



**OCTOBER 1, 2021**

**Hello Rarebreed Family,**

“Maine Veterinary Medical Center is a healing environment. We pledge to provide care in a professional and respectful setting. There is zero tolerance for all forms of aggression. This includes physical assault, verbal harassment, abusive/offensive language, threats.”

This sign bedecks each of the entrances to our hospital and is displayed on our website. A quick Google search tells of the 40-60% growth in demand for veterinary services since the pandemic began. One staggering statistic from American Pet Products Association shares that 12.6 million households added pets to their family since March 2020. Woah!

With this dramatic uptick in demand, combined with the upheaval from the COVID pandemic, has come a backlog of wellness visits, sometimes long wait times, especially in ER, new appointment procedures, staffing shortages, appointments booked out weeks in advance and an increase in intense emotions from clients. Unfortunately, most of us have probably been on the receiving end of a client's anger or frustration over the past 18 months.

How do we, as veterinary professionals, cope with the angry, upset, sad clients that come our way?

**A few thoughts:**

From the book “The Four Agreements” comes the advice — Don't take things personally and don't make assumptions. I try to remember these sage words when I find myself in the line of someone's anger or upset. The other person's emotions may be tied to grief, life experiences, fear and sadness around the unknown of what is happening with their beloved pet. And while these things do not excuse them for being unkind (if that's the case), it does remind me that they are reacting to their own emotions and not ME personally.

Remember all the good eggs out there when you encounter one of the less than kind clients. Last week I received a card that reads, “People like you add little touches of color and warmth to life.” I hung it in my exam room so it can be a touchstone for more difficult times. I try to really take in each kind email or kind exchange I have with clients expressing to them the gratitude I have for them sharing their kindness.

Consider instituting a “Going Home Checklist.” This can be posted by the time clock, at the employee exit, in break areas, or kept anywhere it will catch your eye before

heading home for the day. It can help with the transition from work to home reminding us to leave the tough parts of the day behind. It asks:

- What was something difficult you encountered today? Acknowledge it and let it go.
- What are two or three things that went well today? Congrats!
- How is the rest of your team? Does anybody need a check-in before you leave?
- How are you? Do you have the avenues for support what you need?

Encourage your leadership to adopt a Zero Tolerance policy. Or if you are in leadership, lead the way by developing a Zero Tolerance policy.

Engage in resiliency training — you can find lots of resources online or join one of our Let's Talk: Resiliency Workshop groups.

Find self-care outlets away from work. For me, that meant going for a run in the rain this morning. For those that hate running (or the rain!), it can mean moving your body in other ways, getting outside, connecting with loved ones, watching a specific show or playing a game you love, reading a book...really anything that helps you nourish yourself and not focus on work.

Talk to someone — if you find that you are struggling, reach out! [NOMV.org](https://www.nomv.org) and the Veterinary Mental Health Initiative <https://www.shanti.org/programs-services/veterinary-mental-health-initiative/> are two great resources. Our Employee Assistance Programs also provide support. If you are not sure how to ask for help or who to turn to, please reach out to me, [vgill@rarebreedvet.com](mailto:vgill@rarebreedvet.com).

Remember that you are doing incredible work, each and every one of you. I am humbled, honored and proud to be on this team with you. Love, respect and fun will take us a long way.

**In Wellness,  
Ginny**