

# 10 Tools To Tackle Burnout And Achieve Balance

Burnout is common among veterinary professionals with some studies revealing burnout symptoms in more than half of those surveyed. While burnout can feel debilitating and seem never-ending, there are tools and strategies that can help with recovery and prevention. Here are 10 practical ways to help mitigate burnout and bring your life back into balance.

**1. Know the Causes and Signs:** Burnout is a complex syndrome with many different underlying causes. Feeling overwhelmed by the workload, not having control over work, experiencing work-life conflict, feeling unappreciated or unsupported, and enduring workplace toxicity can all lead to burnout. The most common signs and symptoms of burnout among veterinary professionals are feeling overwhelmed and unable to face the demands of the job, developing a cynical detachment from patients and clients, and feeling ineffective at work or no longer able to contribute to work in a meaningful way.

**2. Start with Sleep:** Getting the recommended 7-9 hours of daily sleep that most adults require is crucial for maintaining mental health and wellbeing. Individuals who are sleep deprived will inevitably feel more irritable, anxious, and depleted. Set an alarm for 1 hour before bedtime, then turn screens off, and engage in relaxing and non-stimulating activities (e.g., read a book, tidy the kitchen, stretch). Then 30 minutes before bedtime, perform the same bedtime routine that you would every night to cue your body that it's time for sleep. For more pointers, read ["Ten Tips for Improving Your Sleep Hygiene"](#).

**3. Create Healthy Habits:** Habits are the things we do every day without having to make the decision or engage willpower. Just like brushing teeth and putting on a seatbelt, health-promoting activities that can be developed into habits will happen seamlessly and reduce signs of burnout. Try stacking new habits on top of old ones; for example, do a 5-minute meditation as soon as you wake up or a 10-minute workout while the coffee is brewing. Or schedule the activity into your calendar until it becomes something you inherently do every day. For other suggestions, read [“Why You Should Form Habits Instead of Resolutions”](#).

**4. Make Time for Mindfulness:** Mindfulness means being in the present moment, aware of your mind and your body; rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future, or going through your day on autopilot. The benefits of mindfulness are endless and include improved mental health, lower blood pressure, better stress management, and heightened awareness and focus. Most importantly, mindfulness creates a buffer between triggering events and habitual reactions, by allowing you to take note of your thoughts and feelings and then choose more adaptive responses. For more information, read [“How To Practice Veterinary Medicine Mindfully”](#).

**5. Maintain Healthy Boundaries:** Unhealthy boundaries are what most often lead to stress, exhaustion, and overwhelm. These include not asking for what you need, extending yourself beyond your limits, taking on the problems of others, or not clarifying how you expect to be treated. Healthy boundaries are what separate our lives and problems from those of others, as well as what prevent us from working or overcommitting to the point of burnout. In order to set boundaries, you must first recognize where they are unhealthy or non-existent. Resentment, frustration, depletion, or feeling taken advantage of are usually red flags that an unhealthy boundary needs fixing. For what to do in response, read [“Five Tips for Building Better Boundaries”](#).

**6. Just Say No:** As often or as much as we'd like to do it all, reality dictates otherwise. Every time we say yes to something, we are inevitably saying no to something else. Too often this means saying yes to an extra work shift or after-hours obligation, thereby saying no to time for family, friends, and self-care. Because the latter activities are necessary for preventing burnout, we must find ways to comfortably and firmly turn down requests for our time. The more you do this, the easier it will become. For further details, read ["How to Say No to Others \(So You Can Say Yes to Yourself\)"](#).

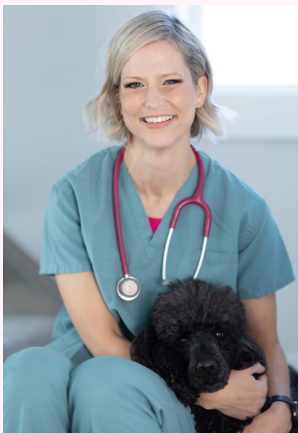
**7. Strategize Self-Care:** Contrary to what some social media influencers might share, self-care is not impromptu lattes and manicures. Self-care is a planned activity that is performed proactively to boost wellbeing, knowing that veterinary work is demanding and predisposes to burnout. Self-care therefore enhances resilience reserves, so that you can show up to work rested and ready to care for others. Experts argue that self-care is morally necessary for care providers to continue to care for others without causing harm. To understand this better, read ["Are You Using Coping Strategies as Self-Care?"](#).

**8. Separate Work and Home Life:** Research investigating human care providers demonstrates the crucial need for work-life separation to prevent burnout. When work seeps into home life in the form of completing files, answering emails, phoning clients, or ruminating about work, it takes away from opportunities to disconnect and engage in self-care. It is the responsibility of care providers to ensure that they are making an intention to let go of work and nurture other aspects of their life while not physically at work. For more specifics, read ["Debriefing is the Most Important Part of a Veterinary Shift"](#).

**9. Aim for Good Enough:** Perfectionism among veterinary care providers can predispose to anxiety, depression, or burnout. While having high standards and trying to avoid mistakes is important when practicing veterinary medicine, having unrealistic standards and regarding mistakes as career-ending will only lead to distress and overwhelm. Perfectionism can be difficult to manage and often requires advice and support from a mental health professional. Reading Brene Brown's book *The Gifts of Imperfection* can also be a good starting place. For additional information, read "[It's Veterinary Practice, Not Perfection!](#)".

**10. Cultivate Self-Compassion:** Knowing that burnout is common and that you are not alone in experiencing it can help to cultivate a sense of compassion for yourself. Too often we regard ourselves negatively or use harsh self-talk to "get over" or "snap out of" difficult situations. Burnout is not simple nor easily recovered from, but it can be helped if you practice self-compassion. Begin by speaking to yourself as you would a close friend who was going through a very difficult time. For an in-depth explanation, visit <https://self-compassion.org/> for the wisdom and research of Dr. Kristin Neff.

For a life-changing deep-dive into integrating these tools into your life, in order to stave off burnout and bring you back into balance, check out the 8-week online program [\*\*From Burnout to Balance: Building Thriving Veterinary Professionals\*\*](#).



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