

## **Navigating a flood of thoughts**

Everyone working in the field of animal medicine has that one patient experience they will never forget. The exact day and time can fall out of memory, but the feelings that arose when working with that one particular animal are not quick to fade.

Some of those memories are surrounded by feelings of joy and even humor, but some stick into a place much deeper, and we feel the sting when we recall them. Challenging thinking patterns are, unfortunately, often more prevalent than positive ones in the medical industry. When surrounded by so much urgency, it is easy to forget to appreciate the good with the same energy that we focus on the bad. Especially during the colder times of the year.

Much like your patients need certain kinds of special attention during the winter, you may need it too. Your thoughts can need extra levels of care during times of the year that bring extra levels of stress and fatigue. During this time, rumination can take over the forward-thinking aspect of our thought processes and lead to negative thought cycles that keep us grounded and stagnant.

### **Preparing for winter**

A new year can bring a lot of expectations for a medical practice. Brand-new clients and their families all needing extra care after the holiday can keep many offices busy for the first few weeks if not months of a new calendar year. This time does not have to be an opportunity to add more stressors to your plate.

Sticking to clear boundaries and making it through may be just the thing you need to keep your head above water while your practice regains its equilibrium. Focusing on the things that are being done right and allowing for room to grow with the things that are falling short may be the best solution to stave off burnout and fatigue.

Vets are in their line of work for the love of the animals. Their patients' safety, happiness and comfort come first. Everything else is a practice in organization and business management. Success can be measured by how well the client interaction went, how successful a treatment is going and how supported the staff feels. Being accepting of where a practice currently rests can be as simple as focusing on the big picture.

## **A reframe**

Positive thought processes can keep the energy light and the work moving. When we become overwhelmed with feelings of worry, especially surrounding situations out of our control, that wash of powerlessness can cause us to feel the early signs of fatigue. Emotional fatigue can color our interactions with clients and their families in a way that can negatively impact our practice, so keeping above them is an important part of our wellness journey.

A quick reframe can help get us on the right track when negative feelings begin to arise, and creating a wealth of positive reinforcements that we can access during times of need can greatly benefit the efficacy of those positive reinforcements later.

When we begin to feel the sting of sour memories, or when a day does not play out in the way we intended, reminding ourselves of our past successes and the strength of our higher education can be a beneficial reframe. Even the smallest step in the direction of our goals can be celebrated as a win and shared with our colleagues to elevate their positive thinking as well. Positivity is often contagious, and sharing the wins we experience in a day can be a much more beneficial practice than lamenting over the goals that fell short.

If you are focused on helping your patients to the best of your ability, you are doing your best. Allowing yourself those moments of celebration can be exhilarating the more it is put into practice.

## **Giving grace**

Our expectations for where our practice can and should be are allowed to shift. Our personal goals are allowed to be in flux, and success is not always a straight line.

As the new year chugs along, it's important to set gentle goals, reinforce our positivity with reframing and remember that the new year should be a time of celebration, not stress!