

Being **Your** Best

A Guide to Taking Care of **Yourself** and **Others**



Banfield
PET HOSPITAL

“Sometimes asking for **help**
is the **bravest** move you can make.

You don’t have to go it alone.”

- Unknown

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255

En Español

1-888-628-9454

For Deaf + Hearing Impaired

1-800-799-4889

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The Five Dimensions of Health & Wellbeing



having good health and energy



taking time to renew and refresh



effectively managing your economic life



feeling fulfilled by what you do at work every day



developing a sense of engagement where you live and strong relationships in your life

How do the Five Dimensions come to life for you? Capture your thoughts in the space below.











Our Suicide Prevention Approach: ASK



To make A BETTER WORLD FOR PETS, we must first make a better world for the people who care for them. We believe that compassionate care for pets starts with healthy, energized veterinary professionals. That's why we're dedicated to building a culture of health and wellbeing to ensure we can all be at our best.

Our suicide prevention approach, ASK, is training specifically developed for the veterinary profession. It helps teach our associates how to support someone in emotional distress or when having thoughts of suicide.

For more information about each step of ASK, continue reading on the next page.



Assess the Situation

- When you recognize signs and symptoms that someone may be in emotional distress or having suicidal thoughts, the first step is to assess the situation.
- While assessing, use open-ended questions or statements to clarify what you heard or observed.
- Continue to assess until you feel you understand what the individual's statement or behavior meant.



Support the Person

- The second step is to provide support emotionally and physically.
- When someone is having a mental health crisis and thinking about suicide, they may feel alone and scared. Stay with them until they have been connected to a professional to ensure they are safe physically.
- You can provide emotional support by expressing empathy and using active listening skills.



Know the Resources

- The third step is knowing the resources available that provide immediate professional support for a person in distress.

Assessing the Situation

Properly assessing the situation involves gathering information during the course of a conversation. If we do not ask effective questions, we can end up making recommendations and decisions based on assumptions, incorrect, or limited information.

By asking meaningful questions, you will be able to obtain the information necessary to understand what the individual's statements or behaviors meant. Meaningful questions are both open- and closed-ended. Using both open- and closed-ended questions helps you gather general information and clarify what you heard or observed.

Open-Ended Questions

Start with open-ended questions. These questions encourage people to talk about what's important to them. They help generate background information, opinions, perspectives, and concerns because they provide the most freedom to answer. Open-ended questions tend to begin with:

Tell me about – Describe – What – Why – How

- Tell me what you meant when you said...
- Describe what has been happening...
- What happened today?

Closed-Ended Questions

Closed-ended questions are useful when you want to focus on specifics, clarify a point, verify information or summarize. Closed-ended questions may ask for a choice or may be answered by a single word or phrase, such as: yes, no, a date, name, time or number. Closed-ended questions tend to begin with:

Are – Can – Did – Do – Have – Will – Would

- Have you had these feelings before?
- Will you let me call someone?
- Would you consider _____?

Assessing the Situation

Reflection

Respond to the following questions:

What were your key takeaways from this section?

How can you continue practicing these skills?

Supporting the Person

Understanding comes from truly listening not just with our ears, but with our eyes, our hearts, and our minds. It's about trying to understand another person's perspective, even if it's not one we share. You can provide emotional support by expressing empathy and using active listening skills.

Active Listening

Active listening goes beyond simply telling people that you hear them. It shows them that you understand what they are saying. It shows that you are listening not only for the words, but also for the meaning behind the words.

When you actively listen, you demonstrate that you care enough to understand their point of view. It also helps you build relationships, which leads to you being able to better support both emotionally and physically. As a result, people feel better about you and stressful situations can become less difficult.

Active Listening Techniques

You can encourage the other person to continue speaking by demonstrating that you are listening. Below are some of the ways we can actively demonstrate that we are listening:

Body Language	Tone of Voice	Words
Eye contact	Calming	Please go on...
Paraphrase	Encouraging	I see
Nodding	Slow pace	Yes
Leaning in	Low volume	Tell me more...

Supporting the Person

Active Listening: What Gets in the Way?

- Popping corn: You are so preoccupied that your thoughts jump around in your mind like popping corn kernels.
- That reminds me: You come in with a story of your own, instead of maintaining focus on the other person.
- Preparing your case: You are mentally preparing what you want to say and do, instead of listening with an open mind.

Active Listening: What else gets in the way?

Active Listening: How will you overcome obstacles?

Supporting the Person

Reflection

Respond to the following questions:

What were your key takeaways from this section?

How can you continue practicing these skills?

Supporting the Person

Empathy

Empathy is not about whether you agree or disagree with what someone is saying or their feelings, but rather, that you recognize how they are feeling. When someone is going through a time of high emotional stress it is important that they feel heard and not judged. Empathetic statements let the person know you understand their perspective, recognize the emotion they are feeling, and then communicate that emotion back to them.

