

# Episode 39 | The Breaking Point (what it is, what it means, and what you should do next)

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The breaking point - what it is, what it means, and what you should do next - when you recognize you're there, that's what we're talking about in Episode 39..

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 39. Today, I want to talk about the breaking point. It's a very important concept and something that many of us come to in our lives, and if we don't understand what's actually happening, then we can't move through it and it does become kind of this downward spiral thereafter.

So what is the breaking point? What on earth am I even talking about? When we're thinking about a breaking point, let's just start out and define it. This is always useful, I think. I love to go back and look at what do the actual words mean from a perspective of a dictionary or some kind of resource. So when we think about a breaking point, the actual definitions include this: it's the point at which a person gives way under stress; the point at which a situation becomes critical; or the point at which something loses force or validity. Those are the definitions of breaking point.

What on earth does this have to do with veterinary medicine? Well kind of everything, right? When we think about Veterinary Medicine, you've probably heard me say it before, and I will say it again because I so strongly believe it, Veterinary Medicine is a catalyst. It catalyzes our personal growth. And as we get into these careers, we get out into the real world, and we engage with our clients and our patients and our coworkers and our family and our friends and the rest of our lives, we hit a point, that is this breaking point. That point at which we start to give way under stress. That point at which the situation becomes critical. And the situation I'm speaking of is our quality of life, our own personal quality of life. Veterinary Medicine forces us to grow in ways that we've never been forced to grow before. And one of two things happens when we hit this breaking point: we either evolve or we break.

So we hit that breaking point. We hit that point where we just can't keep going the way that we are. We recognize the discomfort. We recognize that what we have for our lives right now is not what we want for our lives long-term. This is a very normal place to get to. This is not just Veterinary Medicine related either. So this is really important to recognize. This is not just the Vet Med thing, but for us, it happens much sooner than it happens for a lot of the population.

This kind of breaking point in our lives - this point of intolerance; this point of need to change - for many people, it happens somewhere between 30 and 45 years of age. I think for us in the Veterinary profession, it happens much sooner because of the environment that we're in; because of the kinds

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of stressors that we interact with on a daily basis. And so through our careers in Veterinary Medicine, this catalyzes that need for personal development, personal growth. And when we hit that breaking point, some of us evolve and we do grow and we keep going, becoming more and more of who we're supposed to be and live into our purpose, and others of us break. So what does it look like?

For those of us who evolve, we just become a better version of ourselves. We stay focused on what we want. We create more of what we want. We stay focused on the end game of things that we want for our lives. That I think is a smaller population. The other part, the breaking point occurs, we become bitter. We become angry. We become hopeless quite honestly. And this is where we start to think about things like, "Why on earth did I ever go into Veterinary Medicine? Why are people so awful? Why can't people just do what we tell them to do? Why can't people just be nice? Why can't people see how much we struggle with this profession?" So a lot of those things, and this leads us to, for many of us, to quit. So we may quit the job that we're in and go to another one, especially if we find the most painful thing about our situation is the people that we work with or the job that we have, or we quit the profession altogether. We just get out of it. And it makes sense that we do this because we don't like the way that we feel when we're at this breaking point. It feels awful. Who wants to feel hopeless? Who wants to feel bitter and angry all the time? It's no fun. Believe me; I've been there. And this kind of correlates with the idea of burnout at the same time, right? It's a lot of the same types of emotions.

Now, some of us, as I said, we deal with this by quitting. So we quit jobs. We changed careers altogether. We just get out of Vet Med. Some of us still stay though. We stay in Veterinary Medicine because we feel trapped. A lot of us feel like we don't know what else we would do because this is what we were trained to do.

Some of us stay because of obligation. This is the career I chose. I've invested all this money. Therefore I have to make it work. So all these rules that we've kind of set up for ourselves, and at that breaking point, we just continue to foster more of that same kind of negative downward spiral emotion without any change. It's not a very fun place to be.

