A Personal Journey to Mindfulness

What is mindfulness? It's a common buzzword today, but do we really understand what it is? Wikipedia provides the following definition:

"Mindfulness is the psychological process of bringing one's attention to the internal experiences occurring in the present moment."

Yet this definition leaves room for interpretation. What I have learned is that everyone's understanding of it is as unique as their individual mind, body, and soul.

I have elected to dedicate my lifework to the concept of mindfulness: to provide a framework to help others find their unique, authentic path to sustainability within veterinary medicine. I call this framework living the path toward *Recognize, Embrace, Connect*.

RECOGNIZE

When I first thought of living in a mindful state, I pictured a Buddhist monk up on a distant mountaintop, sitting cross-legged with his eyes closed, where birds flew around him while he was in a blissful trance— a "Zen state of being."

As I pictured this—being the high-achieving, anxious individual that I am with a drive for organization, routine, and super-perfectionism—I saw it as a state completely beyond my reach. The first step I found toward everyday mindfulness is that recognizing where we are and the emotions we have does not mean living in a calm Zen state all the time. It doesn't mean that we will never have "negative" emotions. I realized that not only is it okay to feel anger, sadness, resentment, frustration, and even despair at times, it is normal. I am normal.

In the past, when these emotions presented themselves, I found myself in a space of what I call *Name, Blame, Judge*. When I felt fear or sadness, I wanted to blame or judge someone for how I felt. Often, I blamed people around me, but more commonly, I blamed myself. I was a bad human being for not being that monk on the mountaintop, living in that Zen state no matter what came my way.

Before I could even come close to the next stage of embracing any situation, I found I had to recognize how I felt and then give myself permission for the space I was in. I had to be *mindful* of my body's reaction to the stress, whatever situation was upon me, and then recognize that it was a situation that would pass. I had to allow myself to find the space to not judge myself for my reaction; rather, to let my reaction be present and acknowledge it. This allowed me to fall into the next stage, *Embrace*.

FINAL THOUGHTS

MEET THE AUTHOR

Kim Pope-Robinson, DVM, CCFP

1 Life Connected Consulting

Dr. Pope has been in veterinary medicine for more than 20 years, practicing in both the large and small animal sectors. In addition, she supported the position of a multi-unit manager for a large corporate practice and spent time in the pharmaceutical sector working with specialists and universities. Her career has provided her a unique understanding of the stresses involved with maintaining a career in this industry, and she now dedicates her time to providing wellbeing support for the profession. She provides this support through 1-on-1 coaching, through customized team events, and as a dynamic speaker. She is also the author of *The Unspoken Life*, which explores the concepts of Recognize, Embrace, Connect in more detail. In the end, Dr. Pope truly believes that we are all 1 Life Connected.

NexGard®
(afoxolaner) Chewables

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

Description:
NexGard® (afoxolaner) is available in four sizes of beef-flavored, soft chewables for oral administration to dogs and puppies according to their weight. Each chewable is formulated to provide a minimum afoxolaner dosage of 1.14 mg/lb (2.5 mg/kg). Afoxolaner has the chemical composition 1-Naphthalenecarboxamide, 4-[5- [3-chloro-5-(trifluoromethyl)-phenyl]-4, 5-dihydro-5-(trifluoromethyl)-3-isoxazolyl]-N-[2-oxo-2-[(2,2,2-trifluoroethyl)amino]ethyl.

Indications:
NexGard kills adult fleas and is indicated for the treatment and prevention of flea infestations *(Ctenocephalides felis),* and the treatment and control of Black-legged tick *(Ixodes scapularis),* American Dog tick *(Dermacentor variabilis),* Lone Star tick *(Amblyomma americanum),* and Brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) infestations in dogs and puppies 8 weeks of age and older, weighing 4 pounds of body weight or greater, for one month.

Dosage and Administration:
NexGard is given orally once a month, at the minimum dosage of 1.14 mg/lb (2.5 mg/kg).

Dosing Schedule:

Body Weight	Afoxolaner Per Chewable (mg)	Chewables Administered
4.0 to 10.0 lbs.	11.3	One
10.1 to 24.0 lbs.	28.3	One
24.1 to 60.0 lbs.	68	One
60.1 to 121.0 lbs.	136	One
Over 121.0 lbs.	Administer the appropriate combination of chewables	

NexGard can be administered with or without food. Care should be taken that the dog consumes the complete dose, and treated animals should be observed for a few minutes to ensure that part of the dose is not lost or refused. If it is suspected that any of the dose has been lost or if vomiting occurs within two hours of administration, redose with another full dose. If a dose is missed, administer NexGard and resume a monthly dosing schedule.

