Nine dimensions of veterinary wellbeing and personal resilience

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Abstract

Veterinarians, like all health professionals, are subject to multiple demands and stressors that at times in their careers can compromise satisfaction, engagement, and well-being. 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 1 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 well-being 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 9 dimensions: career, creative, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual.

Key words: wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, dimensions of wellbeing

What is Wellbeing?

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

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

A Wellbeing Framework

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

- 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 identifies, expresses, and manages 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 gets enough sleep (i.e. 7 to 9 hours for both young adults ages 18 to 25 and adults ages 26 to 64); 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; gets regular medical check-ups; limit 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