behavior of the other people working there and perhaps the clients than it is about the job themselves. This is really interesting information to have because you can actually work to improve your own experience in those jobs if you just work to adjust your mindset around the other humans. Now that's not always going to work, but it works a lot of the time. And again, it's going to be specific to your situation and whether or not some of those behaviors themselves are deal-breakers.

Other times, you're going to evaluate your current situation against these data points; these ideal items that you've been able to define, and you're going to very clearly see some areas that the gap is so large that it doesn't matter if the drama goes away. The other data points are just too far apart and those are deal-breakers themselves. This is really good information to have because what that shows you is that it doesn't matter if everybody's nicer to each other. It doesn't matter if the clients would start following the rules. You know, none of that stuff matters and some of these bigger picture items just aren't a good fit.

So what would be an example of that? Maybe if your ideal situation is that you never carry an on-call pager, so you never have an on-call duty, but where you work, you're required to carry an on-call pager or be on call three days a week.

Well, that could potentially be the deal-breaker. If you have determined that's not the style of medicine that you want to practice; that you don't want to be responsible for after-hours emergencies; that you believe that after-hours, animals that need after-hours care should go to an emergency clinic where they can receive a different level of care in a true emergency; there's nothing wrong with wanting that. And if that's not the way that you're experiencing Veterinary Medicine right now, it doesn't mean the place that you work is doing it wrong. It just means it's not a good fit for the way that you want to do it. There's no reason for us to be mad that we have to carry an on-call pager at the job that we currently work at. That's probably something you were told during the interview process. The only reason it's so intolerable now is because you've determined over time, through the clarity you've gained through your experience, that carrying an on-call pager is not something that you want to do. And you're believing that you have to do it, but you don't. You're only expected to do it in this job. You're not expected to do it in any other job. For the next job, you get to decide in advance. And you actually did decide this time too, if we're being really honest with ourselves. You just didn't realize how much carrying an on-call pager isn't going to be

aligned with the way that you wanted to do the job when you took the job to begin with. And as you gained the clarity of that through your experience, you began to resent the expectation to carry the on-call pager. You actually made it into something more than what it actually is.

All that's actually happening is there's an expectation of the current job that's no longer in alignment with what you want for yourself. You simply just don't want to do it. It doesn't make the expectation to do it a bad thing. The hospital gets to decide what they want to do, and if this is the way that it's done there, it's not wrong. They're not bad. It's just not in alignment with what you want, but rather than us kind of stepping into our own power and just identifying how the place that we're at is not what we want for our careers, we instead decide to blame and decide to justify our reasons by making the clinic or the people that we work with, the bad guys or the villains. It's not necessary. We do this because we're just a little bit insecure and voicing what we actually do want for ourselves and we're afraid that somebody might disagree with us.

If we can paint the place that we're leaving as the bad guy, it's a lot easier to leave. You'll probably have a lot more courage in doing it. It takes a lot of courage for us to make a decision to leave someplace simply because we want to go somewhere different that's aligned with where we want when there's not an actual problem where we're at. That kind of decision-making for many of us feel selfish. It feels irresponsible. But I want you to know that it's completely the opposite, because if you're practicing in an organization that's not aligned with your own values; that's not aligned with the way that you want to practice Veterinary Medicine, it's going to be like swimming upstream. It's not going to be good for you and it's not going to be good for the organization either.

Every healthy organization wants to employ people who want to be there. And the organization itself gets to decide how they function. They get to make the rules. They get to make policies and procedures. When we are employees, the policies and procedures of the organization are often not ours to modify. Now, I'm not saying that we can't have conversations; that we can't make recommendations if we see opportunities for improvement, but they're under no obligation to take our recommendations and implement them. Many of us would find the bravery to go and have that conversation, and then if our recommendations weren't implemented, we would get offended. We would be frustrated. We would feel like we weren't heard, or that they didn't care about what we thought, but that's probably not true at all. It's just simply a matter that our recommendations are opportunities that we recognize and adjustments that we thought would benefit everybody, they just don't agree with us. They just don't see the opportunity the same way that we do, and that doesn't make them right or wrong. It just further helps us to see that perhaps it's not a good fit.

There's a lot of value in knowing how you want to practice. And it takes a lot of courage to then pursue that. But I promise you that jobs that you take in the future - so when you change jobs - when

you do it from a place of being in pursuit of finding the ideal situation, which you have actually defined for yourself in advance, that is a much, much better reason to leave a job than just trying to get away from a situation that you dislike, or that makes you unhappy. The reason is because when we leave those jobs, simply from an emotional standpoint, we don't know where we're headed. It's a bit of fight or flight in just jobs swapping form. We're trying to get away from the way that we feel, but we're running blindly forward into something else that has no guarantee to be any better. It's a much better approach to put some analysis behind it, which first starts with requiring you to decide and define what it is that you want. Now, I'm not saying that you're not going to change your mind about what you want as you grow and as you get more experienced, because of course, you are.

