

Episode 56 | Vet Med Alignment Part 2: Score ACAF

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The **Joyful DVM**TM
PODCAST



for **Veterinary
Professionals**

with **Dr. Cari Wise**
Veterinarian
Certified Life Coach

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Career alignment and the opportunities and challenges associated with the career alignment score ACAF, that's what we're talking about in Episode 56.

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 56. Today is part two of a two-part series where we are going to be talking about what the career alignment score ACAF means. So let's take a step back in case you missed last week. Career alignment is different than job alignment. This is really, really important for us to understand in veterinary medicine because alignment is important for us in life, and having our job and our career aligned is one component of that.

Alignment itself is when where you spend your time and your focus and your interest is in alignment with, or in agreement with your bigger life purpose, your bigger life mission. For some of us, that gets a little bit tricky because we don't even know for sure what our purpose is. I would just say that's okay. It's okay. If you don't know what your purpose is. It is something that you discover. It's not something that you necessarily decide. It's something that you discover as you live your life. Part of that includes your job and your career, the way that you feel when you're in that. So anything that has you compromising your morals, ethics values, what's really important for you, what's really true for you, who you actually are, is an indicator that there may be some lack of alignment there. It could be the job - the specific place where you're employed - or it can be the career, which is the entire career field, or it could be a little bit of both. That's only just one component of your entire life alignment.

We created a quiz over here at Joyful DVM called the career alignment score. You can take that quiz at joyfuldvm.com/quiz and you can determine what your score is. The scores fall into three main buckets. Those three buckets we're going to be talking about over the next three weeks.

Today, we're going to talk about the bucket ACAF which is one of the scores. I should say one of the groups of scores falls into this bucket ACAF. So what the heck does that mean?

Well, ACAF is Aligned Choice, Aligned Fit, and what that means is that your choice to pursue veterinary medicine was intentional; wasn't a mistake. I would even say, for all of them, none of them are actually a mistake. But for you guys with ACAF alignment, you knew probably early on that this was the job that you wanted to do. This is a lot of us who grew up just knowing we wanted to be in the veterinary field - veterinarians or veterinary technicians, or just working with animals in some way. Part of an ACAF is having that background. Now that can be a little bit confusing because the other part of it is your current fit - where you work right now.

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For many of us who end up with an ACAF score, it can be confusing because we also recognize that we're not happy. So that's what I want to take a minute and describe. When you take the quiz, by the way, you end up with a multiple-page PDF. We're just going to kind of talk about high-level today because ACAF could be confusing.

If technically ACAF is Aligned Choice, Aligned Fit, then you might be wondering, why am I not happy? Why am I frustrated? Why do I have a hard time going to work? Why do I dread it? This is all very, very normal because what happens with those of us with ACAF alignment is that we go all in, right? We absolutely care about the patients. We care about the clients. We care about all of it. ACAF alignment has a lot of high potential for compassion fatigue and it's because you care so much.

The benefit, the upside of ACAF alignment is to recognize that you're not in the wrong career. You may have outgrown it; that's the challenge. But the first benefit is to see that you didn't screw up your life by picking veterinary medicine. Not at all. What you are experiencing is likely just the result of not having enough balance. So not being able to set those boundaries and maintain them clearly. Not being able to get out of work on time or leave work at work when you go home. The looping thoughts. Those kinds of things. So that lack of balance really contributes to the suffering for people with ACAF alignment, which is where that confusion comes in. Because we all expect when we take a quiz like this that we're going to end up at the far end where everything's just a disaster. I'm going to say, we're getting to that in two weeks, and it's not a disaster there either by the way. It can be confusing when you come up with a higher score. One is not better than the other. Let me just also just mention that one score and this is not better than another. Yes, there is a scale. Yes, there are numbers associated with it, but give yourself the opportunity to step away from our traditional thinking of numbers where higher numbers mean better and lower numbers mean worse. Especially those of us who have an academic background, we're going toward a higher score is what we're looking for. This is an informational assessment. This is to give you some awareness around your own experience. So, what the numbers mean? You're not doing it right or wrong, depending on your score. Those of you with ACAF are aligned. You've picked the right career field, but the current job that you're in may not be the right one, and it probably started out as the right one. So this is definitely important if you've been somewhere for a while and now you're trying to realize that you're feeling burned out. You're having a lot of compassion fatigue. You're starting to feel a lot of dread. This is because of that lack of balance. You've given everything to this career and you haven't even really resented it maybe up until recently. But what has happened is that it become the focus of your entire life. It's just not possible for one job, for one career to fulfill us as humans. We are much bigger than that.

