



rarebreed
VETERINARY PARTNERS

NOVEMBER 17, 2020

Hi Rarebreed Family,

I wanted to take a few minutes to introduce myself and to connect during this challenging (read, at times impossibly challenging) time. My name is Ginny Gill and I'm an oncologist at Maine Veterinary Medical Center (MVMC). I live in Cape Elizabeth, Maine with my partner Jason, our daughter, Cassidy and the usual zoo that often comes along with being a veterinarian (two dogs, two cats, two chickens and three guppies). I was also recently named Rarebreed's Director of Wellness & Sustainability and that's why I'm reaching out today.

As we enter the 8th (!!) month of the COVID-19 pandemic it is at times difficult to imagine that our lives will ever return to the mask-free normality we knew in January 2020. Cases are rising almost universally while we simultaneously brace ourselves for the winter. I think most of us are pretty darn tired and many of us may be pretty darn sad. We as veterinary professionals remain on the frontline of essential workers with many of our clinics actually seeing [MORE cases](#) than we did at this same time last year.

To open the conversation about the times we are navigating, I'd like to share a few thoughts on wellness and wellbeing knowing that you all have A LOT on your plates. I'm not going to try to cover it all in one letter! Remember that thing I said about being pretty darn tired? I don't mean that you're not getting enough sleep...though that could be true too. I mean this pandemic has been going on for a long time and it's exhausting. It's okay to let yourself really feel that tired. Resist the urge to say, "Well so and so has it so much worse. At least I have a job, at least I'm not sick, at least I can put food on my table." Playing down your own struggles is called comparative suffering. It is when one feels the need to see one person's suffering in the light of other people's suffering and it's not particularly helpful. It can lead to burnout and a desire to withdraw from connecting with others. It can make you feel like your own suffering is insignificant. Thankfully empathy and gratitude, which are both antidotes to comparative suffering, are infinite. We can feel sadness at the plight of others while at the same time feel frustrated that we are having a tough time too. It doesn't mean you have to feel sad ALL THE TIME. It means we can empathize with others, i.e. understand the emotional difficulty of someone's situation, and be kind to ourselves in validating that we're struggling too. There's enough empathy to go around for all! Similarly, we can feel gratitude for what we have while also acknowledging that we all have struggles. Brene Brown has a great [podcast on comparative suffering](#) if you'd like to hear more. It's from the beginning of the pandemic but it still rings true.

I urge you all to sneak in moments of self-care. Take a nap, eat healthy meals, take time away from social media, tune in to what nourishes you and do that...even if it's only for a few moments. I'm going to leave you with a link to a [list of resources](#) compiled by Texas A&M's veterinary school. It's a bit overwhelming at first glance. But I like it because it is SO exhaustive. There's something for everyone. If you can, make time over the next week to read one of the articles or listen to one of the podcasts. Believe it or not, that's self-care too! I'd love to keep writing letters to you! Please let me know if there are topics you would enjoy hearing about or topics that would be especially helpful. We're in this together and in community we can gain resilience to navigate this time together.



**Be well,
Ginny**