

Christian Veterinary Mission

Christ's Love Expressed
Through Veterinary
Medicine



CONQUERING COMPASSION FATIGUE IN #VETMED



Introduction



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Goals of this talk



- Why is vet med so at risk for burnout & compassion fatigue?
- Biblical examples of burnout
- WWJD?
- Steps for prevention

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Who does burnout & compassion fatigue affect?



- Dedicated
 - Successful
 - Caring
 - Wired to care
 - Loving people
- Healthcare professionals
 - Charitable giving workers
 - Law enforcement/fire/EMS
 - Helping professions
 - Clergy
 - Teachers
 - Animal rescue/shelter
 - Attorneys

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Biblical prophets



- Complained
- Didn't listen to God
- Burnt out

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Examples from the Bible



- Jonah
 - “Now, Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live...” – Jonah 4:3
- Elijah
 - “I have had enough, Lord... take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” – I Kings 19:4

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Moses



- Exodus 18:17 “What you are doing is not good... you will only wear yourself out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.” (Jethro to Moses)
- Exodus 32: Coming down from Mt. Sinai → destroyed the tablets
- Exodus 34/Deut 9: Moses interceding for the people, neither eating or drinking
- Number 11:14 Moses says “The burden is too heavy for me...”

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Even Jesus got compassion fatigue: Why?



- Crowds constantly surrounding him
- People constantly demanding things from him
- Even his disciples not “believing”
- Surrounded by betrayal (e.g., Judas)

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How did Jesus avoid compassion fatigue?



- He took **time off for self** → taking breaks & resting
 - But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed... Luke 5:16
- Maintained **boundaries** → guard yourself
 - After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was alone there... Matthew 14:23
- Prioritized his **time**

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Taking time off for self: Taking breaks



- Even Jesus took breaks away from people to pray and be around his disciples amidst his ministry.
- “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up.... went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” Mark 1:35
- “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed...” – Luke 5:16

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How to maintain boundaries

- Stick up for yourself (e.g., be assertive)
 - Delegate vs. transfer of ownership
 - Don't go in on days off
 - Spending extra time in the clinic or with patients
 - Worrying about cases at night
 - Checking online blood results
- *After he sent the multitudes away – Matthew 14:23*

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PRIORITIZE YOUR TIME:
WORK SMARTER, NOT
HARDER



LEARNING TO BE EFFICIENT



VETGIRL BLOG

How to be a more efficient veterinarian | VETgirl Veterinary CE Blog

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I'm often asked... how did you get to be so efficient?

Well, it was baptism by fire during my [internship at Angell](#). When you have 18 in-house patients to SOAP before 7 am cage rounds, you learn to be efficient.

Some of the emergency veterinarians I work with hate me (in a loving way) because I always get out on time... for the most part. They are stuck behind doing paperwork for hours and hours, and wondering how- the-heck-does-she-get-out-on-time?

Well, let me fill you in on a few secrets of making you a more *efficient, effective veterinarian*.

