Nine Dimensions of Veterinary Wellbeing & Personal Resilience

Authors Information:
Anna D. Reddish, DVM
Jen C. Brandt; MSW, PhD, LISW-S
American Veterinary Medical Association
1931 N Meacham Road Suite 100 Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360
Abstract: Veterinarians, like all health professionals, are subject to multiple demands and stressors that at times in their careers can compromise satisfaction, engagement, and wellbeing. These stressors include high debt load, long hours, heavy workloads, client demands, navigating social media, and isolation. Our health as professionals can be conceptualized on a continuum, with optimal wellbeing at one end and burnout on the other. Veterinarians and the organizations they work within may move at times toward the wellbeing end of continuum, while others may move more towards burnout. A major component of maintaining personal wellbeing is resilience. Veterinarians that have strategies for overcoming adverse situations are more apt to avoid burnout. Individuals and organizations can play a role in fostering and promoting wellbeing through nine dimensions: Career, Creative, Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Physical, Social, and Spiritual. Keywords: wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, dimensions of wellbeing

What is Wellbeing?

One wellbeing definition is “when individuals have the psychological, social, and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.”¹

Wellbeing includes “the presence of positive emotions…the absence of negative emotions…satisfaction with life, and fulfillment and positive functioning.”²

A Wellbeing Framework
Veterinarians, like all health professionals, are subject to multiple demands and stressors that at times in their careers can compromise satisfaction, engagement, and wellbeing. These stressors include high debt load, long hours, heavy workloads, client demands, navigating social media, and isolation. Our health as professionals can be conceptualized on a continuum, with optimal wellbeing at one end and burnout on the other. Veterinarians and the organizations they work within may move at times toward the wellbeing end of continuum, while others may move more towards burnout.

Wellbeing stems from an interactive relationship between various dimensions, with no single perfect plan but rather a continuum of useful strategies. Our needs, and the needs of our organization may change from day to day. An ideal plan is one that can adapt to changing circumstances over time.

The essential skills of being a whole, healthy veterinary professional include intentional integration of the following dimensions.3

**Career Wellbeing**

The professionally well veterinarian engages in work to gain personal satisfaction and enrichment consistent with his or her values, goals, and lifestyle.

**Creative Wellbeing**

The creatively well veterinarian values and participates in diverse arts and cultural experiences to appreciate and understand the creative world.

**Emotional Wellbeing**
The emotionally well veterinarian can identify, express, and manage the entire range of feelings and seeks assistance about areas of concern and to promote optimal functioning.

**Environmental Wellbeing**

The environmentally well veterinarian recognizes his or her responsibility to preserve, protect, and improve the environment and appreciates how he or she is interconnected with nature.

**Financial Wellbeing**

A financially well veterinarian is fully aware of his or her personal financial status and budget, saves regularly, and manages his or her finances to achieve realistic goals.

**Intellectual Wellbeing**

The intellectually well veterinarian values lifelong learning and seeks to foster critical thinking, develop moral reasoning, expand worldviews, and engage in education for the pursuit of knowledge.

**Physical Wellbeing**

The physically well veterinarian gets enough sleep (i.e. 7 to 9 hours for both young adults ages 18 to 25 and adults ages 26 to 64\(^4\)); eats a balanced nutritious diet; engages in 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity and at least 2 strength training sessions per week\(^5\); gets regular medical check-ups; limits intoxication substance use; and practices safe, healthy sexual relations.

**Social Wellbeing**
The socially well veterinarian has a support network based on interdependence, mutual trust, and respect and has developed sensitivity and awareness of others’ feelings.

Spiritual Wellbeing

The spiritually well veterinarian seeks harmony and balance by openly exploring the depth of human purpose and its meaning and finding connection through dialogue and self-reflection.

References