Now here's some good news though. There is a way to get out of that. So to hit that breaking point; to recognize it for what it really is, which is just opportunity, and then to engage in the opportunity so that you can actually evolve; so that you can become more of who you're meant to be because I think this is the purpose.

Veterinary Medicine catalyzes personal growth. It takes us to a point, what I call the breaking point, to where the status quo is no longer acceptable long-term. That's not a problem. But if we aren't equipped to move forward through that, from breaking point to breakthrough if we don't know how

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to do that, then we are left to either quit the job, quit the profession, or stay and be bitter and jaded and angry and all those other things, which is not good. So there is a way.

What determines, if a person, when they hit that breaking point evolves to become more of who they actually are and to serve in the way that they're supposed to serve in their lives; to fulfill their purpose; to become who they are supposed to be. What determines, if you do go that path versus if you become burnout and bitter and jaded and nothing ever changes, and you just end up resentful over your whole life. What is it?

Well, I think there are four things - four things that make the difference in the world for what you do at this point.

Number one is just having the skills to manage stress. Stress is part of this job. I wish it weren't, but it is. And what's also true is stress is part of life. We will go through periods that we feel stressed out; that we feel anxiety; that we feel frustrated; it's okay. But if we don't have the skills to know how to manage that, it can become our predominant emotion, and when we think about Think-Feel-Act, if what you feel most of the time is stressed out then the actions you take from that place are probably not going to lead you toward a life that you want. Right? Because our feelings drive our actions. So we have to develop those skills on how to manage stress.

Number two, we have to understand where the stress comes from. So what is the origin of that emotion of stress? Where does it actually come from? What is happening in your own body or physiology associated with that? I think understanding the origin of stress and the impact of stress on the body at a more physiologic level and a bit of neuroscientific level is very, very useful because we can understand what's happening to us in a different way rather than continuing to believe that we're stressed because of the job; because of the people. We have to understand what's actually happening, that's number two.

Number three is we need the presence of a support system. When we hit that breaking point; when we hit that point that we cannot continue the way that we are continuing, we need that support system, and my friends, the support system is not the people in the same position with you, who want to sit around and bitch and complain with you. It is nice to have that outlet, but that is not the support system that you need because all you do together in that kind of environment is to continue to reinforce that the things outside of you are the problem. I'm not saying that the things outside of you are not a problem, but what I'm saying is that those things don't hold the solution. So continuing to put all of our effort and our energy into things we will never change is never going to be a solution that moves you from breaking point to breakthrough, to the purpose and the life that you want. So we have to have the right kind of support system there.

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The fourth thing is self-awareness and this is the most important thing. If we don't have a way to get to know ourselves, then we will have a very hard time living into who we are meant to be. I really strongly believe that every single person on this planet is here for a purpose. That every single person on this planet is uniquely created intentionally. That there are not people who are better or worse than others. And that counts you too.

You are not less than the people that you with, or the people that you went to school with, or your family, or your friends, or the strangers. You're not less than any of them. But the conditioning of our culture would have us believe that there are people who are better than others. There are people who are more equipped to do things than other people. And I would like you to know that we are all unique; that we all have very individual traits that are super important for why we are here. If we continue in our lives just comparing ourselves to everybody else, then what happens is we miss out on our own individual purpose. We miss out on understanding who we are actually are. And if we don't know who we are, then as we compare to everybody else, we will constantly be on the short end of that. We will constantly be concluding that we're less than, and this will just add to that burnout, that breaking point, that despair that we feel.

So I think the breaking point is super useful because it helps us to recognize that we're at a point in our lives that just going along with everybody else isn't going to work. It's not getting us the results that we actually want. We know this because we're unhappy. Unhappiness is not a problem to solve in of itself by itself. It's simply just another symptom of a bigger challenge; of something else going on. It's yet another symptom that we're in a growth phase in our lives.

So those four things - having the skills to manage stress; the knowledge of understanding where that emotion and all the emotions actually come from and what they do to your actual physical body; the presence of a real support system that's helping build you up and encourage you to move forward; and then that embracing of the idea of who you are really digging into becoming, figuring out who you are in this world - those four things will make the difference in whether or not you evolve as you hit the breaking point or you break and give in and kind of settle into the bitterness, the regret, the anger, the hopelessness. And if we stay there very long, that can lead to all kinds of other problems.

