

**0:00:18.2 Katie Berlin:** Thank you guys for joining. It's so fun. We are at Connexity and we're squished into this tiny corner with two microphones, and there's a lot of togetherness happening over here. But I'm just really excited to have all five of us together in one room. I've been waiting to see the three of you together in one room now for a while, because I felt like it was just gonna be so magical, I couldn't stand it. And then when you were like, "Guess what, we're having dinner with Michael Shirley." I was like, "Well, I don't know him but he sounds magical too." So...

[laughter]

**0:00:52.7 Josh Vaisman:** He is magical.

**0:00:52.8 Alyssa Mages:** He is.

**0:00:53.6 Katie Berlin:** Yeah, I've heard magical things.

**0:00:54.1 Josh Vaisman:** A unicorn really.

**0:00:55.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. So Michael Shirley, Josh Vaisman, Alyssa Mages and Phil Richmond, thank you so much for coming by.

**0:01:04.0 Michael Shirley:** Thank you, Dr. Katie Berlin for having us.

**0:01:06.3 Katie Berlin:** Yes. Wow, you're welcome.

**0:01:07.6 Alyssa Mages:** That's very formal.

**0:01:09.1 Michael Shirley:** That was very formal.

**0:01:11.4 Katie Berlin:** Yes, it was very formal. A lot of voices and not everyone is gonna be watching the video, is have you guys introduce yourselves so that they know whose voice is who's? Because people listening are gonna be like, "This is a whole bunch of people and I don't know who they are." They might have Alyssa, but that's it.

**0:01:26.2 Alyssa Mages:** No. Oh my gosh. No. No.

**0:01:27.6 Katie Berlin:** Well, I just mean because you sound really different from them.

**0:01:31.6 Alyssa Mages:** Oh yes.

**0:01:32.9 Katie Berlin:** But also you're a big deal, but yeah.

**0:01:33.7 Alyssa Mages:** It's the hair.

**0:01:34.6 Katie Berlin:** So, would you mind because I'd love to have you guys introduce yourself.

**0:01:37.7 Michael Shirley:** Well, my name's Michael Shirley. My wife is Dr. Amy Shirley, and we own a small animal hospital in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, called Family Pet Health. And some people might know me, I'm also the moderator/creator of the Veterinary Leadership Book Club,

which is on Facebook. So everybody should join that. You can learn a lot about... I don't have any original thoughts. I just regurgitate a lot of things I've read.

[laughter]

**0:02:00.3 Alyssa Mages:** There's nothing new under the sun.

**0:02:01.3 Michael Shirley:** That's right. That's right. But we package it up in a really nice way that you can even go through those books with your team, with your veterinary team, and makes big difference. A lot of the things... I'm waiting for Josh's book to come out.

**0:02:13.9 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:02:14.4 Michael Shirley:** As soon as it comes out, as long as you get it on audio...

**0:02:17.0 Josh Vaisman:** There's gonna be audio.

**0:02:17.5 Michael Shirley:** Okay, good. So, narrated by you, I hope?

**0:02:21.2 Josh Vaisman:** Yes.

**0:02:21.6 Katie Berlin:** Oh, yes.

**0:02:22.6 Michael Shirley:** So as soon as that hits, that'll be the next book in the book club.

**0:02:23.6 Katie Berlin:** Who needs guided meditations when you have Josh reading.

[laughter]

**0:02:27.0 Josh Vaisman:** Right. So that's... So years ago I managed a bowling alley and I would always do the announcements for leagues, and routinely people would come up to the desk and say, "You ever thought of being on a radio? You've got such a great voice," and I'd always say...

**0:02:38.8 Katie Berlin:** It is a good voice.

**0:02:39.5 Josh Vaisman:** Do I not look good enough for TV?

[laughter]

**0:02:42.9 Phil Richmond:** A voice for radio.

**0:02:48.3 Josh Vaisman:** Face for radio. My name's Josh Vaisman. I am with Flourish Veterinary Consulting. I am inspired by this crazy idea that maybe since we spend so much damn time at work, it shouldn't just be something we survive, maybe it should actually be something that contributes to a life well lived. So, I'm on a mission now to take what some of the science tells us might actually make that possible, and help veterinary organizations embed those practices into their organizations and teams so that people can actually thrive at work.

**0:03:18.6 Alyssa Mages:** I have to follow that?

**0:03:19.6 Josh Vaisman:** I'm also the fan club president of the... Or the president of the Alyssa Mages fan club.

[laughter]

**0:03:24.8 Katie Berlin:** And you raise bees.

**0:03:27.1 Josh Vaisman:** And I raise bees.

**0:03:29.4 Alyssa Mages:** I love bees, and the honey is delicious.

**0:03:30.5 Josh Vaisman:** It is good.

**0:03:31.0 Alyssa Mages:** It's really good. So, Alyssa Mages. I am a CVT. I am one of the co-founders of Empowering Veterinary Teams, and really what we're looking to do is transform veterinary team growth and development, focusing on the creation of training programs, starting with orientation and onboarding through growth and development, as well as focusing on those continuing educational opportunities, both live and in practice, as well as webinars and coming to these events and hanging out, and bumping elbows with some of these amazing humans. So really just making sure that we can create a world where we inspire, instruct and impact together.

