

0:00:04.3 Katie Berlin: Hi, welcome back to Central Line. I'm your host, Katie Berlin, and my guest today is Andi Davison. Andi is a shiny, beautiful human who I met through somebody that I'm sure you all listening know well, Josh Vaisman, who was on the podcast quite recently. Andi works with Josh, which I'm very jealous of her for, and she is also going out and doing amazing things in the world of positive leadership on her own, and so I really am excited for everybody to meet her. Andi Davison Welcome to central Line.

0:00:39.2 Andi Davison: Thank you so much, I'm so excited to be here with you, Katie.

0:00:41.1 Katie Berlin: Andi and I are both horse people, so we bonded over that and that will come up again shortly, so if you love horses, work on horses, work with horses, used to love horses had horse posters on your wall as a kid, I know there's a lot of you out there stay tuned because that is who you're talking to right now. [chuckle] So Andi, before we get into it, would you mind introducing yourself? Giving a little bit of background on who you are and what it is you do.

0:01:11.3 Andi Davison: Yeah, absolutely. Well, as you mentioned, which is first and foremost, I am horse girl extraordinaire. I've been riding my whole entire life, I've had horses forever, it's what I want to talk about, could talk about for the next decade and be completely happy about it. I am currently an adult amateur at the lower levels of three-day eventing, and I've got six horses of my own. Professionally I do, I work as a positive change agent with Josh over at Flourish Veterinary Consulting. I absolutely love it. We have so much fun. I absolutely adore getting out into the veterinary space, bringing positive change, positive psychology-based change to the world. I'm also a credential veterinary technician, so the veterinary space is not new to me. I've been in vet med for well over 20 years, and so having the opportunity to kind of pivot and make that shift and remind the people of that med that they really do have the best job ever is a privilege, and I'm very excited to be able to do that every day.

0:02:10.3 Katie Berlin: I love that. It's always refreshing to hear from technicians, we've had a lot of technicians on the podcast who are doing unconventional things with their technician experience and credentials, and I really love the blend that you've had in your career so far, you are married to a vet correct?

0:02:26.4 Andi Davison: I am, I am my husband, Mike, he's a DVM, and he's done all the things. We had a small mixed sort of James Harriet type of practice in Kentucky for a little over 10 years. He currently is doing small animal urgent care, and of course he helps me take care of my horses, so there's that too, but yes, I'm definitely married to the vet, so our dinner table conversation is really gross and really difficult, [laughter] and it's always about some case or some diagnostic or something like that. So it is typical veterinary couple conversation. [laughter]

0:03:03.6 Katie Berlin: Excellent. Coupled with horses, just for fun, which often comes with it's share of gross and technical, so... [laughter]

0:03:10.4 Andi Davison: Oh yeah. Completely.

0:03:13.6 Katie Berlin: Well, it's nice to have the perspective of someone who's worked with horses and who is obsessed with horses, because I think that's something that is actually pretty common among the small animal set, who I would imagine is the majority of our audience, because AAHA really, mostly deals with small animal, but a lot of us grew up loving horses and maybe

went into the small animal side but never lost that love, and so it's nice to have somebody on who understands that so deeply. So that may come into play with this next question, but I have been asking people if they have a third space where you don't have to be like Andi Davison, a licensed veterinary technician, and you don't have to be a positive change agent or somebody who's an expert in anything, you can just be Andi and lose yourself in it a little bit. Do you have that?

0:04:06.7 Andi Davison: It's not gonna come as any surprise to you, but I do, and it's my horse barn. It's my horse barn, it's with my horses. It's out in the saddle it's very... I'm very lucky to have it about 300 feet that way, which is great. They're right in my backyard. So I have them here, and currently I work mostly remote, and so that third space is really, really important because it's three steps for my office to my living room, and in trying to establish that boundary and be able to create that space for myself, it was a no-brainer for it to be the horses and the barn, and being able to go out there and be with them and just be me because you know, they don't care, they don't care if I'm attack, they don't care if I just completed some advanced education and blah blah, blah, psychology, they don't care, they just want me, and they just want me for who I am, and that's a really great place to be in, a nice opportunity to create that third space that can help me go from work Andi to family Andi to friend Andi and it's really cool.

0:05:12.8 Katie Berlin: Well, I'm really glad that you said that because I feel like that ties in really well to what we're gonna talk about today, it's not... Like I mentioned, it's not often that we talk about horses on this podcast, but horses are a really... I like to say horses don't lie, they don't lie. And they ask very little of us other than to be patient and be ourselves and try to understand where they're coming from, and that's something that I found when I would go out to the barn and my mind would sort of get occupied with what does this horse need, what does he need from me, who do I need to be today in order to make sure that he's happy, that totally erased all the other stress that was going on in life, and that there's nothing like that bond because horses will tell you if they're not feeling it from you. [laughter]

0:06:03.7 Katie Berlin: And dogs won't always. I think dogs are like, I love you and I'm gonna sit next to you and you can be impatient or snarly or not be feeling it today yourself, and I'm gonna sit here with you and horses they know they pick up on every little thing and today what we're gonna be talking about is relationships and connection, and that bond that we have, not just with animals, but with each other and how they're related. So I was wondering if you could start off by talking a little bit about... You mentioned that you like to bring positive psychology theory and evidence-based methods into the field to help people and in vet med. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how that relates to what we're gonna talk about today with relationships and connection.

