

Episode 48 | What Does, and Does Not, Define a "Joyful" DVM

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What defines the joyful in Joyful DVM and why it's not happiness, that's what we're talking about in Episode 48.

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 48. Today, what I want to do is talk about the joy in Joyful DVM. What does joyful even mean?

For a lot of us, when we think about joy, we automatically think happy. We think that joy and happiness are synonyms. If we pull out the thesaurus, it may very well have them listed as alternate words for each other, but I think it's much bigger than that.

When I created the organization Joyful DVM back, gosh, over four years ago now, when I was picking the name, I very intentionally chose the word joyful. As we've had that name, as we've interacted with that name, it's continued to resonate and expand what it actually encompasses over time, which has been really fun to watch because back then, I didn't necessarily know the breadth of what this was going to become. Now, here we are four years later and we're looking at the organization overall, I am, and I'm looking at the ways that we impact people in the way that we help, and I've really started to look at the word joyful. I think what's brought this up for me recently is that we're also, at this time in the history of this company, we're also running a webinar series called the How To Be Happy in Vet Med webinar.

Being a joyful DVM and being happy in vet med are actually two completely different things. I thought it would be really interesting to go ahead and talk through that and explain what the difference is because I think it's super important for us all to understand.

When it comes to joy, it's more than just being happy. Being joyful is something that we develop over time. We think about what creates joy for us, for me, if I was going to define the word joy and then determine how exactly we create it, it's pretty clear. Joy is defined for me as inspired happiness. So a little bit like being happy, but on a much deeper level - inspired level - inspired happiness. In order for us to create this inspired happiness for ourselves, I think that we have to be in alignment in nine key areas.

One of my mentors, Karen Curry Parker, identifies these nine areas as the nine resiliency keys. I like to think about them more as the buckets. The buckets of alignment are nine areas in our lives that when we really pay attention to these areas; when we look at what's inside the buckets and we clean out

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all the muck that's not supposed to be there and we fill these buckets with what we want them to hold intentionally and develop these nine areas which I'm going to go through. When we develop these nine areas for ourselves, joyfulness becomes inevitable. With joy, which is different than happy, what I find is that as we learn to be joyful, that's something that we get to hang onto.

Developing joyfulness for ourselves is something that can't just be taken away. If we think about just the standard emotion, we know that thoughts create feelings and feelings drive actions. So we know that the emotions that we experience - our feelings - emotional feelings are created by our thoughts, and we know this not only because you've heard me teach it before, but because we can prove this in the lab, like in a scientific lab. When we have thoughts, our brain goes through a photon storm - a light storm, an energy storm - and it produces neurotransmitters. It's quite fascinating that the energy of light just produces this chemical neurotransmitter. That is what then creates our emotional experience. The neurotransmitters create their emotional experience. So it is the thoughts that create the photon storm that then results in the neurotransmitter being created that creates the feeling that we experienced as a human. So thoughts create feelings. We know this, and we also know that if we're feeling happy that we can shift our thoughts to something that is sad, and then we will feel sad.

With joy, it's bigger than just an emotion. It's bigger than just that chemical reaction because you can maintain joyfulness while simultaneously feeling sad. You can maintain your joy while grieving. You can maintain your joy while also recognizing frustration. Joy is powerful because joy helps anchor you in who you actually are as a human being and what's you're made here to actually do.

I believe we are all here for a reason. I think it's absolutely intentional that we exist in this time. I think that from a soul level, we are infinite. That this is just a period of time where we inhabit a body on this earth and there are things that we are here to do. In order for us to fulfill our missions, to become who we were always supposed to be in this lifetime, we have to look at these nine buckets. These nine buckets help us become aligned with what we were actually designed to become and to do while we're here. Those nine buckets, I want you to pay attention to them as I go through them. I'm not going to spend a ton of time explaining them because they're kind of self-explanatory, but I want you to think about them for yourself, just kind of check them off. Where are you landing in these nine areas? What are you believing about yourself and your own capacity in these nine areas? Because it will be very eyeopening for you in regard to where you may be struggling, where you may be having challenges, but more so it provides you the opportunity or the curriculum for where you can investigate and be curious and learn and grow in order to become more aligned in that whole person who you're supposed to be.