Flea Treatment and Prevention:
Treatment with NexGard may begin at any time of the year. In areas where fleas are common year-round, monthly treatment with NexGard should continue the entire year without interruption.

To minimize the likelihood of flea reinfestation, it is important to treat all animals within a household with an approved flea control product.

Tick Treatment and Control:
Treatment with NexGard may begin at any time of the year (see **Effectiveness**).

Contraindications:
There are no known contraindications for the use of NexGard.

Warnings:
Not for use in humans. Keep this and all drugs out of the reach of children. In case of accidental ingestion, contact a physician immediately.

Precautions:
The safe use of NexGard in breeding, pregnant or lactating dogs has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures (see **Adverse Reactions**).

Adverse Reactions:
In a well-controlled US field study, which included a total of 333 households and 615 treated dogs (415 administered afoxolaner; 200 administered active control), no serious adverse reactions were observed with NexGard.

Over the 90-day study period, all observations of potential adverse reactions were recorded. The most frequent reactions reported at an incidence of > 1% within any of the three months of observations are presented in the following table. The most frequently reported adverse reaction was vomiting. The occurrence of vomiting was generally self-limiting and of short duration and tended to decrease with subsequent doses in both groups. Five treated dogs experienced anorexia during the study, and two of those dogs experienced anorexia with the first dose but not subsequent doses.

Table 1: Dogs With Adverse Reactions.

	Treatment Group			
	Afoxolaner		Oral active control	
	N[1]	% (n=415)	N[2]	% (n=200)
Vomiting (with and without blood)	17	4.1	25	12.5
Dry/Flaky Skin	13	3.1	2	1.0
Diarrhea (with and without blood)	13	3.1	7	3.5
Lethargy	7	1.7	4	2.0
Anorexia	5	1.2	9	4.5

[1]Number of dogs in the afoxolaner treatment group with the identified abnormality.
[2]Number of dogs in the control group with the identified abnormality.

In the US field study, one dog with a history of seizures experienced a seizure on the same day after receiving the first dose and on the same day after receiving the second dose of NexGard. This dog experienced a third seizure one week after receiving the third dose. The dog remained enrolled and completed the study. Another dog with a history of seizures had a seizure 19 days after the third dose of NexGard. The dog remained enrolled and completed the study. A third dog with a history of seizures received NexGard and experienced no seizures throughout the study.

To report suspected adverse events, for technical assistance or to obtain a copy of the MSDS, contact Merial at 1-888-637-4251 or www.merial.com/NexGard. For additional information about adverse drug experience reporting for animal drugs, contact FDA at 1-888-FDA-VETS or online at http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth.

Mode of Action:
Afoxolaner is a member of the isoxazoline family, shown to bind at a binding site to inhibit insect and acarine ligand-gated chloride channels, in particular those gated by the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), thereby blocking pre- and post-synaptic transfer of chloride ions across cell membranes. Prolonged afoxolaner-induced hyperexcitation results in uncontrolled activity of the central nervous system and death of insects and acarines. The selective toxicity of afoxolaner between insects and acarines and mammals may be inferred by the differential sensitivity of the insects and acarines' GABA receptors versus mammalian GABA receptors.

Effectiveness:
In a well-controlled laboratory study, NexGard began to kill fleas four hours after initial administration and demonstrated >99% effectiveness at eight hours. In a separate well-controlled laboratory study, NexGard demonstrated 100% effectiveness against adult fleas 24 hours post-infestation for 35 days, and was ≥ 93% effective at 12 hours post-infestation through Day 21, and on Day 35. On Day 28, NexGard was 81.1% effective 12 hours post-infestation. Dogs in both the treated and control groups that were infested with fleas on Day -1 generated flea eggs at 12- and 24-hours post-treatment (0-11 eggs and 1-17 eggs in the NexGard treated dogs, and 4-90 eggs and 0-118 eggs in the control dogs, at 12- and 24-hours, respectively). At subsequent evaluations post-infestation, fleas from dogs in the treated group were essentially unable to produce any eggs (0-1 eggs) while fleas from dogs in the control group continued to produce eggs (1-141 eggs).

