

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

The Joyful DVM
PODCAST



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Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 1

The far-reaching impact of what we don't want in our lives, that's what we're talking about in Episode 44.

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 44. Today, we're going to talk about the impact of what we don't want in our lives. It's not something that we've probably talked about in this way and so I think this is a good idea for us to consider the way that we think about our lives from this perspective.

So a lot of the time we recognize that we're unhappy in our jobs and in our lives and that we want things to be different than they are. Right? We spend a lot of time talking about that. We talk about that with our friends and family. We commiserate with our coworkers if it has something to do with work. There is a bit of a relief that comes from sharing with other people our struggles and the things that we don't like, the things that frustrate us, the things that make us unhappy. I think there is value in that because it does help from a stress perspective. It does help us to recognize that we're not alone in the challenges that we face, but there's a downside to that kind of constant sharing and focus that we haven't really considered or not considered intentionally. I just want to bring this to our awareness because it has a real consequence to it.

There is a downside to focusing on what it is that we don't want in our lives. So what we are not happy about in our lives, in our careers and the downside of that is the block that it creates as far as our creativity and the possibility of things to be different.

When we're focused on the things we don't like; when we're focused on what is frustrating about our jobs, about our clients, about our relationships, about our living situations, about our financial situations, all the things that the world brings us that we would like to be different, and we all have a list like every single one of us has a list, and when we focus on those things, what happens is this silly little concept in the neuroscientific world called Confirmation Bias and the activation of the Reticular Activating System, and what happens is the more that we focus on the things that we aren't happy with, the more we become aware of those things.

The things that we focus on, we do create more of, and part of that, especially when we're talking about being frustrated and aggravated, is that when our focus goes to those things, and that's what we're really considering, day in and day out, we see more of it. So we experience more of it.

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 2

Now, is more of it there? Maybe. Maybe not. But the challenge is to not let that be our focus. When it's the thing that we're focused on, whatever the challenge is, then we will just because of the way that the mind works, we'll continue to gather about how that thing or things or the different situations that are frustrating and causing us to be unhappy, we'll continue to gather evidence that those things exist. I'm not saying they don't exist. Don't get me wrong. It's not what I'm saying at all, but you don't want to spend all of your time focused on the things that you're unhappy about. The reason being, if you remember, Think-Feel-Act, what we focus on, we create more of in our thoughts. The things that we focus on - our thoughts about those things, our opinions, our beliefs about those things - which are actually just factual framework of our lives, all of the thoughts and opinions and beliefs we have about those things create emotion for us. So if all of our time is spent in consideration of the things that we want to be different; in consideration of the things that we don't like about our lives, then the net emotional state that we will create for ourselves is going to be a net negative emotional state. If we are then emotionally frustrated and angry and hopeless and irritated and angry, I think I already said angry so angry must be a big one, if that's where the majority of our emotion lies, then we want to think and consider then how that impacts our actions because our emotion always drives our actions.

Our actions are all the things that we do and we don't do. It's our behaviors. It's our choice. Those actions together create our outcomes or our results in our lives. So if we don't like the results we currently have in our lives, and all we're doing is focusing on those results that we don't like, focusing on those outcomes, focusing on what has now become part of the factual framework of our lives, but in a sense, focusing on it in the sense that we want it to be different; we don't like the way it is, what we need to see is that it becomes its own loop. We continue to create more of it because as we focus on what we don't like and what we want to be different, what we're frustrated, about angry about, then that creates the emotions, which are going to be on the net negative side, which is going to drive more of the actions and inactions in our lives that actually has us creating just more of the same. So it becomes a vicious cycle. That's not even the worst part though. So that's happening kind of that's just like normal, right? This is like the human thing. This is just what we do. We like to find the commiseration, the comrades who are going through the same things with us. There's some use to that, but this is why you'll hear me say a lot, especially in Vet Life Academy. We don't do a lot of commiserating in there, like a lot of bitching and complaining and commiserating. It's not a commiseration station because it doesn't lead to anything different for us.