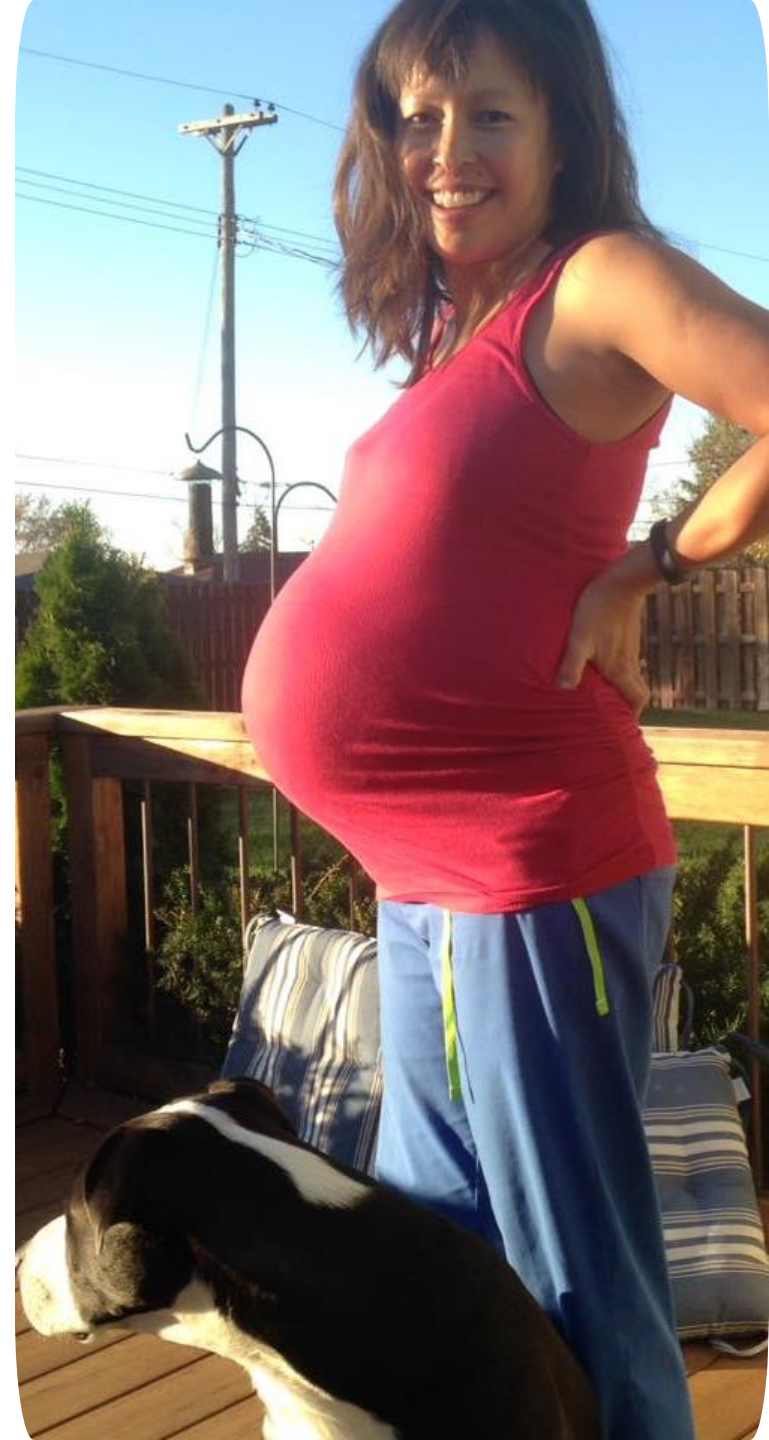
Why is this important? Because the more efficient you are, the better work-life balance you have, the better patient care you have, the happier you make your techs. It's a win-win-win.

Rule #1: Do doctor things

LEARNING TO BE EFFICIENT

- Do “soon-to-be-doctor” things → delegate
- Stop chatting so much
- Type as you go/dictation/AI
- Triage and examine

- Don't stand around
- Check your mailbox
- Self care (e.g., eat, pee)
- Triage your email
- Document a client communication



OHIO: Only Handle It Once

- Once you start working on a specific task, complete it from beginning to end.
- Once you TOUCH it, finish it.
- Select 1 task --> beginning to end
- Helps you:
 - Avoid distractions or interruptions
 - Single task



If it's a repeated problem, solve the problem.

- *Where are my keys?*
- *Where's my phone?*





**LEARN TO SAY
NO**

WHY TODDLERS GET EVERYTHING THEY WANT: "NO!"



Learn to say "no"



Does this directly help/benefit me?



"Yes to stress" ratio





Does this spark joy?



HOW DO YOU SAY NO?