So those nine areas, number one, lovability. Where do you land? Do you believe you're lovable? Are you able to give love?

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Number two, empowerment? Do you feel empowered to make your own choices?

Number three, courage. Do you feel courageous? Do you have the capacity to be courageous in situations when you have to take action or make decisions?

Number four, decisiveness. Are you able to make those decisions that are in alignment with who you are and what you want at your core?

Number five, emotional wisdom. Do you understand what's creating your emotional experience? Are you deciding then for yourself the emotional experience that you want to create?

Number six, self-trust. This is a big one. Do you trust your instincts? Do you trust yourself to make the right choices for yourself?

The next one, vitality. Another word for this one is energy. How are you doing with your energy? Are you managing your energy? Are you conserving your energy? Are you using your energy in ways and areas that align with what you want for yourself?

The next one, authenticity. Are you being authentically you? Have you allowed yourself to be you? Have you given yourself permission to really embrace who you are? Or are you kind of living in a bit of a charade trying to fit in and be like everybody else?

Then the last one, but not least is self-worth. Do you value yourself? Do you think that you're worthy? Do you think that you deserve to have good things in your life? Do you think that your life is important and valuable?

So those are the areas: lovability, empowerment, courage, decisiveness, emotional wisdom, self-trust, vitality, authenticity, and self-worth, these are nine buckets of alignment. These are the areas where if we don't have these buckets filled with the right things, or if we've filled them with the wrong things, it will block our joy.

As we clean out each one of these buckets and we get in alignment with each one of these nine areas, then joyfulness becomes inevitable. In that joyfulness, we become more of who we are. We get that permission to be who we are. We get courage. It's one of the buckets. We do develop the courage to live our own lives.

Unfortunately, the way that the human condition works are that it's not obvious. Left to our own devices without ever questioning the path of the journey of our lives and the things that happen around us and the decisions that we make and the beliefs that we have, if we don't ever question any

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of it, and we just accept it all as truth as it comes, we will not fill these buckets. It's not going to happen as a simple by-product. What's going to happen with us and what has happened with us is that as we've come into the human experience, we have been led by the people in our lives. Of course, we have - parents, teachers, even coworkers and friends, mentors; even people, we don't know - celebrities, people in leadership positions - they've all influenced us. So the imprinting of their influence has been able to be woven into what we believe about ourselves in all of these nine areas and about the world in all those nine areas. It's not until we take some time to intentionally consider for ourselves what we are believing and how we are experiencing the nine areas of our lives that we start to get more control over our lives. Outside of that introspective kind of work; outside of being curious about ourselves and our experiences, we are left as the result of all of the conditioning of the world. I hate that word conditioning because it makes it sound very overbearing maybe. It makes it feel like it's inevitable, I guess, in a way or that it's, that it was somehow our fault, I think that's better. When I think about being conditioned by the world, I feel defensive about that. You guys may hear that word and think the same thing, and I don't want us to exist, not the way that the word is meant to be used. What it's meant to be used for is just for us to recognize that many of the beliefs that we have and the experiences that we have are the result of thinking that didn't come from us intentionally.

The things that we believe about the world, about our families, about our jobs, about our role in veterinary medicine, about absolutely everything comes not to begin with from what's internal. Not at this stage in our life. We listen to the opinions of other people. It's just part of being like a child and growing up, right? We're always looking for information. We're sponges and so we are imprinted by all of the information that is around us. If we are around people who have a very negative opinion about an automobile manufacturer, for example. I'm just going to think about my own childhood. My dad was a Chevy guy all the way. He was not a Ford guy. So he had a very negative opinion about Fords. As I grew up, what I heard and was imprinted with, was this distrust and dislike of Ford automobiles. I know this is a silly example, but this is at the most basic level so easy to understand. You guys probably have the same thing and it wasn't until I got to be a little bit older that I realized, "Wait a minute, why?" I know that he didn't like them at all and so I didn't like them because I trusted him and I still trust him. I mean, he's passed away, but I still absolutely trust his influence in my life, but I also, now as an adult and as I became a young adult, started to recognize, "Okay, he thinks that. Is that what I also want to continue to believe?" It's giving yourself that space to look at all the things that have influenced your own opinions and your own beliefs about yourself and the world. Give yourself the opportunity to examine those and then just to decide, "Is this what I still want to believe?" That's kind of the first step in all of this and that goes right along with what we believe about ourselves in all of these nine areas.