Sample Empathy Statement: “It sounds like you are really hurting – I’m sorry you are going through that and I am here to support you.”

Qualities of Empathy

- Take their perspective
- Recognize the emotion in others
- Communicate their emotion
- Stay out of judgement

“**Empathy** is... communicating
that incredibly healing message of,
‘You’re not alone.’”

-Brené Brown

Supporting the Person

Empathy Challenges

Taking the perspective of others

- Cognitive empathy is recognizing that you are not feeling the same emotion of another, and need to communicate empathetically.
- You can disagree with someone and still understand what they may be feeling and why. This is especially important when someone is having a strong emotion and is asking you to do something that you can't do.
- Sometimes just listening without judgment is enough to convey cognitive empathy. Communicate to the person in an authentic way that you understand what they are experiencing.

Staying out of judgment

- What if you think the other person is wrong? You have never been in that situation or it's not how you think you would have responded? None of that diminishes the fact that we still need to recognize their perspective as their truth.
- So how do we keep ourselves from telling our own story and start to explore their story and their perspective? Try assuming positive intent. Focus more on what they may be thinking or feeling to help remove judgment.

Recognizing the emotion in others

- The most common barrier to showing empathy is not paying attention. Mirror neurons kick in strongest when we observe a person's emotions. We see facial and eye expressions, body position, and gestures. If we're busy multitasking or paying attention to our own thoughts, we can miss important cues that will help us empathize.

Supporting the Person

Reflection

Respond to the following questions:

What were your key takeaways from this section?

How can you continue practicing these skills?

Taking Care of Yourself

Your Introduction to a Self-Care Plan

Self-care refers to activities and practices we engage in on a regular basis to maintain and enhance our short- and long-term overall health and wellbeing. Self-care is an essential veterinary professional survival skill. To create an effective self-care plan, consider the dimensions within the framework below. Successful plans are customized and evolve with your needs.

The following pages include several categories within each dimension. These categories contain activities that you can use to customize your plan.

Health & Wellbeing Self-Care Framework



Taking Care of Yourself: Healthy Body

Review the suggested activities in each category. Note how each category may come to life for you in support of your self-care plan.

Exercise Daily

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Daily exercise reduces stress■ Find what fits for you | |
|--|--|

Eat Well

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Eat regularly throughout the day■ Stay hydrated | |
|--|--|

Get Enough Sleep

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Seven to nine hours per night■ Practice sleep hygiene | |
|--|--|

Taking Care of Yourself: Healthy Mind

Review the suggested activities in each category. Note how each category may come to life for you in support of your self-care plan.

Avoid 'Should' Think and Feel

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- Notice your thoughts and feelings
- Accept your thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad

Notice Positive Moments

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- Notice positive moments in your day
- Write down one thing each day or week that brought you joy

Taking Care of Yourself: Healthy Mind

Review the suggested activities in each category. Note how each category may come to life for you in support of your self-care plan.

Micro Breaks

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Take three deep breaths when conflicts or difficult situations occur to help process■ Create space throughout the day to think clearly about what to do next | |
|---|--|

Recharge

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Start small: find activities you enjoy and work them into your life■ Set time for yourself, this is key to a self-care plan | |
|--|--|

Taking Care of Yourself: Healthy Community

Review the suggested activities in each category. Note how each category may come to life for you in support of your self-care plan.

Ask for Help

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Talk about your experiences with others■ Ask for help and be willing to accept help - both are important life skills | |
|---|--|

Stay in Touch

Suggested Activities	Notes
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- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Have a quick connection after work■ Phone conversation while walking your dog | |
|--|--|

Self-Care Plan Insights and Commitment

Using your notes from the self-care framework, capture your responses below.

My Key Insights Are...

My Commitment to Make a Change Tomorrow is...

ASK Resources

911

If someone is experiencing a physical or mental health emergency, call 911. First responders are trained to assist in these situations.

Associate Assistance Program

Search Fetch for 'Associate Assistance Program' for more information.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

24/7, free confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you, your loved ones, and clients.

Call 1-800-273-8255

The Trevor Project

24/7 crisis and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) people.

Call 1-866-488-7386 or Text "START" to 678678

Veterans' Crisis Line

Veterans and their loved ones.

Call 1-800 273-8255 & press 1 or Text 838255

Self-Care Resources

Books

Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others (2009) by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

Compassion Fatigue in the Animal Related Community (2006) by Charles Figley and Robert Roop

Websites

CompassionFatigue.org

Contains resources for managing compassion fatigue

Self-compassion.org

Addresses the skills needed to develop compassion for oneself

Self Care Apps

Shine: Calm Anxiety & Stress | Daily motivational texts

SAM | Self-help anxiety management

Happify | Evidence based activities and games to reduce stress and negative emotions

Take Time for Your Health & Wellbeing

