



FINAL THOUGHTS

MEET THE AUTHOR



Julie Squires, CCFS
Rekindle, LLC

Julie is a compassion fatigue specialist who brings a unique perspective and approach to support the sustained energy and passion of animal workers. Her company, Rekindle LLC, offers on-site compassion fatigue training to veterinary hospitals, animal shelters, lab animal research facilities, and other animal organizations.

Julie has 25 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 Traumatology Institute. Julie's clients also gain from her experience as a certified life coach and corporate wellness specialist.

Career Success: The Long Run

Melissa* has been a licensed veterinary technician for over 30 years. She came to me for coaching recently because she "just wasn't feeling it." She felt like she had nothing left to give and was deeply concerned about that. Here was a career she once adored, but now she was thinking about leaving it.

Much of the work I do with veterinary technicians is reminding them who they are and the power they have in their own lives. Many of them have given their power away to coworkers, managers, clients, and others.

Does this phrase sound familiar? *I'd be happy in my job if only _____ would change.*

I have wonderful news for you. The only thing that has to change to make you happy in your job is the way you are thinking. Your thoughts create your feelings, and you can choose what to think.

I have another client who works in a newly acquired corporate practice. There has been a fair amount of change in the practice—software systems, client pricing, standard operating procedures, leadership, staffing, staff attitudes, etc. This technician felt overwhelmed, so she reached out to me for help. I told her that she gets to choose how to think about the situation. One option is to think what many of the staff are thinking: *This stinks! Everything is changing, and I hate it.*

But why dwell on your disappointment and hatred?

Once my client became more aware of how she was thinking, she realized how sad they all sounded, complaining nonstop while feeling miserable and hating their jobs.

This client worked on how she wanted to think about the situation and came up with, *I can still take really good care of our patients; that hasn't changed.* She modified her mindset, and that changed how she felt about it all. She told me, "Nothing at the hospital has changed. There's still this acquisition going on, the software systems and fees are still changing, some people are leaving and some are joining the practice, and there's still this air of negativity among the staff. But I have changed how I'm thinking about it all. Because of that, I feel better than I've felt in a long time!"

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

—Dr. Wayne Dyer

*Name has been changed.

Being successful and having longevity in veterinary medicine is absolutely connected to how well you choose to think about it, and also how well you are taking care of yourself.



shutterstock.com/ESB Professional

Being successful and having longevity in veterinary medicine is absolutely connected to how well you choose to think about it, and also how well you are taking care of yourself.

Create a paradigm shift. We think that we are either taking care of others or we're taking care of ourselves. But those efforts are not mutually exclusive. In order to take care of others, you **have** to take care of yourself. There's no way around it, unless you don't want to do this work for long or you want to harbor enormous amounts of resentment and anger. I don't want that for you, and I know you don't want that either.

How are you creating space for yourself in your life? It's time to connect to the part of you that is who you really are. Not you the human *doing*, but you the human *being*.

This space might look like quiet time, time in nature, exercise, creativity, unplugging from technology, meditation, journaling, playing music, reading inspiring books, etc. It's anything that connects you to yourself and makes you feel replenished.

Have a plan. What are your aspirations? Do you want to be a supervisor, teach, or secure a job in industry? Do you want to work in lab animal, shelter, emergency, or specialty medicine? Do you want to become board-certified in a certain specialty or stay exactly where you are, doing exactly what you're doing (which is totally fine, by the way)?

If you want a new challenge, then reach out to someone who is doing what you want to do and ask questions.

As a veterinary assistant, I knew I wanted to get into industry, so I went to conferences and talked to the manufacturer representatives and eventually landed some interviews. This led me to working for a veterinary distributor.

Increase your value. How else would you like to serve your patients and clients? Maybe you want to offer nutritional or grief support. Look into ways to become certified in areas that pique your interest. Dog training, dental care, and weight management are specialties in which technicians can truly excel and that are often neglected within many practices. Search out those areas where you can take ownership of a niche, and make it yours!

Step away from the negativity. You don't have to look hard to find people complaining. It's everywhere: at work, on Facebook and other social media outlets, even on the nightly news. Just opt out, walk away, close the page, or change the channel, but do what you need to do to shield yourself from it. We think we'll feel better if we all get together to complain about something or someone, but if you pay attention, you'll most likely find that you end up feeling worse. Negativity breeds negativity. Protect yourself from its toxic web (**BOX 1**).

Maintain your passion. How you feel about your work is 100% up to you. You can work in a hospice practice, animal shelter, vivarium, emergency practice, or anywhere else and completely love it. It's all in how you think about it. Your thoughts create your life.

Deal with people. *I became a veterinary technician so I could work with people, said no technician ever. Yet, in all of our roles, we must deal with people. I've always seen interacting with people as a technician's superpower. Clients value your opinion and skill set. You may often be the touchpoint between them and the veterinarian. When my dog Virgil was going through chemo, it was the technician who called me every few days to check in on him. I came to really appreciate those calls and her knowledge. She was such a valuable asset to me when I had questions for the oncologist.*

Consider taking on more of a liaison role to help support your clients and veterinarians. The more value you can provide, the more job satisfaction you will have. It also helps at yearly review time to show all the value you bring to your organization.

Be an emotional adult. Being an emotional adult means taking full responsibility for how we feel. Other people are not responsible for how you feel; that's an *inside* job. Your feelings come from your thoughts about circumstances (the facts), not the circumstance itself.

And ask yourself...

- What if you decided to assume that people are doing the best they can?
- What if instead of judging others for their choices in pet care, you accepted that not everyone views their pet like you do—and that is okay?
- What if you allowed others just to be who they are and stopped wishing for them to do what you wanted them to do (behave how you want, say what you want, etc)?
- What if you decided that you were no longer going to put yourself last on the list and moved yourself up to the first spot?
- What if you just loved your work, assumed responsibility for how you feel about things, and took really good care of yourself every day?

You'd feel so good, that's what. ■

BOX 1 Escaping Negative Thinking

If you find yourself stuck in negative thinking, then start a gratitude practice (for some tips, see "Attitude of Gratitude" on todaysveterinarytechnician.com). Training your brain to find the good things that happen every day and appreciating them can shift the way you experience the world. Start with identifying 3 things every day for which you are grateful, and try to not repeat them. I recommend this practice at the end of your shift on your commute home, especially as a way to help you transition from a work mode to your personal time.

CAREERS

Use Your Skills as a Force for Good!



Use your veterinary nursing skills as a force for good! Located in Buffalo Grove, IL, Veterinary Specialty Center has been named a top workplace by the Chicago Tribune. We encourage technicians to take an active role in case management, attend CE, and support them as they work toward their VTS certification.

Contact Sheila Haske at shaske@vetspecialty.com or call 847.459.7535., ext. *1515. Learn more at vetspecialty.com/contact-us/jobs

Advertiser Index

Merck Animal Health bravectovets.com	
Bravecto	inside front cover, 4
Merial oravet.com	
OraVet	back cover
NAVC navc.com	
VMX 2018	6
Nestlé Purina purinaproplanvets.com	
NeuroCare diet	inside back cover
PRN prnpharmaceutical.com	
Duralactin	47
Protégé Biomedical clotitvet.com	
ClotIt Vet	3
Veterinary Specialty Center vetspecialty.com	
Recruitment	64
VetFolio vetfolio.com	
VetFolio.com	57
Virox Animal Health viroxanimalhealth.com/	
Disinfectant	53
Zoetis zoetisus.com	
Siparica	17, 18