Just focusing on everything that's wrong with our lives and our careers doesn't create anything different. And so that's problematic in and of itself because of like I already said, the net emotional state and the actions and the actions that create, but that's not even the worst part of it. The biggest problem that comes from us being focused on the things that we don't like is the lack of focus on the things that we want. And this is everything. If we aren't giving ourselves any time to consider what we do want, then we won't create anything different. We just keep thinking that if we keep working hard

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 3

enough that our lives are going to change, that we're going to be happier, that eventually, this is all going to pan out differently. But if we just keep taking the same actions, we shouldn't be surprised, but we don't create different results. We do at some point have to make some different decisions and take some different actions even if those different actions are in the decisions about what we think about.

To change our results, it doesn't even mean that we have to quit our jobs or quit our relationships or move away. It can start literally by what we're focusing on, like taking control over what we're focusing on, thinking about things intentionally. When we do this, another amazing thing happens. So just like before when we're focusing on all the things that we're frustrated about, the things that we don't like about our lives, that creates a negative emotional state. When we start to consider what we do want in our lives, the things we start to dream a little, we start to consider all the things that we were more free to consider when we were younger because life hadn't happened to us yet, right? We weren't adults. We weren't adulting yet and so that freedom to dream about the future was much more available to us when we were younger. When we do that, what happens is that we start to experience different emotions. We start to feel more hopeful. We start to see possibility and that confirmation bias just as it works to our negative when we're focused on the things that we are unhappy with, it begins to work toward the positive force when we start to focus on the things that we want. We start to dream about the things that are possible. It will also start to gather that evidence that those things are possible for you too. You'll start to see the paths there. And this is probably the most influential thing about what makes anything possible for us in the future is what we spend our time thinking about. Because if you never give yourself the time to consider what you want to be different other than through the lens of how you want things that you don't like to be different.

What I mean by this is, let me give you a real, tangible example. So let's say one of your pain points is that you work on weekends. I hate being in Veterinary Medicine because we always work on the weekends. So maybe that's a thought you have - we have to work Saturdays. I have to work three Saturdays a month or something around those, that idea of that you don't like to work Saturdays and so you think about it a lot. Every time Saturday comes up, it's right back into your awareness. I hate this about my job and all of that. If our focus is on the problem of working Saturdays, then every Saturday, we are going to see that problem again, front and center. Here we go. All the emotions - the frustration, the bitterness, the resentfulness - all of that's going to come up. That's going to show up then for us in the way that we behave during those work hours. Probably also the way we behave the night before we have to go in because of that whole Sunday blues thing, right? Like whenever you dread the next day, I call that Sunday blues. It doesn't have to be Sunday. So it shows up in the way that you behave and then once you're, when you have a Saturday off, you probably don't even enjoy it as much as you could because you are probably considering how you wish you have more of these but not in an empowering way, but again, in the resentful kind of way. Now, if our focus over

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 4

Saturdays is all about how Saturdays in our lives are terrible occurrences because most of the time we have to work. That doesn't open up any possibilities for how Saturdays in our lives could be different. That doesn't give us the permission to consider how we might actually have the power to change working on Saturdays. We don't get to solve that problem.

Remember, your mind is an amazing computer. All you have to do is offer the right questions, but when we're so focused on the things that we are unhappy with within our lives, we don't ever give it the questions to solve. We never ask it questions that it can go to work on our behalf. If we will take the time intentionally to ask the right questions of ourselves, to just dream a little bit, to consider and imagine how things could be different, then our minds actually go to work bringing that to us. It starts with a shift in the way that we feel because as we start to think about different things, we are going to feel differently. As you feel differently, you're going to take different actions; you're going to make some different decisions. But along with that is that beautiful concept of confirmation bias but this time working to your advantage. It's going to start finding all those different possibilities for you around you that are probably already there but are being filtered out of consideration because you've never asked your brain the question, which means it's never been alerted to find anything other than working on Saturdays, to use my prior example, is what you want. Do you see what I'm saying here? It's amazing. If you actually just start to play with this a little bit how you much you can see it's true.