The breaking point only means one thing. It only means that it's time for something to change. That's it! That's really the biggest lesson in a breaking point. When you get to that point like, "I can't do this anymore. I just can't do this anymore." I want you to say to yourself, "Right. You're not supposed to." That's the first thing that I want you to hear. You are not supposed to. If you hear yourself saying, "I just can't do this anymore." You're not supposed to do it this way anymore. That is your signal that you're at the point that it's time to change something because nothing ever changes if nothing ever changes, right?

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We don't change something then nothing is ever going to be different than it is. For most of us, we think that change is just changing the job or whatever the most painful thing in your life is right now, you think it's time to change that. So change the job, change the spouse, change the friendships, change the house, change the location, you know, all those things, change the pay. We think we need to change all those things and you will get some relief from that. But what needs to change is less about those external things and more about the way that you approach yourself and your purpose and your uniqueness and your self-worth and your possibility. That is more of what all of this is about, and all of those things you control.

You have the full capacity to dig in and figure this stuff out. It's not simple, but it's completely doable, and when you do what happens is everything else stabilizes. It really is about finding the lesson that is there to be taught to you when you hit that point where you just can't take it. You can't take it not because you're not equipped for your life; not because you're not equipped for your job. You can't take it simply because there's a lesson there for you to learn that you can apply moving forward. And as you learn that lesson and you apply it, then you become more of who you are always meant to be. You are perfectly equipped for your life. And as we try to make our lives fit into the boxes that society would give us, as the measuring points of worth and value and success, many of us realized that doesn't work for us. Now, what I want you to see is you have complete permission to not live inside the box. You're one person individually created for a specific purpose, and if you're trying to fit into somebody else's idea of the kind of person that you're supposed to be and the success that you're supposed to have to be a valuable human, then that's just never going to work. It was never supposed to work that way.

The lesson here, what I think the massive impact of the catalyst - the catalyzing impact of veterinary medicine is - is that it takes us to that point that our coping skills no longer hold us over. The things that we've devised to just kind of keep going, run out, and they're supposed to. This is the most important thing to hear - they're supposed to - because it's not until the coping skills don't work anymore that we actually have that curiosity and that drive to go a little bit deeper; to peel back the layers; to understand who it is that we are as people. And this is not a question that anybody can answer except for you. You're the only one who can answer what it is that you're supposed to do here in this world. And I will have you know, that where you are now is not an accident. That you've not made mistakes in your life up until this point. That every single decision along the way was an intentional part of your journey and it was necessary and you need all of that to be able to bring you to the point that you're ready to say, "Okay, and now what?" That you hit that breaking point where your life and what's possible for you is no longer defined by society and conditioning and by rules and manners. None of that was ever meant to be, supposed to be the way that we just live. Right? It's so much bigger than that. There's so much more to this than the experience that you're having right now. The breaking point just helps us to start to see that.

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Some of us will hit that breaking point and will leave, and that's okay. And we have, some of us have had the breaking point and we have left. We have left jobs. We have left careers, and I want you to know that that's okay.

I also want you to hear this: Veterinary Medicine isn't for everybody, long-term, and you may not hear anybody else say it this way. Veterinary Medicine, for every single one of us that's in Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Medicine was the exact right starting point. But it very well may not be the last decision we ever make about our careers. And that's okay. That does not mean you failed in Veterinary Medicine. It just simply meant that for the long-term Veterinary Medicine was not supposed to be where you stopped. Now, for some of us, it is. Veterinary Medicine, wholeheartedly, is absolutely your purpose and you will continue to grow and evolve within it and contribute in that way and that was meant for you.

