

Final Thoughts



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Julie has more than 20 years of experience within the veterinary field and with leading organizations. She has developed and executed training, workshops, and 1:1 coaching for major companies in the animal health industry. She obtained her certification as a compassion fatigue specialist through the Green Cross Academy of Traumatology and has also completed training from The Figley Institute and Traumatology Institute. Julie's clients also gain from her experience as a certified health and wellness coach and corporate wellness specialist.

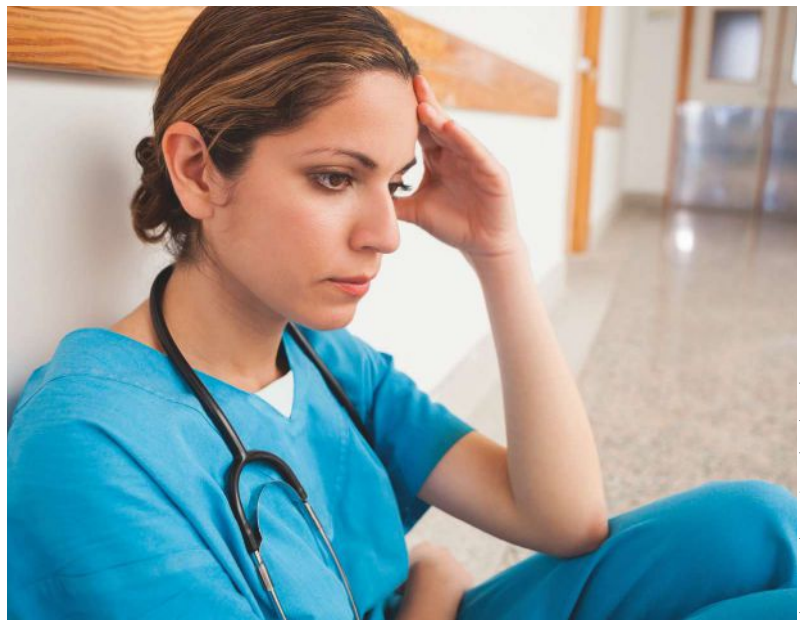
The Golden Ticket to Feeling Better

Recently, I worked with a practice where a client's dog had presented in very poor condition after being hit by a car. The client was difficult from the outset, refusing to fill out paperwork because he "knew" he was already in the computer, stating the practice had "killed his other dogs." When it was determined that he was unable to financially provide care, he opted for euthanasia and spat "I hope the building burns down and you're all in it!" on his way out the door.

Whoa.

What fascinated me was hearing all the different reactions his words provoked from the staff. Some team members were really ticked off, some found it funny, and others felt empathy for the man. How could this be? How could the same comment elicit such a range of feelings?

The answer lies in the fact that *circumstances* do not create our feelings. This client's comment did not cause the myriad feelings I was told about. Our *thoughts* are what cause our feelings—more specifically, our thoughts about things that happen. That is how one incident can lead to such a variety of feelings and reactions: everyone had different thoughts about it.



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WHEN YOU BELIEVE that the circumstances in your life cause your feelings, you are left feeling powerless. Becoming aware of your thoughts is the first step.

Some of the staff thought, *What an ungrateful jerk. Here we bent over backwards for his dog, and he didn't deserve the dog anyway. Loser. The dog is better off now, and he just doesn't want to pay his bill because it died.*

Others thought, *Wow, what a sorry excuse for a human being. He probably has a miserable life and just wants to make ours miserable too.*

Or, *Really, dude? You're angry at us? Give me a break; we did our job.*

And still other staff thought, *Oh boy, who knows what his life is like. Maybe the guy is down on his luck and this dog was all he had. Anyone who could say such an awful thing must be in a pretty low place in his life.*

Because they all had different thoughts about his comment, they all had different feelings about it—and him. Some were still seething about it, although it had happened a long time ago. Others were over it the second after he left the building.

Which would you rather be?

Find the Golden Ticket

I can remember the exact day I learned that my thoughts create my feelings. It was like finding a Golden Ticket in a Wonka bar. Finally, I felt empowered.

When you believe that the circumstances in your life cause your feelings, you are left feeling powerless. Some people react by trying to manipulate everyone and everything around them in an attempt to feel better. Good luck with that. We can't control others. Clients are going to behave badly, coworkers will aggravate us some days, we may have supervisors who have no business leading, and other people in our lives will continue to do things that aggravate and inconvenience us. But we get to decide what to think about all of those situations. And in turn, we get to decide how we are going to feel.

If you don't like the way you feel, look at how you think. Pay attention to the thoughts that come up repeatedly, and you will see why you feel the way you do. Everything in your life is determined by your thoughts. Your thoughts determine your feelings. Your feelings drive your actions (or inaction, like shutting down or withdrawing). And your actions create results in your life. Compassion fatigue is such a result.

As a compassion fatigue specialist, I've witnessed the suffering of many veterinary technicians. Not many people talk about the toll that veterinary medicine takes on technicians. I do. I do because you tell me, and also because I've experienced it myself.