When we focus on what we don't want in our lives, what happens is we create more of it. So there is an impact on the things that we don't want. It's because when we put our focus there, we just continue to create more and more of the same. I think it's useful for us to recognize, "Yes, I don't want these things", but not to spend too much time dwelling on it because that doesn't create any change for you. It actually adds to your frustration which will keep you from making decisions and taking actions to make it different. Instead, recognize what you don't want super valuable and then shift your perspective, "What do I want?" That's a hard question. Many of us have a very hard time identifying what it is that we do want because as we've grown into adulthood. After we've gone through all of this education, we've been in the workforce, we have obligations, we have responsibilities, what happens is we start to see everything in our lives through the lens of those things - through those responsibilities, through those obligations, through the impact of the world that we have lived. So we have these experiences in our lives that have influenced what we believe is possible for ourselves. We need to peel all that back and just let all that go a little bit. We need to go back to before life got so complicated for us. When we were a little bit younger before we had all the obligations and all the responsibilities. We need to go back and think about - What did we think about back then? What were we excited about back then? What did we dream about back then?

Many of us, because of these academic paths that we've been on that have taken so much of our

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 5

brainpower for so many years, have become very out of touch with that part of our existence. It's really important for us to actually go back and revisit that because all of that was intentional. All of those dreams, all of those hopes, all those interests that you had when you were younger are part of who you are, and it was all intentional. Now your life may have taken a completely different path than what you thought you were going to do when you were like eight or nine years old. I know that's true for me, but that doesn't mean that you took the wrong path. It also doesn't mean that those dreams that you had when you were younger were irrelevant. That's a bit of a trap that we fall into. We think that those things that we used to be interested in, they used to light us up and excite us that where we spent so much of our time and our focus and really created a lot of passion around, that those things were just silly childhood things, that they don't have any place for us here in the real world now that we're adults. I would argue just the opposite. I would argue that those experiences of your life when you were younger had a very pivotal role in your journey and still do. That they still have influence, but because we have not focused on those things; we've not focused on what lights us up; we don't focus on what we're passionate about, we're excited about, what we're interested in, and instead, we focus on the things that we don't like about our lives, we don't have any opportunity to bring the positive impact of all of those things that are built into who we are into our actual current reality. That also then blocks what's possible for us in the future.

So in order to move forward, we do have to kind of take a little bit of a step back at least mentally to give ourselves permission to go back and consider the people that we were when we were younger, because there are pieces of you there that you've probably just let drop off along the way as the world has become real. When we're in an academic program, our focus needs to go there to get through. You had a goal. You met that goal. Now that you're out of that, you're not in academics anymore, you're out into the real world, many of us get into this and we burn out. You know, usually that 30 to 40 years of age, somewhere in that period. Usually, for those of us in the veterinary profession, it seems as we get closer to 30, it gets even more prominent. But usually, within between 30 and 40, there is a bit of burnout. There's a bit of this moment like, "What happened in my life? This isn't what I wanted. I'm not happy doing this. This is what I really thought I wanted to do." Right? We go back. We think about that why - I wanted to do this and I worked really hard to do this, and now I'm unhappy. We think we made the wrong choice. We think that this is the wrong profession, and we just keep gathering evidence to prove that that is a true conclusion. What we miss is the opportunity to see how this piece of your journey fits into the overall journey. We miss the opportunity to consider there are lessons that we've learned here that we can apply as we move forward. That all of it is connected to who we were way back when before we ever went into these careers and who we're going to be in the future. That this is all a continuum of an experience. When we laser-focus on the things we don't like about the here and now it blocks off the continuum. It blocks off our ability to see anything outside of this tiny space and time that we're existing in, at this moment. That's the most damaging thing that we can do to ourselves because, in that perspective, that is so narrow and only focus on what is not working now, it squashes our hope. It squashes our joy. It squashes our potential.

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 6

It keeps us in a net negative emotional state. It has us withdrawing from our lives. It has us making choices that we won't ultimately be happy with later.

Friends, I just want you to know that it's not the way we have to do this. There are ways that we can learn to understand our current experiences and take back control over what comes next for us. The first piece is simply getting control of what goes on in our own minds. Just because we think it doesn't make it true. We do have control over what we put our focus on. Left to its own devices, that silly brain of ours will always find the negative. And of course, it does because that's what it was designed to do back when we were at risk of life-threatening danger from predators, but it's not so useful anymore, but instead, it doesn't know that. So it continues to show you all the things that are negative; all the things that you have also kind of taught are harmful to you. It keeps pointing out all those things to you because it thinks that it's protecting you. But in doing that, we pull all of our focus to the things that aren't working, which means all of our emotion is created from those things that we don't like, which means we just keep creating more of the same because what you think creates the way you feel and how you feel drives your actions.

