

HARBOR.VET 30-DAY CHALLENGE

GRATITUDE & MINDFULNESS

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HARBOR 
BY SUVET 

Day 1

Gratitude is one of the most powerful emotions has the potential to override other negative emotions such as anger, frustration, sadness, or envy.

If you can truly embody gratitude, you can overcome the difficult emotions that arise when you criticize yourself or your life for not being “better”.

Take a moment today to acknowledge one thing you are truly grateful for - either by writing it down, telling a friend, or sharing it with your family.

Reflect

Day 2

At the end of your day, do you typically focus on the negative and all the things you wish had happened differently?

Practicing gratitude is a way to ensure that the positive parts of your day are not overlooked and that you can find something good in each situation you are faced with.

At the end of the day, consider what did not go as you wanted it to, and find one thing to be grateful for in that situation.

Reflect

Day 3

Oprah Winfrey once said: "Be thankful for what you have, and you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you do not have, you will never have enough."

If you can appreciate what you already have and acknowledge the good in your life, then ultimately, you will feel more fulfilled.

What in your life are you most grateful for right now?

Reflect

Day 6

Everyone wants to feel appreciated and acknowledged for the work that they do.

Veterinary care providers are no different - receiving thanks from a client, co-worker, boss, or colleague can make a tremendously positive impact on a person's job satisfaction.

Consider sending a **WAVE** (We Appreciate Veterinarians Everywhere) as part of the Harbor.vet initiative to spread gratitude and joy in the veterinary profession - visit Harbor.vet/wave to learn more.

Reflect

Day 1

Expressing gratitude to someone is even more meaningful when a specific reason is given.

For example, "I am so grateful to have you on my team - your smile every morning creates such a positive start to my day".

What specific feedback could you offer someone today to show them why you are grateful?

Reflect

Day 11

Using mindfulness to focus your attention on the present moment has proven benefits for mental health and physical wellbeing.

Anxiety (and all its physiologic consequences) usually stems from thinking about the future, whereas depression or rumination are a result of dwelling on the past.

The next time you find yourself wondering about the future or ruminating on the past, take a moment to bring your attention to something in front of you to redirect yourself to the present.

Reflect

Day 16

“Serenity comes when you trade expectations for acceptance”

Acceptance is allowing things to be the way they are, even if you wish they could be different.

What is one thing in your life that you wish were different, but that you could consciously choose to accept as it is?

Reflect

Day 19

It is easy to hold on to stories, events, relationships, and other things that have impacted you throughout your life.

You may also hold on to certain things at work (e.g., outcome of a case, relationship with a client) which prevents you from being in the present.

Could you decrease your attachment to certain stories, relationships, or outcomes in your work or home life by consciously letting go?

Reflect

Day 20

“In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, in the expert’s mind there are few” Shunryu Suzuki

Having a beginner’s mind allows you to experience situations as if you are doing so for the very first time, thereby removing comparisons, concerns, or anxieties.

Consider going into an appointment with a difficult client or engaging in a challenging task as if you have never done it before.

Reflect

Day 21

Neuroscience research shows that practicing mindfulness regularly can enhance the brain's grey matter within the pre-frontal cortex, which is responsible for holding attention, making decisions, moderating behavior, and solving problems.

Mindfulness also shrinks the amygdala, which identifies physical threats and emotional triggers.

Try to identify situations or events that trigger reactions in you, and notice the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors that arise at those times.

Reflect

Day 22

Mindfulness forms an emotional buffer that creates the space to choose adaptive responses during stressful situations, rather than reacting mindlessly with patterned behaviors.

Ultimately mindfulness allows you to respond in ways that are kind, open-hearted, and calm amidst the chaos of the situation.

During a situation that would normally be triggering for you, take a moment to pause and choose a measured response such as taking a breath, walking away, or asking for a minute to gather your thoughts.

Reflect

Day 23

Research in the human medical field demonstrates that mindfulness training helps human nurses cope more effectively with stress by improving their ability to think clearly and remained focused and calm during stressful situations.

Mindfulness training also promotes self-awareness and self-care among human medical students, physicians, and nurses, thereby reducing the risk of professional burnout.

Consider signing up for a mindfulness training program in the form of an 8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program (MBSR) or an online class teaching mindfulness techniques.

Reflect

Day 24

A study on stress in veterinary students demonstrated that students who performed a 5-minute breathing exercise before performing surgery were calmer and more relaxed than students in the control group.

Using simple breathing exercises during the day anchors awareness in the present moment and is a beneficial mindfulness tool.

For 2 to 3 minutes between appointments, during breaks, or while commuting, focus on your breath by being aware of the sensations of breathing or counting your breaths.

Reflect

Day 25

Most people take shallow breaths and are in a state of sympathetic activation (stress response) throughout their day.

Taking deep breaths that fill your belly and have a prolonged exhale can help to activate the parasympathetic nervous system and enhance feelings of rest and relaxation.

Try to lengthen the duration of your exhales so that they are longer than your inhales - for example, counting your in-breath for 2-3 seconds and counting your out-breath for 3-4 seconds or longer.

Reflect

Day 27

The benefits of a meditation or other mindfulness practice increase the longer in duration you practice.

However, practicing every day, even if for short sessions, is more likely to create a habit than practicing every once in a while.

Plan to complete a short (5-10 minute) mindfulness session at the same time every day - either soon after you wake up in the morning, before or after work, or before bedtime.

Reflect

Day 29

During moments when you feel anxious or distressed, mindfulness can be a powerful anchoring tool to ground you in the present moment to stop the troubling thoughts.

The 5-4-3-2-1 exercise is a great tool to use during these difficult moments.

In your immediate environment count:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Reflect