 Ask to think about it

 Respond by email 24 hours later

 Respectfully decline





COMPANIONSHIP



Find a support network (e.g., work vs. non-work colleagues)



Support from Bible studies, church fellowship groups



Vent sessions, Time limits



How do we prevent compassion fatigue: Be still



- Be silent
- Just sit
- Mind dump
- Mentally picture the stressor
- Take it out to the curb when driving home

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How do we prevent compassion fatigue: Dig into the Bible



- Quiet time - can you carve out 20 minutes out of the day?
First thing in the morning or at night
- But I don't have time!
 - Driving to work
 - Utilizing other sources
 - Podcasts
 - Bible apps
 - Devotional guide
 - Audible Bible

Matthew 11:28-30



- "Come TO me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and lean from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light..."



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Isaiah 40:29-31 New International Version (NIV)

- 29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
- 30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
- 31 but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

- Translation: Don't do it on your own, but rely on God's strength for refreshment

How do we prevent compassion fatigue: Prayer & Meditation



- While driving to work
- Quiet time
- First thing in the morning or at night



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<http://www.wikihow.com/Meditate>

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Prayer: ACTS



- Adoration → Give God praise and honor
- Confession → Ask for grace
- Thanksgiving → Verbalize what you're grateful for
- Supplication → Pray for the needs of others and self

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How do we prevent compassion fatigue: Rest and refreshment



- God allowed Elijah to sleep (1 Kings 19:5)
- God provided food for him to eat (19:5)
- More rest... (19:6)
- More food... (19:7)



REST AND REFRESHMENT

-  8 hours of sleep
-  Go to bed 30 minutes earlier
-  Wake up 30 minutes earlier
-  No electronic stimulation past 9 pm
-  No electronic stimulation before 7 am
-  Unplug from bad news → plug into God for perspective, wisdom, joy and strength





REST AND REFRESHMENT

- Eat 3 meals a day
- Carry snacks
- Eat real meals at the table: does this spark joy?
- Lunch break – go out and walk

HYDRATE

- Drink 40 ounces of water a day
- Cut out too much alcohol and caffeine





TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

- Time with friends, spouse, children (e.g., date night) → reaffirm your commitment
- Hobbies
- Non-veterinary hobbies
- Keep the Sabbath
WWI: More efficient in 6 vs. 7 days





- “6 days you shall labor and do all of your work, but the 7th day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it, you shall not do any work.” - Exodus 20:8-9
- “You are not made for the Sabbath; the Sabbath is made for you.” – Mark 2:27

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How do we prevent compassion fatigue: Taking care of self



- Cut yourself some slack
 - To-do lists
 - Is it worth the \$? (What's your hourly rate?)
- Love your neighbor as *yourself*– Gal 5:14
 - YOU are an important person!

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How do we prevent compassion fatigue: Exercise



- Exercise
 - Take a walk with your dog
 - Jog for 5 minutes, walk for 5 minutes
 - Hike
 - Kickbox
 - Sofa to 5K
 - Ultimate Frisbee

How do we prevent compassion fatigue



- Be thankful
 - ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication
 - Daily journal
 - What are you thankful for today?
 - Have one good conversation a day
 - Say thank you more

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- “As we have received mercy, we don’t lose heart.”
 - 2 Corinth 4:1
- “Let us not grow weary from doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not lose heart...”
 - Galatians 6:9-10
- “As for the rest of you, dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.”
 - 2 Thess 3:13

Balance self-care and being dependent on God for our strength



- *Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing..."*
 - John 15:4-5

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“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved,
clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

- *Colossians 3:12*



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Colossians 3:12

Timeliness is next to
godliness

SOAP all patients prior
to appointments

1st treatments done
prior to appointments

Client
handouts/YouTube
videos/QR codes

“Work it” – run 2
rooms, staggered
appointment times,
utilize staff

Timing of
treatments/number of
TPRs/meds

Set up as much as
possible in “down
time”
(procedures/cages)

Weigh animals up
front/same scale PRIOR
to bringing back

Fear free – owner
medicating prior to
arrival + owner meds

Prepare for visit as
much as possible (pre-
filled history forms,
payment info, etc.)