Our lovability; our ability to be empowered; our ability to be courageous. It has to do with our ability to be wise emotionally. Do we want to continue to believe what we always have believed about

where emotions come from? The biggest one there, as you've heard me talk about many times, is the actions of other people. We are kind of brought up to, not kind of, we are absolute, unless you are brought up in a household that has a completely different perspective. The vast majority of us are brought up to believe that people can hurt our feelings. That what other people say or do impact our emotional wellbeing. I say no! Absolutely not. It's not what science shows us. It's not where emotion comes from. But left unquestioned, we believe that and we live that, which means we keep putting a lot of pressure on the other humans to be different than they are so that we can have a different experience. Emotional wisdom kind of helps us to see what's really happening so that we can take back that wellbeing for ourselves.

Also self-trust. Do you trust yourself or did you grow up in an environment where people didn't trust what you had to say? That they didn't let you make your own decisions. That they questioned everything that you wanted. That they were overcritical. If that's the case, then you probably don't have a lot of self-trust. You don't even know how to rely on yourself to make big decisions.

Your vitality, your energy. Now, a lot of us can definitely recognize that our energy is not in the place that we want it to be. We don't feel energetically sustainable. A lot of us are heading toward burnout or have been there trying to come back from it. Burnout is just a very depleted, energetic state. I don't mean just as in simple, but it is a basic explanation is that. So what are you doing to preserve your energy? How are you approaching your energy? Guess what guys. It's different for all of us and the solutions are different for all of us because of the way that we are designed. We have individual designs. If we think about human design, there are five main types of design, they're all energetically different. If you don't understand the energetics of the way that you were created, then what we do is try to adapt to the energetics of other people. That turns into a big old mess. It's such a relief when you understand the way that you're actually wired.

Authenticity. This is a big one. Do you feel free to be who you are? At some point in your life, you knew who you were. When you were younger, all the things that you liked, all the things that you did, and then as you grew and grew older, lots of people had opinions about who you were. They voiced those opinions and depending on the level of authority they had in your lives, you may have learned to hide parts of you, to squash, parts of you, to silence parts of you. The older that you get, trust me, the harder it gets to silence that stuff. The more that you try, it's like trying to hold a balloon underwater. It's slippery. It takes all your hands. Like it just keeps trying to get out one way or another. If we can learn to simply just be authentically ourselves and everything becomes easier. This alignment in these nine areas helps with that.

Finally self-worth. If we don't value ourselves first above everything else that goes on in our lives, then we will never fulfill our purpose, which means we will never interact with the other people in our lives in the way that we were always supposed to interact with them. This is a big one especially in a

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world where people-pleasing is the norm. We're always trying to navigate what can I do or say to make sure somebody else doesn't get upset. It's not our job. I'm not saying let's be cruel, but I'm saying, if you are squashing your own truth for the sake of somebody else's emotions, then there's opportunity there because squashing your truth is hurting you and believing you have control over their emotions is hurting you as well because you don't. It also may be keeping them from experiencing you in the way that they're supposed to experience you, which means they're not going to get the growth out of that interaction with you either. So it's a lose-lose when we don't interact as our true selves. It does take courage. It does take deliberate action to live in this way because it is not what society would have us do. Instead, it is all about trying to conform; to always just be the same. That's one of the biggest problems that we have in veterinary medicine is that we've gotten through these educations; we've gotten these degrees and now we're out there in the world without any kind of measure to tell us if we're doing it right.

So what do we do? We look for clients who are happy and patients who get better as measuring tools to help us to decide for ourselves if we're doing good in veterinary medicine, or we're doing bad; if we're being successful, if we're being failures. None of those things define success and failure in veterinary medicine. You've heard me say that before. The only thing that defines success or failure is what you believe about it. When you practice in a way that is authentic to you, then success becomes inevitable. You start to let go of the outcomes. You realize that you're not here to make animals better. You're not that powerful. You were never supposed to do that. Instead, you're here to do your part. You're here to evaluate what's in front of you - to make some medical recommendations; to give the owner some options. But we can only do that with confidence when we are aligned in these nine areas of our lives.