In a 90-day US field study conducted in households with existing flea infestations of varying severity, the effectiveness of NexGard against fleas on the Day 30, 60 and 90 visits compared with baseline was 98.0%, 99.7%, and 99.9%, respectively.

Collectively, the data from the three studies (two laboratory and one field) demonstrate that NexGard kills fleas before they can lay eggs, thus preventing subsequent flea infestations after the start of treatment of existing flea infestations.

In well-controlled laboratory studies, NexGard demonstrated >97% effectiveness against *Dermacentor variabilis,* >94% effectiveness against *Ixodes scapularis,* and >93% effectiveness against *Rhipicephalus sanguineus,* 48 hours post-infestation for 30 days. At 72 hours post-infestation, NexGard demonstrated >97% effectiveness against *Amblyomma americanum* for 30 days.

Animal Safety:
In a margin of safety study, NexGard was administered orally to 8 to 9-week-old Beagle puppies at 1, 3, and 5 times the maximum exposure dose (6.3 mg/kg) for three treatments every 28 days, followed by three treatments every 14 days, for a total of six treatments. Dogs in the control group were sham-dosed. There were no clinically-relevant effects related to treatment on physical examination, body weight, food consumption, clinical pathology (hematology, clinical chemistries, or coagulation tests), gross pathology, histopathology or organ weights. Vomiting occurred throughout the study, with a similar incidence in the treated and control groups, including one dog in the 5x group that vomited four hours after treatment.

In a well-controlled field study, NexGard was used concomitantly with other medications, such as vaccines, anthelmintics, antibiotics (including topicals), steroids, NSAIDS, anesthetics, and antihistamines. No adverse reactions were observed from the concomitant use of NexGard with other medications.

Storage Information:
Store at or below 30°C (86°F) with excursions permitted up to 40°C (104°F).

How Supplied:
NexGard is available in four sizes of beef-flavored soft chewables: 11.3, 28.3, 68 or 136 mg afoxolaner. Each chewable size is available in color-coded packages of 1, 3 or 6 beef-flavored chewables.

NADA 141-406, Approved by FDA

Marketed by: Frontline Vet Labs™, a Division of Merial, Inc.
Duluth, GA 30096-4640 USA

Made in Brazil.

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EMBRACE

As I work to embrace a situation, there is one tool I use to help me be more resilient: meditation. I'll be honest, I don't meditate the way some people might picture it, like someone sitting on a pillow in a corner in front of some candles and a Buddhist statue with their eyes closed, looking similar to that monk on the mountaintop. I'm not against that method, nor do I deny the benefits it can provide. It's just that my preference for meditation involves a pair of running shoes and an extra large dose of nature.

"Meditation is a practice where an individual operates to train the mind or induces a mode of consciousness, either to realize some benefit or for the mind to simply acknowledge its content without becoming identified with that content or as an end in itself."

This definition, also from Wikipedia, says nothing about pillows or candles. Again, it's open to interpretation. Running in nature brings a certain peace and quiet to my mind that I don't achieve with anything else I do. I am not pushing my athletic ability, I am just one with my surroundings, taking in smells, sights, and sounds as I work through some unknown distance and often some unknown emotion that comes up during the run.

CONNECT

As we recognize our state and embrace our situation, the final stage in the framework is to *Connect to the space around us*. What does this mean? Say a client has limited resources (money). We may immediately judge them: they don't love their pet, they waited too long, clients are stupid and you can't fix stupid, etc. This reaction stems from feeling inadequate in not being able to help the pet. We feel shame and unworthiness, and we turn it into anger with the client.

How can we connect to the situation instead of allowing it to represent us? One path might be to find a reason to justify the client's position and to relate to the human in the equation. Another might be to acknowledge our frustration and anger in a way that restores us at the end of the day—instead of attacking the client, attack the pavement with a run.

Personally, I fight to stay on "a" path every single day. It is an active process. When I feel "negative" emotions begin to present themselves, I ask myself: Am I running toward name, blame, judge and spiraling down to a place of disconnection with the world and an overall desire to not continue on? Or do I choose to move toward *Recognize, Embrace, Connect* and find a place of mindfulness?

Our solutions to internal happiness and wellbeing are unique to each of us, and I do not have the answer for your personal mindfulness. But the framework I've outlined can allow you to find the unique path you deserve.

So I ask you, in your journey to mindfulness and in finding that authentic career in veterinary medicine, what does Recognize, Embrace, Connect mean to you and how does it show up in your career within the veterinary industry? And more importantly, how will it show up in your life in general? ■