But for the rest of us, who it is not for, feeling guilty, feeling ashamed, feeling like we weren't good enough, feeling that we failed is never useful because that's not what's happening with you. You're simply out of alignment with what you were supposed to do with your life; who you're supposed to be. You didn't make the wrong choice. You needed to take this journey to start to give yourself permission, honestly, to consider that maybe your life is about even more than this. Something a little bit different from that. This is part of your intentional journey; I 100% believe that. But if you don't at least give yourself the opportunity to explore what you actually want and who you're about and what your purpose is and what your life vision is and what's on your heart, that you want your hopes, your dreams, if you don't do that, then what's going to happen is you're going to continue to compare your life to the people who are meant to be in Veterinary Medicine for the long haul.

We are two different breeds of people. Completely. Not one of us is better than the other. We're just different. We are all created differently, but we all have intentional journeys.

For some of us, our journey in Veterinary Medicine is long-term. We will evolve within Veterinary Medicine. We will continue to take jobs within Veterinary Medicine. We will continue to contribute and impact people and impact animals and impact the world in that way, and it's beautiful. And for some of us, Veterinary Medicine is kind of like the skipping off point. We start there, but we don't end there. We go a little bit different direction, but it was always supposed to be that way. So we have to give ourselves permission to be who we are. To recognize that just because we started a career in Veterinary Medicine doesn't mean we have to end there. And if we decide that we're not going to stay in Veterinary Medicine in a traditional form, that doesn't mean we couldn't hack it. That doesn't mean that we weren't capable. It just simply means that we've given ourselves the opportunity to consider that maybe this was just the starting point. And if we don't look at it that way, then Veterinary Medicine does break us because we instead recognize that we're not cut out for it for the long-term, but we also conclude that we're not cut out for anything else. And that's absolutely not

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the case. It's all intentional. It's all part of your journey. I know I've said that like four times, but it's so important for you to recognize that.

The way that you move forward from that breaking point is with those four things. You develop the skills to manage the stress because this is going to create a lot of emotion as you work through it. You've got to have the skills to manage that. You've got to have the knowledge about where those emotions are actually coming from and what they're doing to your physical body and how that may be actually limiting you. You've got to have the presence of the right kind of support system that's going to build you up; that's going to encourage you to figure out who you are and how you're meant to serve in this world. Not the support system that just wants to sit around and bitch and complain because that helps nobody. And you've got to be willing to start to become self-aware to dig into all the layers of you. To embrace it because it's on purpose. You're here for an absolute reason. I promise you that. And this is just the starting point.

So the breaking point, my friends is actually a very great gift that we get from Veterinary Medicine because it forces us to consider "what else". It forces us into this space of discomfort that requires something to change and nothing changes long-term if we don't grow through it. We will just keep going around the same mountain again and again and again. You will keep encountering the same challenges until you learn the lesson that you're meant to learn from it. I have learned this myself; take my word for it. It is much faster if you just dive into the lesson and start to figure that out and start to apply it, then everything starts to shift. For some of us, it takes two or three or four or five or six jobs until we start to realize, "Hey, wait a minute. Maybe that's not the job. Maybe this is just not an alignment for my life." You have all the power.

The bottom line, you have all the power here. And I want you to know that no matter what you decide for your life, that making the decision that gets you in motion will give you clarity. Go to work finding the skills to manage stress. Really learn about the origin of emotion and how it impacts your body. Find that support system that's going to encourage you and help you to grow and move forward and be willing to become super familiar with who you are. Be curious. Stop judging yourself so harshly. You were perfect exactly the way that you are.

Alright, my friends, I hope this helps and giving you a little bit more clarity around breaking points, what the value is for them, and how they are so intentional in our journey. And for those of you who are looking for those other four things, I want you to consider joining us in a webinar. We've got the [How To Be Happy in Vet Med](#) webinar. Great place to learn a little bit more about those things that are happening right now at [joyfuldvm.com/webinar](https://joyfuldvm.com/webinar) and of course, when you're ready to dig into all these things, this is the exact kind of stuff that we do inside of Vet Life Academy.

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Alright, my friends, I hope you have a great rest of the week and we'll see you next time. Bye for now. 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](https://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.