**0:04:06.0 Phil Richmond:** And I'm Phil Richmond and I'm sitting next to Alyssa.

[laughter]

**0:04:12.3 Alyssa Mages:** God. I do not deserve any of this. This is too much.

**0:04:15.6 Katie Berlin:** We are not worthy.

**0:04:16.8 Alyssa Mages:** I am bright red. Stop it, stop it, stop it.

**0:04:22.5 Phil Richmond:** That's not good enough?

**0:04:23.8 Alyssa Mages:** No. You are way bigger than I just... Come on.

**0:04:28.0 Katie Berlin:** Just don't list the letters. There's too many letters.

**0:04:29.9 Alyssa Mages:** There's a lot of letters.

**0:04:32.8 Phil Richmond:** It's mildly extra. So I am Phil. I'm the chief medical and wellbeing officer for Veterinary United.

**0:04:39.5 Alyssa Mages:** Woo!

**0:04:40.3 Phil Richmond:** Yeah. Woo, woo. And I'm founder and CEO of Flourishing Phoenix Veterinary Consultants, and the chief chair of the Florida Veterinary Medical Association

Wellbeing Committee. I get to do a lot of cool stuff with cool people sitting here.

**0:04:54.0 Alyssa Mages:** Making a big difference in that...

**0:04:57.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah, yeah. And Phil is the person I call when I need somebody to be my sounding board. And usually he doesn't even have to say that much. He like asks me a couple of well-timed questions and then I know what I need to do. He never tells me what I need to do. He asks me the right questions and then I know what I need to do. 'Cause I probably knew before I called him, but I didn't know that I knew. And that's happened so many times since we met. And there's something that all of you have in common. I just met you, Michael, but I can... There's a certain energy that you feel from somebody, where, you know when you're talking to them and you're in a conversation and they make you feel like you are the only person in the world that matters to them at that moment. And that is common to all of you. It's very hard in a world where everybody's talking and nobody's listening, to meet so many people who are so good at just zeroing in and being there with you in a conversation. It's a very rare gift, and you guys all have it. And I just wanna say thank you for that.

**0:05:57.6 Alyssa Mages:** Well, thank you for being you and having us here and letting us be...

**0:06:03.7 Katie Berlin:** It's a pleasure.

**0:06:04.7 Alyssa Mages:** Human beings.

**0:06:07.2 Katie Berlin:** I, with all of you here, now I can tell you're all gonna be afraid to speak because you don't wanna speak over each other. [laughter] So, but don't be afraid to talk. I really want to hear what you guys think about this, because the theme of this conference is Create A Better World, and I can't think of better people to talk about what that better world might look like, because I feel like everything I see from the four of you is already aimed at that mission. I mean, I feel like you get up in the morning and you're like, "I'm gonna create a better world today." There's like little singing birdies and stuff. Like, does that happen?

**0:06:40.8 Michael Shirley:** Like the cartoons, remember? Yeah, exactly, 100%.

**0:06:42.1 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. They fly in through the window and perch on your shoulder and make you sing to them while you're brushing your teeth.

**0:06:47.3 Josh Vaisman:** Sometimes it's the birds because I'm Wile E Coyote and I run into something unintentionally, but...

**0:06:51.6 Alyssa Mages:** Yes. I have the stars for the same reason.

[laughter]

**0:06:55.3 Katie Berlin:** There's no anvils involved.

[laughter]

**0:06:57.5 Katie Berlin:** No, it's self-inflicted.

**0:07:00.1 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah.

**0:07:00.6 Josh Vaisman:** 100%

**0:07:01.1 Katie Berlin:** But seriously, that's how I think of you because I just see such amazing things happening and no matter what, if they're amazing things and they're happening, I look and somehow one of you is involved [laughter]

**0:07:14.0 Michael Shirley:** So my wife and I own a small animal hospital in Tennessee. And we require everyone that before they can interview at our hospital, they have to read a bus... A book called "The Energy Bus" by John Gordon. And it's 10 rules for infusing positivity into your life and the way that you frame it. And if people don't read the book, they don't get to come in for an interview. But the rule number 1, is that you are the driver of your own bus. And that I'm excited to be beside these folks because they're my favorite speakers in VetMed and I'm naturally drawn to the message that they have about in just positivity and workplace culture and just how you take care of people. And then those people can take care of your clients and your patients. And that's worked really well for us for we're almost five years in, and that has not failed. So I would encourage everybody to read that book, but that's when you wake up every morning, you have to realize I'm in charge of where I'm going today. I can't be in charge of what happens to me, but I can be in charge of my response to those things.

