

Victory Unleashed

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A VETERINARIAN'S TALE OF THRIVING IN A
PROFESSION MARKED WITH DEPRESSION

Dr. Heidi Pulito DVM

*To my husband, Tony. Your favor, love, support, and wisdom
with this project is the biggest blessing. I love you!*

Victory Unleashed: A Veterinarian's Tale of Thriving in a Profession Marked with Depression
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To you! For picking up my book and reading it! I hope this leaves you in victory and more in love with your career choice!

Much Love,
Heidi

Introduction

I am one of you. I am a wearer of a stained white coat, master of the fat cat cystocentesis, quality of life discussing fierce veterinarian. By no inherent skill of my own, I have learned to switch from crying and handing out Kleenexes to making high-pitched puppy coos and cuddles and handing out free heartworm preventative samples. I have felt the extreme joys of saving a pet's life to the complete despair of having lost another one. I am so thankful they cannot, but if the walls in my office could talk, they would tell the story of a veterinarian who so desperately loves people and animals yet struggles with the idea of being in this profession lifelong.

Why do I struggle with recommending this profession to young enthusiastic students? What has happened to the young me that jumped up and down when I received my acceptance letter to veterinary school? Maybe in order to find the answer to these questions, I should start at the beginning.

Growing up in a small town in rural Illinois, I learned to create my own fun and excitement. This meant seeking out the poor and suffering in my community...the animals that is! I quickly took in any injured bird, cat, squirrel, or rabbit, and the question, "Can I keep him?" was always on my lips. As a result of a drama filled tumultuous first grade friendship, I quickly felt more connected to animals than humans. Seeking out a career path in veterinary medicine came natural to me as it does to many other veterinarians.

After high school, I quickly accepted a job as a kennel technician at my local veterinary clinic. As many will tell you, if you wish to be a veterinarian, you must first volunteer or work in a vet clinic to get a sense of what the profession is really like. Well, I cleaned poop, wrestled with unruly dogs, and scrubbed kennel floors. And OH the laundry! I have never been as overly let down as I was when I rolled out that hundredth towel and heard the loud thud of fecal material dropping to the bottom of the laundry basket. Former kennel techs, I know you feel my pain! This was not exactly the experience I had hoped to gain. However, I would not trade those days for anything. I learned to appreciate the hard work of the kennel staff and acquired much-needed animal handling skills. After a couple years, I approached my boss with a request to move up in the ranks. She awarded me the title of veterinary technician, a twenty five cent raise, and I began to work hand in hand with the veterinarians. I was able to learn how to draw blood, place intravenous catheters, intubate patients, and see what ear mites look like under the microscope. I shouted with excitement the first time I spotted the tiny little fecal protozoa, giardia. I was living the dream and next stop was veterinary school.

I remember sitting in my college dorm when my mom called my cell phone, "Heidi, you got a letter from the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine! Do you want me to open it?" This was it...my whole life path lay in this one letter. You see, I had made a deal with God that either He allow me to get into vet school, or I would enter the peace corp. A lot was weighing in this tiny 2-ounce envelope. Quickly, I rounded up two of my best friends and we made the 45-minute drive to my parents' house. I gazed at the letter like it was a precious jewel, one that I was not sure would have a blessing or a curse attached to it. Tearing it open, my eyes scanned to the first word, "Congratulations!" A bright smile flashed upon my face as I started jumping up and down. My mom and dad swept me up in hugs and tears. I was now enrolled into the coveted University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine Class of 2011.

Looking back at that moment, a very-changed me interprets that experience differently. Thoughts of "you have no idea what you are getting into" and "are you really sure you want to work that hard and get paid so little when just a four year degree will pay you more?" pop into my head. As a mere five year veteran of veterinary medicine, I have learned that even after doing everything I was told to do — work at a practice before pursuing the career, volunteer at other practices to make sure you want to

do this, research jobs in the veterinary field that may fit you — that none of these measures truly could have prepared me for what being a veterinarian is really like. Thoughts of putting me in a locked room with only a screwdriver and tape and giving me ten minutes to get out or else I get a "board licensing complaint" flash into my mind as being more of a telltale method.

Even though our profession is mighty tough, my goal for this book is to provide you with hope that you do not necessarily need to leave the profession to find satisfaction and balance in what you do for a living. In the first half of this book, I outline many of the challenges I have faced that may also resonate with you. You may feel comforted by being able to relate or you may feel a little sad or overwhelmed by all the challenges that we face. But do not lose heart, victory is coming if you keep reading! I believe the veterinary profession is an honorable and fantastic profession, but we as veterinarians could use a little care ourselves! I want you to finish this book with all the tools necessary to thrive and not merely survive being a veterinarian. *Spoiler alert!* You will find among these pages many quotes from the Bible and Christian concepts. I believe that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior and without Him, I would have left this career long ago. He has guided me through all the trials and rejoiced with me in all the victories of vet med. All wisdom in this book is His. But do not lose heart if you are not a Christian; you are so welcome here on these pages with me! You will still be able to benefit from the ideas and tips in this book. If you are a Christian, then you will find your life changed after reading this book by allowing Jesus to do what only He can do in your career and in your heart.