0:06:55.1 Andi Davison: Absolutely, absolutely so, in the signs of Positive Psychology, what psychologists are doing is they're really looking at what promotes flourishing in our lives. And what contributes to thriving in our lives, and what they found is that there are a handful of basic pillars that we can build a flourishing life on, and those pillars are positive emotions, engagement, relationships, achievement, meaningfulness and achievement. Sorry, I jumped out. Meaningfulness achievement. Yeah, and then depending on which model you look at, some of them include vitality, and that's the one that I'm the most comfortable with that I think that kind of fits in this conversation, so I'm gonna throw it in there, but basically what that means is that if we can make the effort to pay attention to those things in our lives, we can encourage and help ourselves flourish, and we can do things that help us flourish because we're much more aware of what's going on in

those sections of our lives.

0:08:11.2 Andi Davison: And one of those sections and one that I see every day and get really jazzed to talk about is the relationships pillar, because people matter our connections with other people matter and wow, there is so much research out there that shows that if we can engage in meaningful connections and have meaningful relationships with other people, that our lives will thrive and that we can flourish and that we aren't as lonely and that we experience more positive emotions, and that our social and emotional contagion puts out into the world that you know what, this isn't so bad, we're doing pretty good and we're actually probably flourishing, and in thinking about that and thinking about how our relationships with animals fits into that, to me, it absolutely fits into that because we have relationships with the animals that we interact with, and whether that's our patients, whether that's our own animals, we have those connections with our animals. And what stood out to me the most was the astonishing parallel, that is a relationship with our horses, and how that lines up so perfectly with what positive psychologists encourage us to do in order to thrive in the relationships department.

0:09:34.6 Katie Berlin: Can you talk about that a little more.

0:09:36.0 Andi Davison: In looking at relationships and looking at what that means, you're like, oh okay, Andi, that's really great. We need to have positive relationships cool. But what does that look like? What is a positive connection? What is a positive relationship? And they've really found that there are a handful of ingredients that will contribute to that, and the ingredients of a quality, positive relationship are vulnerability, authenticity, curiosity, kindness, belonging and mattering and trust. If we can develop and nurture and create those things in a connection we are going to have a positive interaction or a positive relationship or a positive moment with that person.

0:10:27.0 Katie Berlin: That list is so evocative for me because as you were reading it off, vulnerability, authenticity, trust, these are things that strike me as just so hard for a lot of people, especially people who are used to having that little bit of a wall up, even with close friends, sometimes it's hard to let people in, but with horses, you don't really have a choice, because if you have a wall up, there's only so far you're gonna get with any horse, they're so sensitive to us and who we really are, no matter how we're acting with them, and you just have to let that bad day go or let that anger go. Why is it so much easier to do that with horses than it is with humans? I know that there are a lot of people out there like me who tend to be impatient, and if they're in a group project, for instance, or a meeting and they don't like how it's going, they're just like, urgh, and it's very difficult to sort of tamp that down or you're in a room with a client and you're like this interaction is not going the way that I want it to, and it's very hard to be that vulnerable, authentic self and build trust in that situation, but with animals, so many of us got into this field because it's so much easier, why is that?

0:11:45.5 Andi Davison: That is the million dollar question. [chuckle] I have my thoughts on that. This doesn't mean that this is the end all be all answer? And I would love your thoughts on my thoughts, right. I really think that it could have something to do with how genuine horses are, how genuine animals are, in that they are so authentic and they're so genuine, and they're not looking to... They don't have other agendas, they don't have ulterior motives, they don't have... They're not thinking about the 14 things that they still have to do today, they're not thinking about all the other things they have to do when they get home, or things that are on the to-do list or something they are quite happy, with animals in general are very in the moment, they live in the present. And I think

that that contributes to their genuine role in our lives, because they don't expect anything from us where other people, whether it's a fabulous expectations or not, they inevitably expect something from us, and that's okay, but I also think the fact that animals don't is part of why that's such a magical relationship with them and why it's so easy, quote fingers to create that relationship with an animal and to truly be yourself and to truly be able to take that breath.