**0:08:23.8 Alyssa Mages:** And I love that, that you just said that too. And that's a really important differential, how you respond versus how you react. I mean, think about back to high school chemistry. Ugh. But I mean, they're volatile, there's heat.

**0:08:37.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:08:37.3 Alyssa Mages:** And it's instantaneous versus if you actually take the time and the thought, then you have a response and it takes a lot of work to learn how to do that. It's definitely not. I don't think for any of us, we had that instantaneous of this is how I'm gonna do this and it's gonna be easy. Yeah. It's work, but it's such a work.

**0:08:56.8 Katie Berlin:** I know I'll just be nicer.

**0:08:58.2 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah. Just smile more. It will make it better.

**0:09:01.1 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. Not good vibes only. That's not...

**0:09:05.1 Josh Vaisman:** Thank you.

[laughter]

**0:09:05.6 Alyssa Mages:** I hate it.

**0:09:08.9 Katie Berlin:** None of you are gonna be wearing a shirt that says good vibes only.

**0:09:11.1 S?:** No, no.

**0:09:12.9 Alyssa Mages:** It's a really good learning moment, like a teachable moment, my mom got that for my daughter when she was little. And I was like, so this isn't, we're not doing this. And she's like, "Well, why?" And so we had that conversation. It's like, oh, I just taught my mom something.

**0:09:27.1 Katie Berlin:** Whoa. [laughter]

**0:09:28.7 Alyssa Mages:** But it's really, and then in turn, you learn from the other younger generation. So it's something to consider too, is that we're always learning. Don't stop because life's not gonna stop teaching you, with the stars and bonking and all of that stuff. But all joking aside, it's something that you have to choose your response and be thoughtful about your intentions.

**0:09:51.3 S?:** Yeah.

**0:09:52.8 Katie Berlin:** But I know Phil and I have had conversations where we've talked about how our ability to respond and not react definitely, gets dampened by really difficult situations that go on and on. It's like the more close to burnout you're getting or the more the weight just gets piled on, the more that reflex of just like, I'm just gonna react. I don't care. This is just gonna come out of my mouth. It just gets to be like a hair trigger. And that is always a sign for me that things... Something needs to shift.

**0:10:26.6 Alyssa Mages:** Absolutely.

**0:10:27.5 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. So what about the idea that there are a lot of problems in VetMed at the organizational level, the institutional level, systemically that we need to be addressing too. And so in some cases it seems like it's very difficult to put yourself in the place where you can respond and not react. And it's easy to get resentful about that stuff. And what I love about listening to all of you is that you never seem to be nurturing that resentment. You admit that it's there, but you're not feeding it, but it's a delicate balance. So do you have a specific resource that you go to or words of wisdom that you remember when you're trying to tread that line between what needs to change systemically and how we respond to situations that we may not be able to control?

**0:11:21.0 Michael Shirley:** I would say for me personally, it's vision and it's understanding who you want to be. And so our vision is written out and we talk about it at every time, we talk about it every morning when our team gets together and remind our team of our team vision. And then whatever happens to you or whatever you're experiencing before you react, if you can check yourself to say, how would someone that is in it, wherever that goal is, how would a person that's productively heading towards that goal, how would they respond? And it's not to say that you can't live in some negativity, like not live in negativity, you can't experience... You can experience negativity, there are some things that really make me angry at our office, but I know that it's going to damage all the hard work that we've done for psychological safety in our office.

**0:12:14.1 Michael Shirley:** If I throw the door open and start yelling and screaming at people, 'cause that is opposite of what our vision is. And so I think as I look at these other panelists here, they each have a vision for what they want VetMed to look like. And I'm with it. I like it [chuckle] And so that's why I think each one of them stays consistent with their messaging and the research that shows that this is the best way to make the world a better place here. So to me, vision and having that goal and a clear understanding of what you want to be is, how you can frame all your

responses in the way how am I gonna deal with this?

**0:13:00.1 Phil Richmond:** Yeah.

**0:13:01.4 Katie Berlin:** I like that answer.

**0:13:03.2 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah, I think you started off, Katie, by saying the theme of this conference is to make a better world. And for me, a better world through the prism of veterinary medicine certainly, but really just generally speaking, a better world is a world of humanity, where we sort of just embrace and recognize that we are fully human beings, and...