In order for us to get out of this stuck place of frustration and anxiety and misery and regret, the first thing, the most important thing that we have to do is simply to change our perspective. To grab back control over what we're thinking about. To recognize when it's useful for us to focus on the things that are frustrating and that we want to be different and to recognize when it's not helpful. To redirect and look forward to see where we want to go.

You've heard me say this before you can't drive a bus looking down. You're going to crash, and we do. We crash and we think it's the job. We think it's the wrong choice that we made. But friends, the biggest thing that causes us to crash is not the prior choices that we made. It's the failure to make any new ones. The only reason we fail to make any new choices is because we're so stuck looking down in the soup of our own misery, that we don't even give ourselves the opportunity to solve the questions and the challenges in front of us for ourselves in a way that's most useful for our individual journeys in our individual lives.

I know we've got a little bit deep here today. I just wanted to bring this to our awareness again, that it's very important for us to be mindful about what we're putting our focus on, and for us to remember that the only person who gets to decide what's important to us is us. If the things that you're focusing all your time on really aren't important to you in the grand scheme of things, I want to give you the opportunity to just shift that for yourself. Intentionally just decide, "You know what, it's not useful for me to keep thinking about that. Let me think about something different." Start to play around with it. See how it changes the way that you feel day in and day out. All of this together, as you get an understanding and get control of what's going within your own mindset and how that's influencing your own reality, the doors start to open up, especially when you leverage that to the

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 7

positive. When you leverage the power of thinking to generate an intentional emotion, which then will drive intentional action toward the things that you want. You're looking up driving your bus instead of looking down. This is a key component in living out the purpose of our lives.

I strongly believe we're all here for a reason. We have things that we're supposed to do here in this world. When we are so focused on the day in and day out, things that keep us frustrated, our purpose will not be fulfilled. You're not going to find the purpose of your life in the muck of what you're experiencing today. It's not there. You're just going to find more and more of the same. Instead though, if you just shift your perspective, look up, look around, give yourself the opportunity to consider who were you before life got so complicated, what were you interested in, what were you passionate about before life got so complicated, and then consider how have your life experiences shifted what you believed was possible for you, I think those two pieces together are a great place to start.

And then the third place is getting to know who you are on a completely different level. Start to peel back the layers. If any of you guys love the personality tests, you know, like Myers-Briggs and the Enneagram and things like that, and you have found that doing those really has helped you kind of understand yourself more, have I got something for you. The Discover Your Purpose workshops coming up. It's going to be here at the end of the month and the enrollment for that's going to open here later this week. To be notified when that opens go to joyfuldvm.com/purpose, and you'll get an email as soon as that registration opens. In that workshop, we're going to be taking a look at all this. We're going to be taking a look at who we were before life got complicated. We're going to be taking a look at the influence that the life experiences we've had up until now have had on our current realities. We're going to look up. We're going to look forward and we're going to look at ourselves through layers. If you like the self-help stuff; if you like personality assessments; if you like a little bit of Wu astrology, the impact of the cosmos, all kinds of stuff like that, if any of that stuff interests you, you're going to want to come to this living or Discover Your Purpose workshop. It's going to be a lot of fun; something we've never done before with any Joyful DVM event. It's going to leave you with a whole different set of things to consider about yourself, and I think that you're going to find it really, really useful. Especially useful in normalizing your experience so that you can see that you're not broken. You're not screwed up. You aren't the one who's getting it wrong. You're simply a human, living a human experience with human challenges.

One of our greatest challenges is managing that silly brain of ours so that we can leverage the power of it to create what we want for ourselves and live more fully into the purpose that we were designed for.

Episode 44 | The Impact of What You DON'T Want

FULL EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

| 8

Alright, my friends, that's going to wrap it up for this week and I will see you next time. Bye for now.

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