0:13:22.2 Katie Berlin: It's so true. And I'm thinking of so many times when an animal has told me horses specifically, when they've told me that I'm not being that person, I'm not being myself. Could be on a ride that didn't go the way that you expected, or you walk into the barn and the energy that you're trading back and forth with the horse that you know so well feels different, and it's almost never the horse, because as you say, they don't have another agenda, they just bring themselves to the table each time, no matter how it's gonna be received, and that's one of the things that we love so much about them, but it's hard to accept that in other people, if they come to table the same each time, and we are hoping we have expectations for how they're gonna act to. And so I think you're so right, it's like an expectations mismatch sometimes, whereas with animals, you don't have to... It's not a guessing game, but that vulnerability and that authenticity is something that it feels like if we could figure out ways to nurture that in ourselves and bring that to the table each time our relationships would be stronger. Are there ways that we can learn how to do that?

0:14:48.6 Andi Davison: Oh yeah. There are lots and lots of ways, and the first way is to realize that there are ways that we can learn how to do this. The first way is to realize that we are not stuck with what we've got now, that it is possible to shift our mindset that it is possible to explain what's happening to us in a little bit different way that will promote a little bit more what, optimism than how we used to. And that to me is the biggest and first step is realizing that, you know what, I can do something to change, and if I'd like to be a little bit more vulnerable then I can do something about that. That said I really think because it is, it's overwhelming and it's a little bit scary to be like, oh my gosh, you guys are telling me that I have to do all of these things. All of this whole list of ingredients. I have to do this in order to have a quality connection, you don't. You don't, you can do one thing at a time, you can do one thing a little bit differently than you're doing it now, and you'll still see benefit. That's the beauty of it, it's not an all or nothing kind of situation.

0:16:09.5 Andi Davison: So let's say that, I don't know, you're a super kind human and you're really, really, really good at finding out more about what makes people tick and trying to find something in common with them, but when it comes to say, being vulnerable you just shut down and you think oh my goodness, that's really, really hard for me. So then maybe you just make an effort to share one superficial vulnerable thing with somebody this month. And you make it an approachable goal, you make it something small that isn't gonna make you go, oh God, and turn and run away, and it will make a difference for you, it will allow that connection and that relationship to be more positive. It's not...

0:16:56.7 Andi Davison: We always can get better and we always wanna work towards getting better, and there's no end to this race. We just... We wake up every day and we wanna live our best life. Be our best self, and that just is one step at a time, and so if we continue to take steps in that direction, we'll continue to be... We'll continue to thrive, we'll continue to flourish, we'll continue to develop positive connections with each other, and it's comforting. I don't know about you Katie but it's kind of comforting to me to know that there's no finish line because that takes the pressure off and it really helps me go, you know what, I'm here to do better today, and that's what that looks like for me today. And there's no big prize at the end, because there is no end it's all about just

continuing to try and do a little bit and do a little bit. And do a little bit every day.

0:17:51.3 Katie Berlin: I agree, it is comforting. I feel like it is not something that we are really born into this culture, learning how to do, to say like, oh, this is gonna be a journey throughout my entire life, is learning how to build good relationships and connections with people, and that's not... Like we didn't have a class in school, like how to build connections with people, which I think is a real shame actually now that I think about it, [chuckle] but I also wonder the idea that it's ongoing and that there's no boss at the end of the level where we suddenly get upgraded to this next level of relationships that also can be a little bit hard for such a goal-oriented group of people to accept like when have we made it. And I was gonna ask you the relationships that we're talking about, we're not just talking about relationships with close friends or with partners, right? We're... Are these principles sort of applicable to any kind of relationship that you might encounter?

0:18:58.4 Andi Davison: No, actually no. Every single person that we interact with every day, no matter how long, no matter what their role is, is an option and an opportunity for us to create a quality connection with them. So whether it's, you know, I get this opportunity to create a quality connection with you, and you're somebody that I know and you're a professional colleague, and I will see you again, and this will be an ongoing relationship. But technically the definition of a high quality connection is a moment between two people that ends and creates kind of a positive, positive emotions and a positive outlook on your opinion of each other. So that can happen if you and I are gonna sit down and have coffee, that can happen again next week if we decide we wanna go to lunch, and that can happen again three months from now when we meet at a conference.

0:19:51.0 Andi Davison: It can also happen between, say you and your mail carrier, they drop a package off, you have an interaction with them, and off they go on their way, and maybe you don't see them again for six months. That's still an option for a high quality connection. So it doesn't really matter if this is somebody that you're necessarily going to see every single day and work with or live with or really interact with on the daily. There are options to have high quality connections with everybody and everything and every animal that we come in contact with. And that is one of the beautiful things about it, because it's so important to our flourishing and we have lots of options and opportunities to, develop it, build it, and experience those high quality connections.

0:20:42.7 Katie Berlin: That's beautiful because I think, while you were talking, I was thinking about interactions that I've had with like the per... The UPS man, or somebody at a store who just, there's a moment where they ask you a question or you say how are you doing today? And you get like a real, there's a real answer, and you can tell it's not just somebody being like, fine, thanks for coming. It's like a real conversation that might have two lines in it, but you leave feeling really full. Like at least I do leave feeling really full and like, huh I'm a person in the world and I matter because they talked to me like I do. And that has to be something that could really enrich the lives of people, especially people who don't get to build those connections in practice.