**0:13:24.0 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:13:25.5 Josh Vaisman:** All of us are doing the best we can each and every day with what we have to try and move forward and be productive. And so when I hear things like what Michael is talking about, I hear there are challenges, there are problems, there are moments where we're not at our best and there are the experiences that are negative and there's an end there as well. And that vision for me, it manifests as possibility, maybe I'm not gonna be at my best right now, maybe you're not gonna be your best right now, maybe together, our profession is not at its best, and we can get there, yeah, because there are so many vibrant beautiful strengths and possibilities that exist within all of the people of this beautiful profession and within the profession itself, and if we can start to lean into those strengths, we'll get through the stumbles and challenges just fine, and we'll build that brighter future.

**0:14:21.2 Katie Berlin:** It's the helplessness and the hopelessness, that's the real enemy there, right?

**0:14:26.0 Michael Shirley:** I think our industry is plagued by a whole bunch of people that are experiencing bad things or negative feelings, and they think that they're the only one.

**0:14:32.3 Katie Berlin:** Yes.

**0:14:32.9 Michael Shirley:** And they're so afraid to share that with their co-workers that what Josh said, we're all gonna have bad days, so if I'm having a bad day, I just need to be able to have trust in him and say, "Josh, I'm having a really bad day today." And he may say, "Dude, go home, yeah, yeah, because we would just rather you go home and deal with it than to be here and bring us down." Or he might say, "Well, let me take some of this load off of you."

**0:14:54.5 Josh Vaisman:** Yes. Yes.

**0:14:54.8 Michael Shirley:** And then that builds trust and that builds shared experiences that we can build on to make our practices better individually, and then by that, making VetMed better.

**0:15:05.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:15:07.1 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:15:08.7 Phil Richmond:** Yeah, so when I hear everybody speak, there was a... I forget what it

was, I want the world to change, and it has to begin with me. As the... That was for me, I was one of those people where I was... It was very easy for me to have the blame thrower.

[laughter]

[background conversation]

**0:15:28.6 Phil Richmond:** Everyone else's fault, I would be doing so great in this world amongst everyone, if they all have... The eight million people would just do what I want.

**0:15:38.0 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:15:38.4 Phil Richmond:** Well, I can't absolutely control any of those people.

**0:15:41.9 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:15:42.5 Phil Richmond:** And so it took... So and we talked about this with a big reset, it took a big change of my life to get to a point where I realized that I was the only one that I could control, and then once I did the work with me, then I was able to help try to give that away 'cause I can't give something away that I don't have, and I also can't... I have to have that self-compassion like Michael and Josh were saying that if I'm off, it's okay. But I can't build the great things every moment.

**0:16:17.3 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:16:18.2 Phil Richmond:** I can't and I have to be... You have a little self-compassion that that's there, and then it's if we can do that on an individual level and know that we have to do that there, and then we work on a team level and then help our, the people around us and then also help the organization level. And it works when all comes together in that regard, but it had to start with me, I had to look at... I love the phrase, "What part did I play?"

**0:16:45.0 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:16:45.1 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:16:45.2 Phil Richmond:** And so I had to had to see where I was and then using tools to lift myself up and grow. Yeah.

**0:16:53.8 Alyssa Mages:** I love that. And I think that's... It all ties in together. And for me, what it became is I got into the profession to be the voice for the voiceless, and that shifted from the patients to the team.

**0:17:08.1 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:17:09.1 Alyssa Mages:** And I kept hearing, "I'm just an assistant. I'm just a Vet tech." And I think it was Betsy Charles that brought it up that was, I would cry and like, "You're not just anything." And she's like, "Where is that coming from?" So again, that goes back to that response versus reaction, but it's really, for me, is flipping that definition. We love the English language, right? You



have so many words that spell the same, sound the same, mean two different things. So instead of having the just be limiting, it's something to strive for, to be just, and to flip it from, I'm not to I'm not yet.

**0:17:45.8 Alyssa Mages:** And to look for that potential and from... When I had a leadership role years ago, I was not the right person for it. People thought I was, but I wasn't ready. And to your point of having to start with me, it took having a big personal moment where I used to have a lot of hair and my mom went through cancer and I shaved it off, and I was like, "Oh, that's who I am. Cool." So I wasn't just, I needed to be just. And it really was, go back to dentistry. And take a look at it, if you look at the two fruit from one angle, you only see two but if you turn it, you see the three.

**0:18:26.7 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:18:27.4 Alyssa Mages:** So...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:18:28.0 Alyssa Mages:** I know. [laughter] And that's the one that always cracks up at the center rock. But it's perspective. It's changing their perspective, flipping that definition and really redefining who we are as individuals and then what we can become as a profession.

**0:18:44.0 Josh Vaisman:** That last statement really rings true for me. What inspires me about the people that are sitting around me right now is that every single person here has really embraced this idea that people, individuals, teams, organizations, hospitals, the community is where we are and where we can be, and that's the possibility. That's the potential. And what I see are people who are starting to view the world, take a perspective, that we can create spaces that allow people to lean into what they can be, and that opens up so much possibility. That's where the energy comes from. Instead of, "Katie, you're letting me down because you keep taking three hours to extract this molar and I really need it to take two." It's...