What I have come to believe is that, to a large extent, compassion fatigue is a thought problem, whether with our thoughts and expectations of ourselves or of our clients, colleagues, bosses, researchers, the general public, etc. We

can't change how people behave. We can't change the fact that cancer exists. We can't change the fact that some pet owners have no idea how to care for animals.

I see many people who push against and resist all these facts. When you resist reality, the only one you harm is yourself. What you are in control of is...everything else. That's right. We have much more power than we think and the ability to influence our lives in more ways than most of us ever realize.

Become the Watcher

Your power lies in your awareness of what you are thinking about all of these things: the clients, the work, the patients, the organization, the co-workers, the leadership, the researchers, the public. Becoming aware of your thoughts is the first step.

How do you do that? Get quiet with yourself. Journaling is a great tool to empty your mind. Set a 10-minute timer and just start writing. If journaling isn't your thing, find what is: take a walk, go for a run, create something artistic, meditate, do yoga, or do anything that allows you to disconnect from your thinking mind and connect to the you that "watches" your mind.

Spiritual author and teacher Eckhart Tolle says it this way:

Be present as the watcher of your mind—of your thoughts and emotions as well as your reactions in various situations. Be at least as interested in your reactions as in the situation or person that causes you to react. [...] Don't make a personal problem out of them. You will then feel something more powerful than any of those things that you observe: the still, observing presence itself behind the content of your mind, the silent watcher.¹

Your thoughts are a choice. Once you are aware of what you are thinking, you have the ability to change it to something else. This is how you can change your life. This is how you can feel empowered rather than defeated. Ask yourself: Do you want to continue thinking the way you've been thinking? Maybe so, if your thoughts are uplifting, motivating, and supportive and are serving you well. By contrast, if you are struggling with your work or an area of your life, check in with your thoughts and how they make you feel. Your feelings will tell you everything you need to know about how you are thinking.

I'll say it again: your thoughts are a choice. For example, an HBC stray cat ends up being euthanized because no one claimed ownership and offered to pay for surgery to fix his broken legs. Do you think, *This totally stinks. Why couldn't the shelter take him and pay for this? Why couldn't we do it pro bono and find a home for him?* Or do you think, *I wish*

Heartgard[®] Plus[®]

(ivermectin/pyrantel)

CHEWABLES

CAUTION: Federal (U.S.A.) law restricts this drug to use by or on the order of a licensed veterinarian.

INDICATIONS: For use in dogs to prevent canine heartworm disease by eliminating the tissue stage of heartworm larvae (*Dirofilaria immitis*) for a month (30 days) after infection and for the treatment and control of ascarids (*Toxocara canis*, *Toxascaris leonina*) and hookworms (*Ancylostoma caninum*, *Uncinaria stenocephala*, *Ancylostoma braziliense*).

DOSAGE: HEARTGARD[®] Plus (ivermectin/pyrantel) should be administered orally at monthly intervals at the recommended minimum dose level of 6 mcg of ivermectin per kilogram (2.72 mcg/lb) and 5 mg of pyrantel (as pamoate salt) per kg (2.27 mg/lb) of body weight. The recommended dosing schedule for prevention of canine heartworm disease and for the treatment and control of ascarids and hookworms is as follows:

Dog Weight	Cheewables Per Month	Ivermectin Content	Pyrantel Content	Color Coding On Foil Backing and Carton
Up to 25 lb	1	68 mcg	57 mg	Blue
26 to 50 lb	1	136 mcg	114 mg	Green
51 to 100 lb	1	272 mcg	227 mg	Brown

HEARTGARD Plus is recommended for dogs 6 weeks of age and older.

For dogs over 100 lb use the appropriate combination of these chewables.

ADMINISTRATION: Remove only one chewable at a time from the foil-backed blister card. Return the card with the remaining chewables to its box to protect the product from light. Because most dogs find HEARTGARD Plus palatable, the product can be offered to the dog by hand. Alternatively, it may be added intact to a small amount of dog food. The chewable should be administered in a manner that encourages the dog to chew, rather than to swallow without chewing. Chewables may be broken into pieces and fed to dogs that normally swallow treats whole.

Care should be taken that the dog consumes the complete dose, and treated animals should be observed for a few minutes after administration to ensure that part of the dose is not lost or rejected. If it is suspected that any of the dose has been lost, redosing is recommended.

HEARTGARD Plus should be given at monthly intervals during the period of the year when mosquitoes (vectors), potentially carrying infective heartworm larvae, are active. The initial dose must be given within a month (30 days) after the dog's first exposure to mosquitoes. The final dose must be given within a month (30 days) after the dog's last exposure to mosquitoes.

When replacing another heartworm preventive product in a heartworm disease preventive program, the first dose of HEARTGARD Plus must be given within a month (30 days) of the last dose of the former medication.

If the interval between doses exceeds a month (30 days), the efficacy of ivermectin can be reduced. Therefore, for optimal performance, the chewable must be given once a month on or about the same day of the month. If treatment is delayed, whether by a few days or many, immediate treatment with HEARTGARD Plus and resumption of the recommended dosing regimen will minimize the opportunity for the development of adult heartworms.