0:21:28.4 Katie Berlin: Like, somebody who works in urgent care and may see a dog one time ever and never see, never know what happens to that dog or, something like that and it's a show, a veterinarian at a show or a technician at a show, where the horse is traveling and needs help that day and then they disappear and you never see them again. But there's still always a chance to build a connection, not just with that animal, which is always easier for us, but with the person attached to that animal, because that's the real kicker. [laughter] Like, that's the one that a lot of times we're like, oh, if only they didn't come with the person attached. But like, seeing that as an opportunity

rather than a challenge is really a beautiful way to look at it.

0:22:12.9 Andi Davison: Yep, absolutely. Absolutely. And it's, it's true the vet med is that profession that most of us got into this because we love animals, and then we get into it and go, oh my gosh, there's humans attached to these animals. And those humans are that opportunity. They really are. And, my husband works urgent care, and so we're very, very familiar with that. Well, you see them once, you're never really sure, and we've had more than one conversation over dinner that wonder what happens or how that sort of lands for the part of the profession that isn't able to build that long-term year after year connection with the humans at the other end of the leash or the human at the other end of the lead rope. And that awareness of the opportunity that even that 10 minute exam or even that five minute follow up phone call is an opportunity to develop a high quality connection with this person.

0:23:16.1 Andi Davison: And for the record, I giggled when you were saying that you thought of it as like, I matter and that was really great and I'm a superhuman. That's what you should feel when you have a high quality connection. I always say you should have one of those like my faith is restored in humanity type of moments. And when those happen, that is, you're like ding ding, ding. You just had a high quality connection and it can happen with anybody. And short term interactions and owners that you only meet once totally fit within that sort of, dish or bowl or group of people where you've got that opportunity. And I think that's always really good to remember.

0:23:53.6 Katie Berlin: Do you have an evolution in this area yourself? Like, can you think about how you were, say at age 20 when you talked to people you didn't know well or when you like found yourself in a, in a new group of people, versus the Andi now who has so much of this knowledge and experience in this field. Have you noticed a change in how you relate to people?

0:24:16.4 Andi Davison: 100%. 100%. And it's even like, gosh, it's really been in the last couple of years that I've noticed the change. You'll laugh and if anybody listening knows me, I've always been talkative. [chuckle] I've always been like that girl who's like, hi, I'm Andi. What's your name? I'm a talker and I've always been that way. Now I've been able to really be more aware of what that can look like. And I've been able to be more really curious is a big shift that I've been able to make is that I've really started to understand the importance and the value and the magic of being genuinely curious about somebody else. Or what, why are you doing that? Tell me more about that. I can tell that that's really exciting for you. What does that mean for you? And that genuine curiosity has been an absolute game changer for me.

0:25:24.7 Andi Davison: And of course, back when you were a kid, you listen to people and it's that you listen to respond. You listen to what they're saying and then you jump in with the, oh yeah, I did that and this is what happened and this is how I thought. Now it's that shift, it's that curious change to tell me more about your experience. Tell me more about what that felt like for you. Tell me more about how I could experience that, because I can tell that that was a really cool thing for you and I'm... I really would like to know more. And that has been a big change. And it's weird because it's not like a big change because I mean, I'm still a talker. I'm still the one that's gonna like walk up to you and be like, hi, I'm Andi, I have horses and I'm a tech and let's talk about positive psychology. But it's been a subtle enough sort of shift that it's made. It's been, it's been life changing in my relationships, my connections, my, the magic that I get out of interacting with others has like elevated tremendously because of my awareness and my knowledge in what I can do for myself to help myself and the people around me flourish.

0:26:37.5 Katie Berlin: When I first met you, and I thank goodness you're like that. I love that you're like that. Like, and in going through how we can change and evolve and learn to foster even more meaningful connections as we get older like that's your superpower though, is that outgoing, talkative Andi, who no room is ever gonna be awkward with you in it because you're gonna make people feel really comfortable. Like you made me feel instantly comfortable when we met. And it wasn't just because you came with great references because anybody Josh Weisman introduces me to, I usually I'm gonna love. But it was like, you just make people feel at ease because you not only show that you are willing to put yourself out there, but you show that it's safe for others to do the same with you. And that's a real gift. And it's one that when I met you, I immediately thought you're the perfect partner, business partner for Josh, because Josh has that superpower too, and it's very, very rare to meet people who really make you feel like there's no one on the planet they'd rather be talking to right then.