**0:19:31.9 Katie Berlin:** This is a true story.

**0:19:32.8 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah. [laughter] It's an accurate, accurate story... It's...

**0:19:36.1 Katie Berlin:** It was a lower canine but...

**0:19:39.4 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:19:39.5 Alyssa Mages:** Oh. That, it's gonna be so long. Yeah.

**0:19:41.4 Josh Vaisman:** That's big. Instead of viewing it that way, it's, "Katie, what's preventing you from getting to what you are capable of doing? I know that you have all the skills and abilities that you need. You have the implicit talent to become the kind of doctor who doesn't necessarily need three hours to do this procedure. How can I help you get there?" That's the same tooth turned in a different perspective.

**0:20:05.1 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:20:06.4 Phil Richmond:** And it all wraps up into our favorite... One of our favorite quotes. "Be curious, not judgemental."

**0:20:13.8 Katie Berlin:** Yes. Yes.

**0:20:15.5 Michael Shirley:** Yeah. Exactly.

**0:20:16.4 Josh Vaisman:** And that's...

**0:20:17.9 Michael Shirley:** I just had that conversation with some people on our team. I'm gonna use this as like a, "Hey, help me, guys." [laughter] Free consult out here. Free consulting here.

**0:20:27.0 Katie Berlin:** Now here, this is actually a recorded consulting session.

**0:20:30.4 Michael Shirley:** Yeah, so thank you... So we just hired a new team member that came from a whole nother part of the country with a different culture and everything, and down to the South. And I had another team member that they were not communicating. They weren't... We would say, "Gee and haw" down here. That's a mule term. Anyway, but they were having the same conversation... Like they were in the same conversation, but they weren't having the same conversation. They weren't hearing the same conversation. And it was just interesting to talk to 'em and I said, "What you need to do, what I think would help you all is add one more sentence to your question and explain why you're asking the question. 'Cause what you, you asked a question and she heard it as an attack.

**0:21:13.7 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:21:14.2 Michael Shirley:** But you weren't trying to attack, you were looking for clarity. You just need to say that, "Phil, why do you wrap a pack that way? Because I wanna make sure that I'm doing it the way I know best, 'cause that is not the way I learned. So I wanna make sure that we do it the best way possible" versus "Why are you wrapping the pack that way? 'Cause without... " 'Cause what's heard is, "Why are you wrapping the pack that way? You're an idiot!" and you're like, "That's not the way to do it!" So they just had to add that extra sentence to explain a little bit more like, "I'm curious as to why you're doing that because I want us to be the best team we can be."

**0:21:48.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:21:48.8 Michael Shirley:** And so that's helped. I probably need to apply that to my own parenting and stuff. I do a lot better at managing the hospital than parenting.

**0:21:55.2 Katie Berlin:** It's hard to please yourself...

**0:21:57.5 Michael Shirley:** It's hard. Yeah.

**0:21:58.1 Katie Berlin:** It is really hard to hear it...

**0:21:58.2 Alyssa Mages:** Oh my gosh. Oh yeah.

**0:21:58.7 Katie Berlin:** When it comes out of your own mouth until somebody draws your attention to it.

**0:22:01.4 Alyssa Mages:** Well, and that's the accountability piece, right?

**0:22:03.3 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:22:03.3 Alyssa Mages:** And that's why I'm just honored to be here. Because I always reach out to Josh. "This is out of my wheelhouse. Like help me out here," but we need that person or people in our lives.

**0:22:14.3 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:22:14.5 Alyssa Mages:** Like I'm not going to the gym unless someone's like, "So, I'm tracking you on our shared app and so... "

**0:22:19.2 Katie Berlin:** Ooh, that's hardcore, yeah.

**0:22:21.3 Alyssa Mages:** Oh yeah.

**0:22:22.0 Katie Berlin:** I see you're not in your car yet.

**0:22:22.6 Josh Vaisman:** It is, yeah.

**0:22:23.6 Alyssa Mages:** Business partner and workout partner. She's legit. But to that point is, you have to have that someone holding you accountable. Yeah. And it doesn't necessarily have to be that authority figure. It can be a peer.

**0:22:36.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:22:36.4 Alyssa Mages:** It's really just, how can I help you be the best you, you can be, so you can help me?

**0:22:42.9 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:22:42.9 Alyssa Mages:** And to shift that needle from a sense of competition. Dear God, please no. [laughter]

**0:22:48.6 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:22:48.6 Alyssa Mages:** And let's collaborate. I talk on wellbeing and things like that. I infuse that with the work I do, but that's not my wheelhouse. That's what Phil and Josh are for. And I have a partner that works in management that Michael knows way more about managing a practice than I do.

