

## FINDING BALANCE

# Mindfulness

**Dr. Laura Baltodano**, Owner of Lighthouse Pet Clinic  
Lehigh Acres, Florida

“Mindfulness” has become a “buzz” word lately and with good reason; however, what we call mindfulness has been around for thousands of years. The practice of mindfulness involves intentionally being fully present in each moment with kindness, nonjudgmentally and without striving for things to be any different than they are. It provides a way to step out of “automatic pilot” and see life in a different way; it is a form of awakening. Bringing this awareness to moment-to-moment experiences can change everything. Aspects of mindful living include, but are not limited to, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), mindful self-compassion (MSC) and mindful eating.

In the busyness of modern day society, where we are constantly on the go and wrapped up in “doing,” mindfulness is our STOP button. It provides us with a space to consider alternative ways of responding to both internal and external stressors.

There is a correlation between stress and health outcomes. When presented with a stimulus, we are usually acting from a place of reactivity. Our sympathetic nervous system is activated and the “flight or fight” response kicks in. This system is in place as a survival mechanism and is very useful in acute situations. However, when activated chronically as it is in modern day society, it has multiple adverse effects

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including adrenal fatigue, lack of motivation or drive, physical and/or emotional exhaustion and disease.

*Stress hardiness* as coined by Suzanne Kobasa is defined as “a mindset exhibited by an individual that makes him or her resistant to the negative impacts of stressful circumstances and events.” This emotional hardiness is developed by looking at situations mindfully and interpreting adversity as an opportunity for growth. In being committed to a new approach in how one perceives challenges, a resilience is developed.

In the veterinary profession, we are hit with multiple stressors on a daily basis. Learning new ways to manage these day-to-day stressors (both internal and external), our thoughts about them and how we perceive and

respond to them can have positive implications on one's overall wellbeing, increase satisfaction and increase resiliency. This tool is available to us at any given moment; it just needs to be honed.

## TAKE ACTION:

Make a commitment to begin pressing the STOP button when presented with a stressful situation.

**S** *Stop* and interrupt "automatic pilot" by concentrating on the present moment.

**T** *Take* a deep breath (or a few if you need to) and bring your attention to your breath as a focus point.

**O** *Observe* the situation from the point of view of a scientist recovering data. Connect to the present moment and determine what is arising for you with a sense of curiosity. In what ways can you respond that would be positive and fruitful in the current interaction?

**P** *Proceed* and reconnect with your surroundings. Respond mindfully to the situation at hand. **TVP**

## References

1. Maddi SR. Hardiness and health: a prospective study. *J Pers Soc Psychol*. 1982;42(1):168-177

### Laura Baltodano

Dr. Laura Baltodano graduated in 2013 from Washington State University. She is the owner of Lighthouse Pet Clinic in Lehigh Acres, Florida. In addition to veterinary medicine, Dr. Laura is passionate about equipping others with tools to enhance their wellbeing. She is a certified health and wellness coach, a certified 7 Minute Life Time Management Trainer, registered yoga teacher and, mindfulness teacher and is licensed to teach The Four Elements of Success by Lori Beth Jones. Her app, "The Wellness Doctor," is available for download from the App Store or Google Play.



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