The way that we spend our time is super important. So our occupation is super important. How we serve the world is absolutely very important. But what happens for many of us is that we get into these jobs, we give it our all. We get a lot of fulfillment out of it, but then over time, it can become

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tired. If we aren't recalibrating where we're headed in our own lives, what's important for us, then what happens is it becomes the job's responsibility to fill those voids. It can never do that. Over time, as we recognize that, then what happens is we start to second guess our own career choice decision. We try to draw a lot of conclusions about other careers and how we would feel if we were in them. What we really just need is to kind of recalibrate where we are and just get focused again. So we need some balance.

When we're ACAF Alignment, we really need to understand boundaries. We need to learn how to communicate those boundaries and then uphold those boundaries. We need to work on that balance regarding how much time we spend at work. So are we getting out of work on time? Can we use our time more efficiently when we're at work so that we can get back, get away from work and get that downtime? No more away from work. Are we managing our mindset? Are we able to shut off those looping thoughts? Because here's the deal, guys. It doesn't matter if you're sitting on your couch at home if your brain never shuts off. Your mind always wants to go on and on and on about everything that's happening at work, then you're not getting any time away. So learning how to master that is super important as well.

The opportunities for those of us with ACAF alignment are to really work on those boundaries. To really work on creating efficiency around how we spend our time and become more deliberate. To work on the mindset piece - to let your work brain be your work brain and to let your brain start to consider other things in the rest of your life so that the job doesn't have to serve the sole purpose.

The final thing that I'll leave you with for ACAF alignment in regards to opportunity, and I kind of touched on it a minute ago, is this potential for having outgrown where you are. We are always growing and changing. That's just the nature of what a human does, and it's no different with our careers. So if we get into a job where it becomes the same old, same old, and we don't have a personality type that is made for that routine, it can become very frustrating. We will feel a kind of discontent, a desire to learn something different, to do something different, and that's normal. That doesn't mean that you've done something wrong, but you want to pay attention to that because you're really eager to just keep growing. That's what shows you.

There may be opportunities within your own organization to do that especially if you really enjoy the people that you work with and the clients and all those kinds of things, but you're just not happy day in and day out. You may have opportunities within your own organization to expand what you do - to shift, to change, to grow in your role there. So don't be afraid to talk to people in leadership about what opportunities may exist there. Now you may find that there aren't opportunities to grow where you are and so that creates a whole set of different opportunities for you. One is to create some kind of side hustle. Something that you're interested in that you can develop your own. That's independent of your nine-to-five job. I laugh when I say nine to five because this is veterinary

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medicine. Is there such thing as nine to five? But you know what I'm saying, rather than your regular day job. The other opportunity may be to switch to a different job within this career field.

ACAF alignment does not mean it's all sunshine and roses. Many of us with ACAF alignment, do feel frustrated. We do also feel a lot of burnout and we could feel it. It tends to amount to compassion fatigue, and that's just an indication of how much you care. As you build that balance back in, as you start to set those boundaries, as you start to manage the mindset piece and get back to focusing on what's really, really important to you, and maybe you have to just start with identifying what's important to you because many of us we're so busy in the career field. We haven't even stopped to look around and decide where we want our lives to go. It just keeps kind of spinning groundhog day over and over and over again. Those are the greatest opportunities now for an ACAF alignment.

Let's figure out where you're headed. Let's get you some balance. Let's work on the mindset piece. Let's become more efficient with our time so we're using it in a way that actually helps us become more of who we want to be instead of in a way that keeps us kind of stuck where we are and really stifles our own potential.

All right, my friends, that's going to wrap it up for part two of this series, ACAF alignment today. Next week, we're going to be talking about ACMF alignment. So make sure that you join us next week for that. If you've missed any other ones that you don't know what the heck we're talking about, jump back and listen to last week's episode, where I talked about job versus career alignment. I introduced the whole concept and then talk about how we're going to be moving through this four-part series. If you have not figured out your own career alignment score yet, jump over to joyfuldvm.com/quiz. Take that quiz. Get your score. Find out which alignment bucket you fit into. Grab a copy of the multiple-page PDF that I created for each of those buckets.

Let's really take control of where we are in our careers and where we're headed, which is the most important thing. I hope you guys have a great rest of the week. That's going to wrap it up for now. 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. 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.