**0:23:03.7 Josh Vaisman:** For me, this brings up a point that goes back to, you used a word earlier, Katie, you said the word hopeless. For me, there's something that actually comes even prior to accountability, which is just the experience that I actually matter.

**0:23:18.5 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah. Ah yes!

**0:23:20.4 Josh Vaisman:** It's almost impossible to have these kinds of productive conversations to hold somebody accountable, to empower somebody with something if they don't actually feel like they make a difference in any reasonable way.

**0:23:31.2 Alyssa Mages:** Right.

**0:23:32.0 Josh Vaisman:** And we know, we know, that's an essential element to thriving. Human beings who don't feel like they matter, end up hopeless.

**0:23:38.4 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah.

**0:23:38.8 Josh Vaisman:** Hopelessness is not a place of which you can be resilient, of which you can work towards your potential, which you could feel like you can actually extract that tooth at all. And so, I think it has to, it just has to start there. We have to... That's why I speak about humanity. We have to start with just connecting as human beings and recognizing that this person has value. They have a strength, they're needed for some purpose. Let me help them see that.

**0:24:04.2 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah.

**0:24:04.8 Josh Vaisman:** Then you open up the doors to all the other stuff that can come from that effectively.

**0:24:09.8 Katie Berlin:** Be the mirror.

**0:24:10.4 Phil Richmond:** Yeah. Be the mirror.

**0:24:11.1 Alyssa Mages:** Be someone's mirror.

**0:24:12.4 Josh Vaisman:** Be someone's mirror.

**0:24:13.7 Alyssa Mages:** So they can see out there.

**0:24:15.1 Michael Shirley:** What are y'all's tips for... If there's a listener out there that wants... That's like picking up what you're laying down, they're like, "I wanna get this going in my hospital" and they don't have that currently, where do they start? Like what's the first step?

**0:24:29.3 Josh Vaisman:** They call Phil Richmond.

[laughter]

**0:24:33.6 Alyssa Mages:** Yes!

**0:24:35.7 Phil Richmond:** So let me say this, is that, one we wanna... The first thing, we wanna have a vision. And when you said, "Create a better world" and then what Michael said, what I thought about is having a veterinary team where that's said, and my first inclination is not to think

that person is attacking me...

**0:24:54.5 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:24:55.0 Phil Richmond:** Is to know and not even that I have to, that I have to have a thought, make the charitable assumption, that I work in a team, where if you make that comment, I know you want what's best for me. And that, when you were saying, having that team around us, what if that support team is our team? And I got to experience that at the practice that I was at, but we were very, very intentional about crafting that. And it took a lot of work.

**0:25:25.3 Katie Berlin:** Fantastic work.

**0:25:26.9 Phil Richmond:** But where it came from was, we changed the thought processes that we were gonna make that an intention, we were gonna empower staff. We wanted to work on education. We wanted to work on communication. And we were just, that was the thing, we felt like that was important. And it's beautiful when it's there. Like it's genuinely, it's a beautiful thing. And we're gonna talk about this tomorrow, but it saves patients' lives and it makes a place. In 2019, before COVID, we...

**0:26:00.5 Katie Berlin:** In the before time.

**0:26:00.5 Phil Richmond:** We would say...

**0:26:02.3 Josh Vaisman:** In the before time.

**0:26:02.5 Alyssa Mages:** Yes.

**0:26:02.8 Phil Richmond:** In the before times, our medical team, we would say that we would come to work to get away from the world. That's the...

**0:26:13.1 Katie Berlin:** Wow.

**0:26:13.2 Alyssa Mages:** Right?

**0:26:13.3 Katie Berlin:** Everybody just, we've got goosebumps, I think.

**0:26:13.9 Phil Richmond:** That's the creative better world.

**0:26:14.0 Alyssa Mages:** Yes. It is.

**0:26:14.8 Phil Richmond:** And that's the veterinary medi... Because then, everything else becomes fruitful. Because then it comes...

**0:26:21.7 Katie Berlin:** [0:26:22.4] \_\_\_\_\_.

**0:26:23.6 Phil Richmond:** Then we go and when clients say something, we're able to make that, we're in a place where we can make that charitable assumption. We become curious. And when they say something... If they say something, I don't take it wrong. And I'm like, "Wow, I wonder

what they're going through right now?" And then I have the, I have the emotional space to be there for that client. And that's, that's what...

**0:26:39.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:26:39.5 Phil Richmond:** That's the goal.

**0:26:42.1 Katie Berlin:** That's the [0:26:42.1] \_\_\_\_\_. Yeah.

**0:26:44.1 Michael Shirley:** So do you think that not... If the practice owner is not on board or the corporate management overlords aren't on board, can the associate vet, can the licensed techs, can the veterinary assistants or the kennel folks, can they do that on their own?