0:27:43.2 Katie Berlin: That is a definite superpower and you both have it. So, don't... I'm so glad that that's you. And also, I know as the person who always talks at meetings also that sometimes it's good to be able to be... To foster those skills of active listening and curiosity. And that's something the podcast has been teaching me to do because it's my job to be curious about people now and that's made me much more curious about everyone that I meet, even if they're never gonna be on the podcast, just because I think of all the questions that I wanna ask people, immediately. [laughter] So, so I love that you said that. Did you have an animal, I mean, you probably have had 600 of these, but is there a connection that you had with an animal, particularly a horse who really taught you that skill of listening and curiosity? Because I think that's one thing that animals are really, really good at, is like, we have to ask those questions. If we really wanna have a great relationship with them, we have to figure out where they're coming from.

0:28:46.4 Andi Davison: Yeah. That's part of it because they can't speak to us. Well, they can, but they can't speak words to us. And so, part of that relationship development is, being curious and trying to figure out how to communicate with them. And, yes, I absolutely have a relationship with a horse that has taught me some of these things. And he is my three-year-old Irish sport horse, and his name is Marshall and he is the like biggest dork on the planet and I love him. And he is so curious. He's like, what is, what is that over there? What do you have in your pocket? Oh my goodness. There are things on the shelf. Oh wow, look over there, there's a dog over there. And he gets so excited when he sees something different and something new.

0:29:42.4 Andi Davison: And he really reminds me and he really like, brings me along on that to be like, look at that mom, look at that really cool pile of rocks. I mean, let, we have to go look at that. That is just fat. Oh, there's grass next to it. Like, he's just so, he's so wowed and he's just in awe of everything and he wants to learn more about it and he wants to know what the rocks feel like on his nose, and then he wants to see what's up underneath them, and then he wants to eat the grass next to it. And it's just such a beautiful reminder how magical curiosity is and how important it is. And when I spend time with him, I get to practice that, right? Because he makes me what, slow down and smell the roses. And so he makes me slow down and he makes me go, gosh, you know, I, what is that over there?

0:30:47.9 Andi Davison: I don't know. Let's go check it out. And he really kind of boosts that inside of me. And he does that in a way that is safe. Because he's not gonna judge me if I'm scared of the pile of rocks. He's not gonna laugh at me if I trip over the pile of rocks, which is probably

gonna happen. And he's just gonna, come with me and, and join me in the investigation together. And then we're gonna figure out that, okay, cool, it's rocks. Cool, okay, well there's grass here and we could eat that too. And it's just this like, beautiful simple reminder of how important curiosity is. And that is something that I see in that horse everyday and makes me smile about him every every day.

0:31:24.8 Katie Berlin: Love it. It's, I can, we don't have kids, but I can see that being something that people get too from having like a toddler who just wants to touch everything and look at everything. And like if, I mean, it's a good parallel, three year old Irish sport horse and a toddler, probably very similar [laughter] but you know, thinking about what that list, that you, that I wrote down because, it's such a good list. So vulnerability, authenticity, trust, kindness and belonging or mattering. Those elements are all so vital. But I feel like of all of those, the one that jumps out at me, they're two actually would be vulnerability and trust. I feel like trust a lot of us are conditioned to think, well, if they trust me, I'll trust them. You know, and I don't want to, I don't, I think it's a self-protective mechanism to not trust people until I feel like they trust me. But so much of that trust, we can start that ball rolling. So if we're in a room with a client and we just get this sense that the client isn't getting what they need from us to build that trust, what is a baby step that we can do to sort of help reset that and give the client a sign that it's okay to trust us?

0:32:44.0 Andi Davison: Such a great question, and I'm excited that you asked this one because the answer I think is gonna make people excited because it involves an equation. Math and equation science. What research has found is that in order to really trust somebody, there has to be, every part of this equation has to kind of fall into place. And what that looks like is there needs to be credibility, there needs to be reliability, there needs to be connection, and all of that needs to come with a self-orientation that is not all about me. So what does that mean? That means that if I am looking to say trust you, it's gonna be a lot more likely that I'm gonna trust you if I find you credible, I believe that you know what you're talking about, if you show up when you say you're going to show up, if I kind of like you and have something in common with you, and I know that you're not an all about me kind of person, if we can establish that and sort of figure out what that looks like between us and it works and it's there, I'm way more likely to trust you.

0:34:05.3 Andi Davison: And I think that that's a really neat equation because to me, in the medical field, especially between clients, any veterinary professional, it lands really, really well because that credibility, that reliability, I mean, that's what most pet parents and horse owners look for in a veterinary professional. And I think that's a really kind of neat way to think about it and to think about how that really contributes to trust, because I'm willing to bet Katie, I'm gonna ask you, is there anybody in your life that you really trust, that you don't find credible, that you don't find reliable, that you don't even really like them and that they're always only in it for themselves?

0:34:52.0 Katie Berlin: Listening to you talk about that? I think one thing that really jumped out at me was being a patient myself, in a medical facility. When I was going through a whole bunch of medical stuff last year, I saw so many doctors and nurse practitioners and PAs and I was treated really indifferently by a lot of them. I was one of a bazillion patients they had waiting and I felt like they wanted to do these tests. It was like, these are the tests we want to do, or this is what I think is going on, or like, this is what I need you to do. And the one doctor, I actually, took a creative writing class recently and wrote him a letter in it because he was the one that looked me right in the eye.

