

Emotional Recovery & Wellness Tips for Veterinary Professionals

1. Acknowledge the emotional weight of the job.

Veterinary work involves compassion, grief, high stake decisions, and client emotions; sometimes all in one shift. It's okay to admit that this work is heavy. Suppressing emotions long-term can lead to burnout.

2. Practice small moments to yourself during shifts.

You may not get long breaks, but small resets help:

- Take slow breaths before entering the next room.
- Step outside for a minute of fresh air whenever possible.
- Drink water between cases.

Small pauses can lower stress significantly.

3. Develop a transitional ritual after work.

Create a small routine that signals the end of your shift:

- Change clothes immediately after getting home.
- Listen to a specific podcast/playlist on your drive.
- Let yourself have five minutes of stillness before the rest of your day/night begins.

This helps prevent carrying the clinic home emotionally.

4. Lean on your team.

Peer support and a sense of community is critical in a high-pressure field. Normalize:

- Checking in on each other.
- Debriefing after a hard case.
- Leaning on your program for emotional and professional guidance.

Staying connected to your team protects your perspective and ability to continue showing up.

5. Leave the job within the four walls.

Give yourself kindness and grace when in a position of learning to be a professional:

- Understand that growth is not a straight line.
- Replace: "I should already know this" with "I'm still learning this"
- Remember that mistakes are all part of the learning process

Being kind to yourself supports growth and encourages constant improvement.

6. Separate responsibility from the outcome.

You can control your effort, preparation, and compassion, but not every medical outcome.

- Remind yourself "I did what I could with the information and resources available."
- Release attachment. Recognize when you are fixated on a specific timeline or result, and consciously surrender the need to control the final outcome.
- Shift from "Why" to "How." Focus on the process of improvement and your own experience rather than just the final result.
- Reframe failures as data. Treat undesirable outcomes as learning opportunities for future actions rather than personal failures.

Focusing on what you can control releases extra emotional burden.

7. The importance of establishing boundaries.

- Reduces Stress and Burnout. By defining limits on time and energy (e.g., turning off work devices), boundaries reduce stress and prevent burnout.
- Fosters Self-Respect. Setting and enforcing boundaries shows you value yourself, which increases self-worth and confidence.
- Improves Relationships Professional and Personal. Clear boundaries build trust and foster mutual respect, as they clearly define expectations.

Establishing boundaries is not a sign of weakness, but a practice for maintaining balance.

8. Separating Professional and Personal Identity

Having something in your life that has nothing to do with animals or medicine:

- **Fitness, art, reading, sports**

A diversified identity and sense of self helps buffer against burnout.

9. Celebrate small wins.

Not every day will have a dramatic save, but:

- A smooth client interaction
- A good team moment

These matter. Acknowledge them.

10. Remember why you chose this field.

Revisit your "why" occasionally. Keeping meaning at the center of your work helps sustain resilience during harder seasons.

Give the same heart you give to your patients to yourself.