**0:26:56.0 Phil Richmond:** Without leadership buy-in...

**0:26:56.1 Josh Vaisman:** Revolt!

**0:26:57.5 S?:** Yeah!

[laughter]

**0:26:57.6 Alyssa Mages:** Viva la revolución!

**0:27:02.3 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. That's what [0:27:02.4] \_\_\_\_ in my head.

**0:27:02.5 Phil Richmond:** Because how do... Potentially, we vote with our feet.

**0:27:05.8 S?:** Yeah.

**0:27:06.3 Phil Richmond:** To a point, to a point, I'm not saying that everybody... But if we make that, that this is what we believe and this is what we want as an intention, potentially there's just, the owner, the leader's just not... Is not with it...

**0:27:18.8 Michael Shirley:** When they're scratching their head...

[overlapping conversation]

**0:27:22.5 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah. What is it?

**0:27:22.6 Michael Shirley:** They may...

**0:27:22.7 Phil Richmond:** But then again, can I get, as a leader, can I get curious and... What's going on? What do you need? What do we need to be doing differently?

**0:27:29.7 Michael Shirley:** And then the practice owners, what I'm hearing you say is that if the practice owners are listening to this and they're thinking, "This is the way I can retain my team is to create this culture." They need to just verbalize it with their team and maybe even involve them in the creation of the vision.

**0:27:45.5 Katie Berlin:** Right.

**0:27:45.7 Alyssa Mages:** Well...

**0:27:46.4 Michael Shirley:** Have to. [laughter]

**0:27:47.4 S?:** What?

**0:27:47.5 Alyssa Mages:** They have... Yeah.

**0:27:48.2 S?:** We have to.

**0:27:48.3 Alyssa Mages:** Absolutely. I mean, that's, that's really... And taking that shift from like a hierarchical approach to a team-based approach. And to... Instead of top down or bottom up, it's inside out.

**0:27:57.7 Josh Vaisman:** Exactly.

**0:28:01.6 Alyssa Mages:** And really making sure that, to your point, Josh, is that people matter...

**0:28:04.3 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah.

**0:28:05.8 Alyssa Mages:** I can't... None of us in our practices would have a job without our CSRs.

**0:28:10.0 Katie Berlin:** Right.

**0:28:11.4 Alyssa Mages:** Sorry. Not sorry. And as a technician, I can't do what I need to do without an assistant. And you can't spell vet without VT.

**0:28:21.8 Katie Berlin:** Right. Or run a blood machine.

[laughter]

[overlapping conversation]

**0:28:25.5 Alyssa Mages:** Exactly. Yeah.

**0:28:26.3 Katie Berlin:** On one Friday night at our practice.

**0:28:27.9 Alyssa Mages:** Wait. And then the whole practice doesn't work if we don't have people [0:28:29.9] \_\_\_\_ obtaining the facility. And then if we don't have a leadership team in place. So everyone has an integral part to play.

**0:28:35.9 Josh Vaisman:** Yeah. Yeah.

**0:28:36.0 Alyssa Mages:** So you go beyond, I do shy away from the whole work family experience, unless you are related to your coworkers, which happens, which is a good thing.

**0:28:42.9 Michael Shirley:** Very not creepy. Right? [laughter]

**0:28:44.9 Katie Berlin:** That's right.

**0:28:44.9 Alyssa Mages:** Simply because that's not the same lived experience for everyone. Family doesn't have that same connotation for everybody. But this is, whether you're athletic or not, this is a team sport. I mean, you can't do... You can do things alone, but should you? And so when you have that mentality of like, "Hey, I've done this twice, I'm tapping out." Then you know that that's established... To your point, you're intentional about what you're doing, everything that you're doing. And you're recognizing that, if your clinical skills suffer, so too does your wellbeing. And if your wellbeing is not maintained, your clinical acumen is not gonna be what it needs to be. So it has to be a wholistic approach, the whole person.

**0:29:31.5 Josh Vaisman:** And a quote from, this is such a great story. And when you said it, it really resonated, is they, there was an organizational psychologist that was interviewing these teams and he went to NASA, and he was asking, he asked a guy that was one of the janitors that cleaned the floor. I don't know, I think it was years ago. And he said, "What do you do here?" And he said, "I'm helping to put a man on the moon." Because every, every job under that roof matters.

