

Stories of Resilience

“What moves you?” If I had answered this question 5 months ago, my answer might have been very different than it is now. I would likely have included a list that had a professional tone, such as: (1) the tremendous amount of exciting change that is happening within our profession; (2) the many opportunities available as a result of this change, and (3) how the growing opportunities are increasing career advancement pathways.

Although I still wholeheartedly agree with that list, a recent life-changing event now inspires a more personal tone to my response.



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MY STORY

I wear many different hats in the veterinary profession, including practice manager, consultant, educator, author, lecturer, and musician. Specifically, educating about the well-being of veterinary professionals is a passion of mine, and I am thrilled to see that well-being issues have become somewhat of a “movement” within our profession.

Late last year, while working on multiple projects and preparing for significant work travel, I felt a suspicious lump on my neck. As I teach veterinary team members about self-care, I took time out from my busy work schedule to visit my doctor. Although taking the time was important, I honestly had not planned on spending much time dealing with this personal issue. I suspected it would be nothing more than an infection.

After several weeks of diagnostics, I received the answer: tongue cancer. I was in tremendous disbelief. This was not possible. How did I get tongue cancer, especially since I’ve never smoked a cigarette in my life? Would I be able to speak and sing again or would it be through an unfamiliar voice? I had an endless number of questions as well as a growing mix of emotions.

Treatment involved an aggressive 7-week course of radiation and chemotherapy. The love and support I received from friends, family, and colleagues was critical. I actually took some of the advice I share with veterinary teams and learned to ask for help; I surrendered to the fact that I didn’t have to do everything myself.



WHAT MOVES YOU?

Veterinary technicians are the heart of veterinary medicine. We are passionate and dedicated, and we each have a story to tell. *Today's Veterinary Technician* wants to hear yours!

**What drives you?
What inspires you?
What moves you?**

Send us your story at TVTech_submissions@NAVCC.com. Submissions should be approximately 500 words or less and may be posted on our website or edited for publication in the journal.

Tell us your story!

“Our pathways in dealing with difficult life events won’t always be the same, but it may be an inspirational word or story of another person that resonates and helps us get through.”

—Deborah A. Stone



Deb undergoing radiation therapy in her “supermask.”

In addition to their generous support, some folks shared stories of resilience about difficult times in their lives and how they pushed through. The stories weren't all about cancer or medical issues; however, they all included some challenging life event that presented seemingly insurmountable obstacles. As people shared these experiences with me, they also seemed to demonstrate authentic gratitude for the journey needed to overcome them.

One story I held onto was of a friend who had dealt with a serious health condition several years ago. He actually shared his story before I even had a diagnosis, so I listened

and was amazed at his strength and positivity in dealing with intense medical treatment.

Although the story and final outcomes were amazing, what continued to resonate with me throughout my treatment was one word he used: *psychological*. He said throughout the pain, fear, and unknown outcomes during his treatment, his biggest challenges were the psychological ones. It wasn't intentional, but that word stayed with me throughout my treatment, especially as I experienced my own fear of the unknown. It pushed me through the entire course, especially if I started feeling really sorry for myself or thinking I would never feel “normal” again.

I successfully made it through all of my treatment and am now on the path to making a full recovery, thanks to the support of many people...and stories.

WE ALL HAVE A STORY

At some point, everyone will experience a life event they feel presents overwhelming odds. Our challenges may vary significantly and may not always be life-threatening or medically related, yet they are all life-changing.

Our pathways in dealing with difficult life events won't always be the same, but it may be an inspirational word or story of another person that resonates and helps us get through.

FINDING STORIES OF RESILIENCE

Veterinary technicians create stories of resilience every day. The care, attention, and commitment they provide to their patients is often life-saving and life-changing. Stories of resilience can be found right under our nose and often in our very own workplace.

Perhaps a client shares a story in the exam room, or a colleague reaches out because they see signs that you may be struggling. Remaining open, mindful, and present provides opportunities to hear stories that can inspire you for a lifetime.

You never know when someone's story will help pull you through difficult times. You also never know when your very own story may help someone find the hope, strength, and pathway to navigate their own challenging journey. ■

“Moving” Stories

When I lecture on the importance of well-being and discuss the evolution of well-being issues in our profession, I use the term “movement” to reflect the increased attention these issues are receiving. Notably, this attention started with compelling, individual news stories about high-profile suicides, then expanded to an increase in studies and education. The result is what I see as almost a profession-wide movement to increase our understanding of well-being issues as well as how to better care for ourselves. Although the stories that inspired it, especially those of suicide, are tragic, their legacy is, I hope, helping others pull through.