



**Career? Calling? Job? -- Reframing Your View of Veterinary Work and Advocating for Yourself**  
**Saturday July 11, 2020**  
**Notes**

**Notes:**

- Merck Veterinary Wellbeing Study:
  - Showed that 59% of veterinarians could not whole-heartedly recommend their own career to a friend or a family member
  - What about here? In this group?
    - Techs
    - CSRs
    - Managers
    - Other veterinary staff
- Veterinary Medicine is a Calling – or so we’re told
  - We enter the profession because of the Human-Animal Bond – which is truly sacred
  - We use the “Calling” of veterinary medicine to push through when going gets rough
    - At school
    - At work
  - It becomes a rallying cry – especially at big conferences
    - . . . but what if you’re within the 59% who might be feeling on the “outs”?
- Definition and History of the idea of having a Calling
  - What is a Calling? Miriam Webster Dictionary’s definition:
    - a strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence
    - the vocation or profession in which one customarily engages
    - the characteristic cry of a female cat in heat
  - Historical notion –
    - Idea of having a “calling” comes from our world’s religions
    - Those who are “called” to religious leadership make the REST OF THEIR LIFE subservient to the work they are doing
    - Having a calling assumes
      - A vow of poverty
      - Sometimes a vow of celibacy
      - That your work takes precedence over EVERYTHING ELSE in your life
  - BUT! Is this compatible with a life where you have:
    - Self-care
    - Good boundaries
    - Healthy relationships
    - Balance?
- H’s story – How I realized it wasn’t healthy for ME to have a calling



## Agents of Change COACHING

- Having a calling can be tied to SHAME
  - Shame is . . . (in the words of Brene Brown)
    - The intensely painful feeling that we are unworthy of love and belonging
    - The most primitive human emotion we all feel – and the one no one wants to talk about
    - The less we talk about it, the more power it has
    - The difference between guilt and shame is the difference between “I did something bad” and . . . “I \*am\* bad.”
  - Shame can be deeply damaging
  - In the veterinary world
    - People shame us all the time, often without intending to do so
    - We need to be VERY careful not to shame each other
  
- Summary of early research and writing on the Dark Side of Calling
  - Academic Research
    - 2009, Bunderson and Thompson – first description of the Dark Side of Calling
    - 2018, Duffy et al – negative outcomes from having a calling at work include
      - Burnout
      - Workaholism
      - Employer exploitation
  - Popular writing
    - People say if you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life – CEOs and experts caution that could be dangerous advice
      - In this 2018 Business Insider Article, the author mentions two resources that may help offer solutions to the problem
        - Job Crafting, as described by Amy Wrzesniewski, at the Yale School of Management, and
        - “The Job”, a book by Ellen Ruppel Shell
    - The Risk of Thinking of your Job as a Higher Calling
      - This 2019 Quartz.com article describes how we often approach a calling
      - We fail to care for ourselves, and deny our basic physical needs
        - Sleeping
        - Eating
        - (many veterinary workers don’t even make time to use the restroom!)
  
- It’s JUST A JOB!
  - Why these 3 dirty little words make us so uncomfortable: “Just a Job” implies . . .
    - Your work can’t be meaningful
    - Your work is supposed to be your IDENTITY
    - Work shouldn’t \*feel\* like work



Agents of Change  
COACHING

- You are not a team player
  - Your work can't be rewarding
  - Are these assumptions or implications TRUE?
    - Story of H's meaningful job at McDonalds
  - DROP THE STIGMA: **IT'S JUST A JOB!!!!**
    - I believe we can
      - CARE about what we do
      - EXCEL at it
      - Make a DIFFERENCE, and
      - Find MEANING in our work
        - . . . While still viewing veterinary work as "just as job".
- Reframing our view of veterinary work as "just a job" can give us . . .
  - The ability to be TRULY OFF
    - You can disengage in two ways
      - Logistically being off of work
      - Disengaging your mind
    - Healthy Compartmentalization is a positive mindset that can help you achieve better balance
  - Better Boundaries
    - In the veterinary field, we are systematically taught it is not ok to have boundaries
    - The idea that our work is "just a job" is, in itself, a boundary
  - Reduction in the Halo Effect
    - Is veterinary medicine truly, really, always both HEROIC and DELIGHTFUL?
  - Better ability to advocate for yourself
    - With employers
    - With Clients
    - "I love what I do, but this is not a hobby for me."
- What to look for in your place of employment
  - We face uncertain (and downright shitty) economic times – COVID-19 #\$(@&&@!\*#&!
    - Unemployment was down to 0.5% overall in Feb 2020, prior to COVID-19
    - Now, may go as high as 20% due to the pandemic
      - (Was at about 25% during the Great Depression)
      - Was supposedly down to 13.3% at the end of May, 2020, but had been higher earlier in the pandemic
  - YET! There is still a shortage of veterinary technicians
  - It is still STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that you advocate for yourself when seeking new employment.
  - Seek high levels of ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT
    - H's story of organizational support with Diego
  - Look for workplaces where JOB CRAFTING is the norm



## Agents of Change COACHING

- Work of Amy Wrzesniewski at Yale School of Management
- Job Crafting for individuals and organizations is a powerful tool
- Ask about INNOVATIVE PAY STRUCTURES
  - Production pay hurts everyone
  - What about team-oriented incentive pay for the whole staff?
  - What is a technician's work worth?
- If you ARE an employer, make sure you OFFER these things!
  
- BE THE CHANGE YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD
  - Especially if you ARE an employer
  - Even if you are just yourself
  - The veterinary world CANNOT change without YOU.

### Resources/Reference:

- Kitchen Table Wisdom – Stories that Heal; Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.
  - Other books: My Grandfather's Blessings
- Daring Greatly; Brene Brown, PhD, LMSW.
  - Other books:
    - I thought it was just me (but it isn't)
    - The Gifts of Imperfection
    - Rising Strong
    - Braving the Wilderness
    - Dare to Lead
- The Call of the Wild: Zookeepers, Callings, and the Double-edged Sword of Deeply Meaningful Work; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Administrative Science.
- Work as a Calling: A Theoretical Model; Duffy et al, 2018; Journal of Counseling Psychology.
- People say if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life – CEOs and experts caution that could be dangerous advice; Lebowitz, Shana, 2018; Business Insider.
- The Risk of Thinking of your Job as a Higher Calling; MacLellan, Lila, 2019; Quartz.com.
- A Prescription for Change; Hauser and Fuhrman, 2018; Today's Veterinary Business.