As we take on that curriculum, the life curriculum to fully become aligned in these areas, everything gets easier. I'm not going to say the journey itself is easy, but what I am going to say is the journey itself is worth it. It's not the kind of thing that you have to master before you have the results or you don't master all of it before you get relief. You don't master all of it before you feel better. Before you start to develop joy. The joy becomes something you develop through that path; through that journey; through that understanding of who you are; through that discovery. As you develop that joy, it creates momentum for you to keep going; to keep peeling back the layers to understand your own human experience; to dive into what's the truth of who you are and what your mission is here and how that plays into what you're doing day in and day out in your job in veterinary medicine, and also in the greater areas of your lives. As we keep trying to normalize the veterinary experience, as we keep trying to stabilize the emotional experience of veterinary medicine in the way that we always have done it, we will just continue to fail. I just want to be really clear about that. If we keep trying to control the other humans, whether they're our clients, our coworkers, our support staff, our bosses, the organizations, the public; if we keep trying to control them in order to feel better in veterinary medicine, we will continue to lose. That is not the way this works. If it is going to work, it would have

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worked by now because we've got decades of people who've been approaching the problem from the same place. It's not an external problem to solve. It's an internal problem to solve because as we become confident in who we are, as we become aligned with who we are supposed to be, as we become strong, as our buckets become full in the areas of lovability, empowerment, courage, decisiveness, emotional wisdom, self-trust, energy, authenticity, and self-worth, what happens is we become free to interact in a way that is actually helpful for everybody. Everybody wins, but it takes that.

Now, the good news is, it doesn't take everybody to start to make a change. One person living in alignment becomes an example for those around them. Curiosity sparks. Other people like, "How are you doing that?" I know this is absolutely true for me and I didn't even know what was going on back then. I just remember in my third job out of school, that the man who owned the practice just had this peace about him that I did not understand. I don't know how he does this. I was fascinated. I would just watch him, and I watched the other associates and me running around, our hair on fire, and I would think about how stressed out I was when I went home from work at night and how I worried all night when I think about the cases and what would be there the next morning. I carry an on-call pager. Of course, I was always terrified that the thing was going to go off and it didn't matter what happened. This dude was always peaceful. He was always joyful. He was always friendly and I didn't get it. I was so curious. But what I now understand is that he had such a high sense of who he was. He knew who he was. He knew what he was about. That the external circumstances of the world can't touch him. That's joy.

When you are solid in who you are, when you are aligned with the real truth of who you are, your own individual authenticity, the world can't touch you. When the world can't touch you, then you have the freedom to interact in the world in a way that is super powerful for the people that you come in contact with, in a very positive way.

So when we think about joy and we think about happiness, they are two completely different things. Happiness is an emotion. They can come and it can go. Joy is inspired happiness. It is deeply rooted. It is not shakable. It grows. It gives. It is something that if we all seek intentionally to find it, the way that our lives for ourselves change is dramatic or the lives change of the people that we interact with is also dramatic because we can become that constant kind of shining light for them of possibility, and everything gets easier.

If you're curious about more of this kind of stuff, we have a workshop - Discover Your Purpose workshop - joyfuldvm.com/purpose to grab your seat in the Discover Your Purpose workshop. We're going to be taking a look at all of these things. We're going to be taking a look at your independent role - your unique role in this world - and how that role, how that purpose of yours has played out up until now and your opportunities for letting it play out in the future, intentionally going after it,

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shedding off all of the rules that we have boxed ourselves in because that is what we have learned through the other humans over time and getting more in touch with who we actually are so that we can fulfill the purpose that we actually have here in this lifetime. That's the kind of stuff that we're going to be talking about. Completely different material than we usually talk about over here at Joyful DVM. We're trying to expand that. So if you're ready to kind of skim the tip of the iceberg of the types of things that we talked about today, I definitely recommend that you check out that workshop.

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.