0:35:45.9 Katie Berlin: That was the first thing. And like asked me questions that I thought were more than just the questions that he needed for his chart and read the notes that I had brought about my symptoms and made it feel like it was actually about me, and not him and what he wanted to do with me. And I never really thought about it that way before that, like, that feeling that he was treating me like a human and not a... Not just a number, was because it felt less about what he wanted to do for a case that was kind of interesting and more about what I needed as a person and how I needed to hear it in order to feel comfortable going home that day. And it doesn't take longer to do that. It's just a diff... It's a different energy and I really, that really hits home with me thinking about all the interactions I've had with clients that probably could have gone better if I'd maybe been less focused on what we need to do and more about what you need from me.

0:36:42.6 Andi Davison: Yeah. And I really, really truly appreciate you sharing that story because it's... It happens to all of us and it happens to all of us in a variety of different sort of scenarios and situations, and a lot of times something like that will happen to us when we're at our most vulnerable and we're, you're just... And I kind of get that sense from you that that was a position that you were in and that made it all that more, amazing and important and effective. And you created a better connection with this guy, this doctor, sorry, this guy, that lovely doctor because of the effort that he made in order to earn your trust. And clearly that resonated with you and that's been something that helped you through that time. And that's just a really, really beautiful example. And I really do appreciate you sharing that.

0:37:49.0 Katie Berlin: See you make it feel comfortable to share things. [laughter] But that brings me to the second thing that's really difficult on that list, which is vulnerability. I don't know what happened to me. I had like some kind of weird like some bolt from above hit me and I just became a person who feels comfortable being vulnerable. I don't know what happened, but like I overshare, I'm an oversharer, but it is very difficult for a lot of us who have had armor up for many good reasons often to be vulnerable. And when I was thinking about that story and then listening to you after you heard it, it strikes me that it's a very uneven relationship when we're in an exam room. Like that client is by nature vulnerable. If you're asking them to do something for their pet and they're already upset, emotional, worried, scared they're also late.

0:38:43.1 Katie Berlin: They have kids, they have to pick up from school and they've been waiting an hour and all of that stuff. Like they don't have to tell you about it for you to know that they're vulnerable and it can feel really one sided when you're the one on the other side of the table. And you're looking at this professional who doesn't seem vulnerable at all at that moment. So what, do you have like examples of ways that a veterinary professional in that situation can drop that little seed that says to the client, I am vulnerable to and I understand what that feels like right now.

0:39:25.2 Andi Davison: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. That image of being one sided, when you were explaining that it was like, yes, and I just saw that I saw the scale where there's the, all the weights on one side and nothing on the other side, and the seesaw is way up at the top. And that is probably the case more times than not. And the awareness and remembering that. So the next time we go into an exam room kind of remembering that, yeah, this client is bringing their animal, they're worried they've got a thousand other things going on. They are trusting you to help and they're here for your help. And as a veterinary professional, giving a little bit of vulnerability is going to contribute immense amounts to the possibility of creating a quality connection with a client in this situation.

0:40:25.4 Andi Davison: It will help to level out the playing field a bit. It will help to kind of keep

emotions more even. And it will help to keep things from getting a little bit emotionally out of hand. And the beauty is that as a vet professional, sometimes it can be really hard, like we said, to be vulnerable. And so what I'm not asking or even recommending is for you to go, oh gosh, here's this steep dark secret about my life. In order to establish a connection with a client that's not necessarily required to be vulnerable, I think a nice approachable way to do that could involve something along the lines of acknowledging kind of what's going on with the client and acknowledging the vulnerability that they're bringing to you. And so it could, I mean, it could sound something like this. So you mentioned having a client who's brought their animal, they've got their kids to pick up, they're really worried, they don't really know what's going on as a veterinary professional, if we can just acknowledge that within them and go, gosh, I hear that you've got your kids to pick up from school and that this is the third time that you've been in and you're just not sure, why Maggie still has diarrhea.

0:41:39.9 Andi Davison: And I can absolutely sense that this is worrying you and I get it because if my dog had diarrhea and we didn't know why, it would be worrying for me too. Something as basic as that will show that client that you're giving a little bit of vulnerability that you're human too and that you get it. And that's all it can take sometimes to take that little baby step towards that opportunity for a positive interaction.

