

Being a veterinarian is exhausting, isn't it?

We need to care about so many things!

I need to care about that blocked cat whose owners can't afford treatment. I need to care about that dog with pulmonary metastasis whose owners would go to the ends of the earth and pay any amount of money for him ... but we've reached the end of the road. I need to care about that stray cat dropped off at the clinic door, and that dear client whose dog is sick from the same thing her husband died from a year ago and the emotional toll of it is just too much. I need to care about that dog who, my gut is telling me, is neglected. I need to embrace the circle of life and be excited about that healthy puppy right after I euthanize an old dog of the same breed, and I need to care about that vigilant client who, for better or worse, wants to spend 10 hours learning every detail about roundworms when I just really need to eat something and take a deep breath and reset for the afternoon. I need to care about that puppy who is showing signs of fear aggression at 10 weeks old, and that lovely perfect old golden retriever with the enlarged lymph nodes. I need to somehow care about getting off work in time to make it home to my family, but also staying late to keep up on records and make sure every client has a good experience and that no pet leaves the clinic without a medical plan in place for them. I need to care about staying current in my field, and making sure I am challenging what I know without exhausting myself. I need to care about not just my patients but my clients, and my receptionists, and my technicians, and my colleagues, and - let me never forget - myself.

How on earth does a person refill their tank to keep caring that much?!

Unfortunately - I have nooooo clue!

But, here is what I can tell you:

To you who cares loudly and proudly - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who cares quietly and deeply - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who throws all your energy into one cause - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who dabbles in many different causes, running yourself ragged because you never quite feel like you are giving 100% to anything - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who is a cheerleader, a friend to all, the one others seek for advice - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who wakes up each day and just tries to live your life as an example for others - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who is a parent, trying to balance raising humans with caring for animals - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who sleeps 3 hours a night, running on coffee and adrenaline, devoting hundreds of hours to your work because it is what drives you - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who is feeling the compassion fatigue, who struggles to make it into work each day, but who is taking steps to lighten your burden and finally focus on yourself - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To you who adores veterinary medicine but has to step away from it entirely to care for a family member (even if that family member is yourself) - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To the shelter vets, who manage an enormous caseload and must make heart-wrenching decisions and who are so very under appreciated and even marginalized by the community - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To the emergency vets, who work nights and weekends and holidays and weekend holiday nights so that others don't have to - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To the large animal vets, who are out in the field, freezing your buns off dealing with a dystocia on a cold December night in Minnesota while the rest of us are curled up at home with a cup of coffee - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To the specialists, who toil for years after the rest of us have celebrated the end of a long road of school, who ensure veterinary medicine is on par with human medicine, who provide an invaluable service not only to your clients but also to your referring veterinarians - thank you. You are doing a good job.

To the general practitioners - who are the bedrock of veterinary medicine, the doctors on the front line, who must deal with every body system and every species and somehow, impossibly, do it perfectly - thank you. You are doing a good job.

Caring is hard. Caring is thankless. But caring is SO BLOODY IMPORTANT. So dig deep, add oil, persist - and continue to care in your own way; continue to care in whatever way you are able.

Thank you. You are doing a good job.

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