**0:30:05.0 Alyssa Mages:** Yep.

**0:30:05.6 Josh Vaisman:** And that... I remember reading that, it was just beautiful. And I know...

**0:30:10.7 Alyssa Mages:** If NASA can do it, I'm pretty sure VetMed can do it.

**0:30:13.4 Phil Richmond:** Vet... Yeah. I mean, we're pretty smart.

**0:30:15.7 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. And a vet clinic especially is a much smaller environment than probably a very large laboratory, organization like NASA. And so everybody, it's very easy to see that everybody in that small space plays a really important role. And yet, we still manage to forget it. And we still manage to come in and not say hello to each other and just go about our day. And I think a lot of our people have talked themselves out of wanting more. We talk about potential and the ability for each individual to reach sort of the pinnacle of who they can be and what their strengths will allow them to be, but I feel like we've trained a lot of our support team, especially to believe that that... That there's a ceiling. And this is what their job has to look like. And they've accepted it because it's been so long that that's been the myth, and we have to... That's a big culture to change, is not only to convince leadership that they can create that environment, but to convince the people that they want that and they deserve it and they can dream.

**0:31:23.8 Alyssa Mages:** 'Cause dreams can be scary.

**0:31:26.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. It can be really scary. It'd be really comforting to know, this is my pigeonhole. Even if you don't really like the pigeonhole.

**0:31:32.1 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah. But I know what's happening.

**0:31:35.1 Josh Vaisman:** Pigeonhole...



**0:31:35.2 Katie Berlin:** Yeah, you know what's happening and you don't like it.

**0:31:36.1 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah.

**0:31:36.8 Katie Berlin:** Next, and that, I think a lot of us have been in that situation, maybe all of us have been in that situation. And when you bust out of the pigeonhole, it feels so good.

**0:31:47.2 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah. It does. [laughter]

**0:31:50.1 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. So that's really what we're doing is creating a better world, is busting a bunch of pigeonholes.

**0:31:54.8 Alyssa Mages:** I just got that visual.

**0:31:56.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah.

**0:31:57.3 Alyssa Mages:** Yeah, I think.

**0:32:00.1 Katie Berlin:** Well, thank you all so much. We could sit here and talk for a hundred years...

**0:32:02.1 Michael Shirley:** No, I just came to be in the fan club and watch and now I got to... Thanks for letting me talk with you guys.

[overlapping conversation]

**0:32:07.4 Alyssa Mages:** And it's great.

**0:32:07.4 Katie Berlin:** Yeah, no, it's fantastic.

**0:32:07.8 Alyssa Mages:** You're an example of what practice management is.

**0:32:10.8 Katie Berlin:** Yes. I agree.

**0:32:10.8 Michael Shirley:** Well, I think is really important. Like this was, when my wife came home, she did relief work and she came home one day and said, "I think I wanna open my own practice." It was actually after the AAHA Connexity event, it wasn't Connexity and then in 2017, we came here 'cause she was doing relief work. This was the closest CE so we came, and after the speakers, it was not long after that, that she said, "I wanna open my own hospital." And I was like, "All right, let's do it!" And I asked her why, and she said, "I want to create the type of work environment where I want to go to work every day."

**0:32:41.7 Katie Berlin:** Hear, hear.

**0:32:42.3 Michael Shirley:** And she said, "If my last place had done that and worried about me instead of the non-compete, I'd still be there probably." And I'm so glad that they didn't, because now we've taken our hospital from just her and three employees, now we have three doctors and 14

employees, and we're about to start building a brand new hospital. And we wouldn't have been able to do that without help, like all of these people that are right here have helped me along the way. And we just take care of our people and they can then take care of our clients and the patients. And so if there's any managers out there that are like, "I don't know, this sounds hokey, [0:33:15.3] \_\_\_\_\_ or whatever."

**0:33:16.2 Michael Shirley:** I'm telling you, if you're having a retention problem and you're having complaints all the time and people calling out sick all the time, if you worry and focus on their wellbeing, a lot of that's gonna go away and you're gonna find that you have a waiting list like we do, of people waiting to come work for you. And so, that's why we're building a bigger hospital and I'm not as stressed about... They're like, "How are you gonna staff it?" I'm like, "I got people waiting." And it's because of the help that, like every person who has helped me and helped our hospital. And so, people listen and need to follow these folks and listen and... And just take advantage of the resources that are out there, whenever you see one of these people speaking, you should sign up for it and then implement it in your hospital and make a big difference. So thank you all for helping make our dreams come true [0:34:02.7] \_\_\_\_\_ so yeah. And thanks for letting me join.

**0:34:06.3 Katie Berlin:** Yeah. Sure. Thanks for dropping in. Alright, you guys, thanks so much. I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference. I will be seeing you two tomorrow, 'cause I'm your moderator.

**0:34:15.4 Alyssa Mages:** Awesome! I'm jelly!

**0:34:18.6 Katie Berlin:** And I hope you enjoy your night out tonight, and it's been a great pleasure.

**0:34:24.1 Josh Vaisman:** Thanks, Katie.

**0:34:24.2 Alyssa Mages:** Likewise, thank you.

**0:34:25.9 Phil Richmond:** Thank you, Dr. Katie Berlin.

**0:34:28.4 Katie Berlin:** Thank you. [laughter]