0:42:10.3 Katie Berlin: We always say that we don't want people to accuse us of not caring, right? 'Cause we've always had, we've all had those reviews or heard about those reviews that are like, well, if he really cared about my pet, or she obviously didn't care anything about animals, she was just there for the money. Or it's just a job for her. And like, that's the worst thing you can say to a veterinary professional. But that little bit of vulnerability seems like it would make it so much less likely for that to happen because you're showing that you really do care. But like sharing a deep dark secret they didn't, that doesn't really fit with the conversation seems like it would be a bit manipulative. Like you were trying to create vulnerability where like force it. And people can tell that right away [laughter], like even if they don't realize it's what you're doing, like consciously, I feel like they can tell that right away. If you're like trying to force a connection, that genuine understanding when you're on the receiving end, that's where you're like, I have faith in humanity again.

0:43:09.4 Andi Davison: Well, and the other thing that it will do, especially in like a client professional type of relationship in the exam room is that it will remind that client if we as a veterinary professional are using an opportunity to be vulnerable by recognizing what's worrying our client and saying, gosh, I get it. That is being vulnerable. It's acknowledging what the client is worried about. It's reminding the client that we're really here for you and your pet. And all of those things are really great reminders for us and for our clients and are really great opportunities to build that, quality, positive interaction that we have. So it's less of an option or it's less of a chance that an owner is gonna go, gosh, you're only here for the animals all you care about is the money if you're really making that effort to acknowledge them as an individual and acknowledge what it is that they're worried about and make that comment to relate to that a little bit, it's gonna be like, gosh, we're both humans. We both are in this together. We both have the common goal of trying to help Maggie with her diarrhea. Let's do this together. And that's a way better place to be in no matter what. Yeah.

0:44:23.4 Katie Berlin: I'm thinking about the client that had a dog. She had a wheaten terrier. I still remember this was probably 10 years ago. She had a wheaten terrier with separation anxiety.

And the dog was like two maybe. So she was young. She's the cutest thing, but she was starting to really wig out when the owners left. And I was like, well, let's try see if we can get to the bottom of where this started. But like, do you have a, do you like make a big deal when you come home and you see her, is it like a really big deal? And I told her that I had a ritual when I get home where I sing a little song to my dog. It's a little man song. I won't sing it right now, but I just told her that.

0:45:02.4 Katie Berlin: And she was like, she just kind of looked at me and she's like, yeah, I have a theme song for her. [laughter] And then she sang the Maggie theme song in the exam room. And it could be like something, so my dog does not have separation anxiety. He could take or leave it when I leave the house, I think. But but her dog did. And that the ability for her to just like sit there and sing that theme song to me and be like, yes, it is a huge deal when I get home and like, we sing and dance and there's like a whole thing. But that was a moment of connection that I just have not forgotten in that long, in a decade or more. And that was the kind of moment that made me really happy to be sitting in an exam room with a woman in a Wheaten terrier talking about separation anxiety, which it takes a lot to make me happy to talk about separation anxiety. So I'm just thinking about all the little moments that we could have in our day as vet professionals. If we could have a moment like that with every client or with almost every client it would be a pretty beautiful thing. Like you said, it would be a good way to remind ourselves on the regular that this is, that it's the best job in the world.

0:46:16.1 Andi Davison: Well, and it's fun too, right? Because you wake up in the morning and you're like, gosh, I've got all... I wonder what opportunities are gonna come down the line today. And then you go, you stop by Starbucks, pick up a coffee on the way to work. Oh, here's an opportunity. I wonder how this is gonna go and what can I do to promote a quality connection? And then you get to work and you've got all of your appointments to have, an opportunity and you've got your colleagues that you interact with. And it really, the, for me, 'cause I'm that outgoing, like huge dork. It absolutely is like a fun, it's a fun game for me. Like I go out into public and I'm like, oh, these are all these really cool opportunities. Like how is that gonna go?

0:46:56.8 Andi Davison: And to make that effort to compliment somebody on their really cute shoes and then, oh thanks they're really great. And then you get to walk away and be like, yes, I did it. I did one, I got it. Woo-hoo. And it's like a little pat on the back that you just were aware of the opportunity to create a high quality connection and you did it and you feel really good. And I promise you, the chick with the really cute shoes feels really good because who wouldn't wanna get complimented on their shoes And it's just a win-win and it's fun and it makes you kind of look forward to those opportunities every day.

0:47:29.6 Katie Berlin: So true. And it just occurred to me that we could have shown up wearing the same shirt today. 'cause I know we both own the same green shirt and we did not so go us [laughter] 'cause if we had, I wasn't gonna change [laughter] and that would've just, they would've been like, they must've planned that, but yeah, and it doesn't have to take a ton of energy. It can just be something fast that makes you have to talk to the person anyway, so you might as well make it a good connection. What about resources for people who are interested in learning more about this, about connections, relationships, positive psychology in general. Do you have favorite resources that you send people to if they want to do a little bit more digging?

