

Book Club Discussion Questions for "A Compassionate Calling: What It Really Means To Be a Veterinarian" By Dr. Marie Holowaychuk (For Veterinary Professionals)

Part One: Journey of a Veterinary Critical Care Specialist

Chapter 1: Pursuing a Lifelong Calling

- What factors influenced your decision to pursue veterinary medicine, and how have those motivations evolved over time?
- Did you relate to Marie's early exposure to the profession through her family? How has your own background shaped your career path?

Chapter 2: Between Pre-Vet and Practitioner

- What memories do you have of your pre-vet journey? What lessons from that time still resonate with you today?

Chapter 3: The Path to Veterinary Specialization

- What were your initial thoughts on veterinary specialization, and how has your perception changed after reading this chapter?

Chapter 4: The Challenges and Realities of a Residency

- Have you ever experienced a period of intense stress or self-doubt in your veterinary journey? What helped you through it?

Chapter 5: Adventures in Veterinary Academia

- How did your experiences in academic or clinical teaching compare with Marie's?

Chapter 6: A Departure from Academic Life

- Have you ever made a difficult career transition? What motivated the change, and what challenges did you face?

Chapter 7: Transforming Overwhelm into Opportunity

- When have you turned a challenging or overwhelming experience into something positive or transformative?

Chapter 8: From Crisis to Compassion

- How has compassion for yourself or others shown up during your most difficult times in practice?

Part Two: What I Learned about Veterinary Medicine along the Way

Chapter 9: The Road to Becoming a Veterinarian

- What misconceptions did you or others have about becoming a vet?

Chapter 10: Veterinary Education's Debt Crisis

- How did your financial situation after graduation shape your career choices?

Chapter 11: The Hidden Curriculum in Veterinary School

- What unspoken messages or cultural norms did you internalize during your training?

Chapter 12: Meeting the Demand for Veterinary Specialists

- What do you think the future holds for specialization in veterinary medicine?

Chapter 13: Stories from the Veterinary ICU

- Which ICU story resonated with you most, and why?

Chapter 14: Navigating Euthanasia in Veterinary Medicine

- What strategies have helped you navigate emotionally difficult euthanasia decisions?

Chapter 15: Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Stress

- How do you manage the emotional toll of ethical grey areas in practice?

Chapter 16: The Paradox of Compassionate Veterinary Care

- How do you balance empathy and professional detachment in daily practice?

Chapter 17: Compliments, Complaints, and Client Incivility

- What impact do client interactions have on your wellbeing? How do you stay grounded?

Chapter 18: Examining Toxicity in Veterinary Practices

- What signs of toxicity have you encountered? What changes helped shift the culture?

Chapter 19: The Burden of On-Call

- How has on-call duty impacted your personal or professional life?

Part Three: What We Now Understand about Veterinarians

Chapter 20: Professional Identity

- How do you define your identity as a veterinary professional beyond your clinical role?

Chapter 21: Playing the Veterinary Victim and Martyr

- Have you seen or experienced these patterns in practice? How can we shift out of it?

Chapter 22: The Hidden Struggles of Perfectionism

- What role does perfectionism play in your work? What helps to counter it?

Chapter 23: The Human Side of Veterinary Mistakes

- How do you or your team approach mistakes when they happen?

Chapter 24: Mental Health in the Veterinary Profession

- What supports or resources have you found helpful (or lacking) in your own journey?

Chapter 25: Recognizing Mental Health Stigma

- How does stigma show up in veterinary culture? What can we do to change this?

Chapter 26: Confronting Compassion Fatigue

- What are your go-to strategies to recharge emotionally?

Chapter 27: Addressing Burnout among Veterinarians

- What signs of burnout do you look for in yourself or colleagues?

Chapter 28: Finding Balance with Boundaries

- How do you create and protect boundaries in your professional life?

Chapter 29: Unveiling the Tragedy of Veterinarian Suicide

- What conversations do we need to normalize to reduce the risk of suicide in our field?

Chapter 30: Realities and Resilience Amidst the Pandemic

- What lessons from the pandemic are still shaping your work today?

Part Four: What the Future Holds for Veterinary Medicine

Chapter 31: The Rise of Veterinary Corporatization

- How has corporatization affected your work, for better or worse?

Chapter 32: Insights into Pet Health Insurance

- What role do you think insurance plays in equitable care for patients?

Chapter 33: Transformative Technologies, Including Telemedicine

- How are you using or adapting to new technologies in practice?

Chapter 34: Striving for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- How can your workplace become more inclusive?

Chapter 35: Redefining Veterinary Education for a Dynamic Profession

- What would you change about veterinary training if you could?

Chapter 36: Exploring Veterinary Frontiers Outside Clinical Practice

- Have you considered alternative paths in vet med? What appeals to you?

Chapter 37: The Unsung Heroes of Veterinary Medicine

- Who are the unsung heroes in your clinic or community?

Chapter 38: Responding to the Veterinary Workforce Crisis

- What are practical solutions that could address staffing challenges?

Chapter 39: Paving a Path to Self-Care and Self-Compassion

- What does meaningful self-care look like for you?

Chapter 40: Reshaping Veterinary Culture to Value Team Wellbeing

- What culture shifts would you love to see in the profession?

Final Reflection Questions

- What parts of the book resonated most deeply with you?
- Has this changed the way you view your role in the profession?
- What is one action you plan to take based on what you've read?

