

## PERSONAL WELLNESS

# Creating a Highly Effective Veterinary Team

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Creating a highly effective team can change everything about how we practice veterinary medicine and experience fulfillment in our careers. In business, we view having an effective team as maximizing profit and providing exceptional patient care. The question then becomes: How exactly do we do that? Establishing a place for open communication, practicing and promoting nonjudgment, and providing tools to cultivate wellbeing provide us with a framework to build a great team! These concepts can also allow for creativity and a fresh approach to practice. The effects will extend to the veterinary team and overflow into patient care and client interaction.

## PAY ATTENTION

Open communication is critical to a practice's success. Active listening requires the listener to be fully engaged in a conversation with the intent to understand the person speaking, not only their words, but their perspective. Listening intently should be done without interruption or thinking about your response while the other person is speaking. When in an exam room, listening intently and paraphrasing or asking questions after the person is done speaking ensure that you understood the message being relayed. Then you can follow up with an honest and thoughtful response. Also, practice active listening with team members

and have an open-door policy for them to relay concerns, comments, and ideas. It takes a team to run a practice, and allowing them the space to be creative and give input helps them feel like a valued member of the practice's success. Active listening can pay off in spades by bonding both clients and the team.

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## PRACTICING NONJUDGMENT

Developmental psychology tells us that as early as age 2, children can begin to develop narratives about what they think is going on in the world. As a result, we often live and interact with others using stories we tell ourselves—how we perceive others and the world around us. We are reactive to what we think is going on instead of behaving and responding thoughtfully.

Does this resonate with you? Perception plays a primary role in how we view our work and interact with our veterinary team and clients. They come to us with their beloved pets and sometimes we react by blaming or judging them without fully knowing their story or understanding where they are coming from. Keeping this in mind can be helpful in coming from a place of compassion and empathy while still offering what would

be the best care, without taking things personally or getting angry, both of which affect our overall wellbeing.

## CULTIVATE WELLBEING

Creating a practice culture that promotes health and wellbeing helps with team effectiveness and motivation. This can be accomplished by having a lunch-and-learn geared toward personal health, such as having a chiropractor come in and speak on a particular health topic. Consider offering healthy meals for the team, the services of a health coach, cooking classes, mindfulness classes, massages or a spa day at certain intervals (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly) to enhance wellbeing and overall satisfaction.

We all want to be seen, heard, and know that we matter. Let the team know that their role is instrumental in creating practice success and providing patients with the very best we have to offer. Giving them access to tools that can provide joy and personal fulfillment will provide a foundation. Happiness is contagious, and the ripples will extend far and wide. **TVP**

### 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, and 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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