0:48:14.8 Andi Davison: Well Gosh, my most favorite resource is flourish Veterinary Consulting. We do a lot of work in the positive psychology space. Not only do we talk about relationships, we

talk about all the other facets of positive psychology, leadership and what that looks like. We look at a lot of culture. We look at a lot of communications. We look at a lot, well, we look at all the things that really help veterinary professionals to thrive at work. Relationships and communication are the things that I get really jazzed to talk about. So when I'm going out to look for other types of resources, I really look very heavily into the world of positive psychology. And that is where I would always send people or recommend that people go. There are a couple of really reputable sites online. The Pennsylvania has a psychology program and that is where you, that is where the facet of positive psychology was born.

0:49:17.6 Andi Davison: That is where the majority of the research that is happening is happening over there at UPenn. And so anything that they put out is wonderful and beautiful and magical. The other names that I would look into are Martin Seligman is the father of positive Psychology. He is so incredibly amazing and all you would have to do is put his name into Google and up would come all sorts of resources. He's written a number of books. He's got a gajillion research studies. He's got his own website. So those are some really, really great sort of places to go if you are interested in finding out more. I'm also happy to connect with you guys individually to like figure out more of what works for you and what you need in your life and your situation and be a little bit more customized in a suggestion as far as what a resource could be.

0:50:18.9 Katie Berlin: That is super generous of you, Andi. And where can people find you besides through me? You can always email me at podcast@aaha.org and I will pass on questions to guests for you including Andi. So never hesitate to do that. But where else can people connect with you?

0:50:37.9 Andi Davison: You guys can absolutely get me on email. My email is andi@flourish.vet and that is probably the best way to get ahold of me. If you visit our website, which is Flourish.vet, you'll be able to find out a little bit more of all of the wonderful and incredible things that we do, who we are on the team. You'll find out more about Josh if you don't already know because he is freaking magical. And our other awesome team members, Tess, and we are just so excited to be out there making the changes. You can find out more about what we do at flourish.vet, and again, my email is andi@flourish.vet.

0:51:17.5 Katie Berlin: And I'll drop links to all of the stuff that Andi just talked about including you are very brave to put your email out there, [laughter], but including your email address. I'll put all that in the show notes and people can browse at their leisure. But I second the Googling Martin Seligman is a really good start because basically that will connect you to every resource out there, it seems like. [laughter] 'Cause if he's, if it's not on his site, then he's referenced in every other site [laughter] that talks about positive psychology. But I learned a lot today that I didn't know, and I am an avid fan of positive psychology and a big reader of texts about it. But I learned stuff today that I didn't know and thought about it in a different context. Thanks to you Andi. So I really appreciate that and I hope, I'm sure others listening feel the same way. Even if you're not an extrovert like Andi is just making one quality connection a day, I'm guessing could make a really big difference in the quality of professional life that you're enjoying whatever aspect of practice you're in.

0:52:24.5 Andi Davison: Yep. That is so true. And I always say to people whenever we talk positive psychology, because you get to talking about it and you get to talking about what it looks like and what it means and what relationships are and the ingredients that encourage a positive high

quality connection. And I always sort of pause and kind of giggle because Katie, it's not rocket science, right? It's not rocket science. Well, yeah, if we're kind and if we trust somebody, and if we're a little bit vulnerable and if we're authentic and we genuinely feel like we belong and we matter, we're going to feel like we have a positive connection with them. Well, yeah, duh, that's not rocket science. But what I really think the magical part of it is that awareness and that sort of recognition of how important it really is and the ability to go, you know what? I'm gonna consciously make an effort to tweak that just a little bit. And then you're gonna start to see the benefits that come from it, and you're gonna go, oh my goodness. It's this, like, it's magical and it's not rocket science. And that's what makes it so fun and so relevant for all of us.

0:53:39.5 Katie Berlin: I love that. Andi Davison, you are as always array of sunshine and I'm so glad that we had this time together. Thank you so much for spending this hour chatting about something I know is super hard for you to talk about. But I think you and your and Marshall, your horse may be soulmates because I was just thinking about you going out in the world looking for opportunities to be, to make connections. And I'm like, you're Marshall, you're the same. [laughter] So that's another way to think of it is like, at the end of the day, we are all, we all need the same things outta life, animals, humans, like we're all animals. And that connection is no different. So thank you so much.

0:54:23.8 Andi Davison: Thank you so much for having me. I can't believe it's, already been an hour. Like you said, we could talk about this forever and it's just, it's so awesome to be able to share it with you and to be able to make those, connections between those different parts of our world. To put that human side in with the horses in, with the relationships, in with flourishing in with our professional sides because it all relates and it all matters. And so having the chance to be here and talk to you today and share this with the world is just fantastic. So I really, really do appreciate it, Katie.

0:55:02.5 Katie Berlin: Well I do too. Thank you so much. And thank you to all of you for listening. Again, I'll have links in the show notes if you wanna learn more about Positive Psychology or about Andi and Flourish and the amazing work that they're doing. So and don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you need anything that I forget because Andi dropped a lot of good tips there and I don't want anybody to miss out. So thanks so much again for listening. We'll catch you next time on Central Line.

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