Clarity is created through action and experience. So what you think you want right now, as you pursue that and make a change in pursuit of it, you may get there and do that for a while and adjust your perspective a little bit. That's okay. That's the human experience. That's the way to move forward. That's actually a very emotionally responsible way to move forward as well because you're not blaming the place you're leaving for simply making a choice to move on when you do it this way. You're simply recognizing that where you are, isn't a good fit for you without any need to make them bad; to make it a bad hospital or a bad organization or bad clients or bad support staff. We don't have to make any of that bad for us just to recognize it's not a great fit for us. That decision then becomes more about heading toward a better fit than it does running away from a bad one. And it may seem like semantics, but I promise you, the results that you'll create for yourself in approaching it this way are going to be vastly better than the old way of simply running away.

So for all of you guys out there that are considering leaving your jobs - so whether that's leaving a position that you have for a different one or leaving the career altogether - I would like to offer you the opportunity to just consider first what it is that you want and the answer cannot be just to feel better. We all want to feel better. We all want to be happier, but we've got to put a little bit more clarity around it. We have to be able to define what it is that we want for our lives and these decisions can feel overwhelming because sometimes we believe that we are tied forever to whatever the decisions that we make. That's not true, but you've got to have some decisions so that you have something to move toward. Without it, we're just going to continue to experience the same thing over and over again.

We're like cars with our foot on the gas pedal and we're looking down. Nobody's steering, and eventually, we're going to run out of the road and we're going to hit a wall. But if we just drive that car looking up, we can still hit the gas pedal, and we're going to end up in a completely different place. That's not to say that eventually we won't take a right or a left turn, make a bit of a pivot,

change our minds as we have more clarity around the situation. Of course, we will. This human experience requires ongoing growth. It requires us to stretch and to push and to move in different directions; to pursue something more as we keep moving forward. Where many of us who have kind of messed this up for ourselves is in that pursuit of Veterinary Medicine, we've gotten to the end and have thought that we're done; that we reached our goal and now our life begins. But what's true is your life is continuous; that the search is ongoing; that the pursuit never ends. And what's more true is that you don't actually want it to.

For some of us, when I first said this, it may feel a little bit overwhelming. "What do you mean it's not done? What do you mean I have to set some more goals?" And what I want you to hear from this is that that constant pursuit of a better version of you - of the best version of you - including how you fit into the world; how you serve the world with the gifts that you're given; how you contribute to the rest of the world, that is what's going to create that satisfaction for you; that is what's going to ultimately bring you that peace and that fulfillment that we all want.

The right situation will never create that for us. And for those of us who have worked so hard in an academic program just to get out into the real world and to become disappointed by the results, what I want us to see was that the real world was never supposed to fulfill us. It is in our pursuit of a better version of ourselves that we find that kind of peace and fulfillment.

So if you're unhappy in your current job, give yourself the opportunity to really understand why. Stop blaming the job and the people and the pay and the hours. Go a little bit deeper than that and ask yourself, "How is this situation not in alignment with what I want for my life?" Answering that question is going to require you to consider what it is that you do want for your life. And you may resist it because it feels selfish to answer that question because you should be grateful for what you already have. And what I want you to see is that you can be grateful for what you already have, and you can still want more for yourself. There's nothing selfish in that because at the end of the day, the things that we want more of for ourselves, almost always come back to an increase in opportunity to serve others in a bigger way than what we already are.

Consider that as you think about your next move in your career and in your life, and if you want a little bit of help with this, definitely consider joining us in the [2021 Intentional Happiness program](https://joyfuldvm.com/happy), [joyfuldvm.com/happy](https://joyfuldvm.com/happy). This is exactly the kind of thing that we're working on this year inside of [Vet Life Academy](https://vetlifecollege.com), as well in the [2021 Intentional Happiness program](https://joyfuldvm.com/happy). If you're wanting a little taste without the commitment of [Vet Life Academy](https://vetlifecollege.com), it's a great place to get your feet wet and to really start living with intention as you move forward.

Alright, my friends, that's going to wrap it up for this episode and I'll see you next time.

Thank you for listening to the Joyful DVM Podcast. If you'd like to learn more about the concepts 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](http://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 VetMed together.