Monthly treatment with HEARTGARD Plus also provides effective treatment and control of ascarids (*T. canis*, *T. leonina*) and hookworms (*A. caninum*, *U. stenocephala*, *A. braziliense*). Clients should be advised of measures to be taken to prevent reinfection with intestinal parasites.

EFFICACY: HEARTGARD Plus Chewables, given orally using the recommended dose and regimen, are effective against the tissue larval stage of *D. immitis* for a month (30 days) after infection and, as a result, prevent the development of the adult stage. HEARTGARD Plus Chewables are also effective against canine ascarids (*T. canis*, *T. leonina*) and hookworms (*A. caninum*, *U. stenocephala*, *A. braziliense*).

ACCEPTABILITY: In acceptability and field trials, HEARTGARD Plus was shown to be an acceptable oral dosage form that was consumed at first offering by the majority of dogs.

PRECAUTIONS: All dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection before starting treatment with HEARTGARD Plus which is not effective against adult *D. immitis*. Infected dogs must be treated to remove adult heartworms and microfilariae before initiating a program with HEARTGARD Plus.

While some microfilariae may be killed by the ivermectin in HEARTGARD Plus at the recommended dose level, HEARTGARD Plus is not effective for microfilariae clearance. A mild hypersensitivity-type reaction, presumably due to dead or dying microfilariae and particularly involving a transient diarrhea, has been observed in clinical trials with ivermectin alone after treatment of some dogs that have circulating microfilariae.

Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children.

In case of ingestion by humans, clients should be advised to contact a physician immediately. Physicians may contact a Poison Control Center for advice concerning cases of ingestion by humans.

Store between 68°F - 77°F (20°C - 25°C). Excursions between 59°F - 86°F (15°C - 30°C) are permitted. Protect product from light.

ADVERSE REACTIONS: In clinical field trials with HEARTGARD Plus, vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours of dosing was rarely observed (1.1% of administered doses). The following adverse reactions have been reported following the use of HEARTGARD Plus: Depression/lethargy, vomiting, anorexia, diarrhea, mydriasis, ataxia, staggering, convulsions and hypersalivation.

SAFETY: HEARTGARD Plus has been shown to be bioequivalent to HEARTGARD, with respect to the bioavailability of ivermectin. The dose regimens of HEARTGARD Plus and HEARTGARD are the same with regard to ivermectin (6 mcg/kg). Studies with ivermectin indicate that certain dogs of the Collie breed are more sensitive to the effects of ivermectin administered at elevated dose levels (more than 16 times the target use level) than dogs of other breeds. At elevated doses, sensitive dogs showed adverse reactions which included mydriasis, depression, ataxia, tremors, drooling, paresis, recumbency, excitability, stupor, coma and death. HEARTGARD demonstrated no signs of toxicity at 10 times the recommended dose (60 mcg/kg) in sensitive Collies. Results of these trials and bioequivalency studies, support the safety of HEARTGARD products in dogs, including Collies, when used as recommended.

HEARTGARD Plus has shown a wide margin of safety at the recommended dose level in dogs, including pregnant or breeding bitches, stud dogs and puppies aged 6 or more weeks. In clinical trials, many commonly used flea collars, dips, shampoos, anthelmintics, antibiotics, vaccines and steroid preparations have been administered with HEARTGARD Plus in a heartworm disease prevention program.

In one trial, where some pups had parvovirus, there was a marginal reduction in efficacy against intestinal nematodes, possibly due to a change in intestinal transit time.

HOW SUPPLIED: HEARTGARD Plus is available in three dosage strengths (See DOSAGE section) for dogs of different weights. Each strength comes in convenient cartons of 6 and 12 chewables.

For customer service, please contact Merial at 1-888-637-4251.



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we could've helped him, but at least he died being held and loved by me. I did what I could. I imagine the first thought will result in you feeling angry or frustrated or cynical or grief-stricken. The second, I imagine, would result in feelings of sadness but also contentment, peace, or reverence. Can you see how our thoughts create our feelings, and therefore shape our experience?

Which do you think is more likely, over time, to fuel compassion fatigue?

Do you want to continue to think thoughts that don't make you feel good?

Appreciate the Gift

When you truly realize that you can influence your thoughts and, therefore, how you feel, you will be able to use this skill in all areas of your life. It really is an immense gift. We are not taught how to make ourselves feel better, which is why we live in a culture of addiction and hyperactivity. People try to numb their uncomfortable feelings with too much alcohol, food, technology, and other distractions, when what we really need is just to realize we have the power to make ourselves feel better—and we always have.

Be gentle and compassionate with yourself, not judgmental. As you begin to recognize your thoughts, you will also begin to realize that many are simply not true. Don't criticize your thoughts, just notice them, and be curious about them. Ask yourself, *Is this true?* We are never motivated to change anything when we come from a place of self-criticism, so stay open, loving, and compassionate towards yourself.

And remember: I want you to know you are more powerful than you think, more amazing than you know, and capable of feeling much better than you do now. ■

Reference

1. Tolle E. *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*. Namaste Publishing; 2004.



JOURNALING is a great tool to empty your mind. Set a 10-minute timer and just start writing.