

# Caring **for the** Care Team

Practical ways to support  
mental health inside the clinic

Veterinary professionals show up every day for pets, clients, and one another. The pace and emotional intensity of clinic life can take a real toll, affecting communication, morale, retention, and the care experience. Small, consistent actions can help reduce stress, build connection, and support staff through difficult days.

The ASPCA® Pet Health Insurance recognizes the essential role veterinary teams play and is proud to share resources that support team well-being in practice.

## Tips for inside the clinic

### 1 Start shifts with a quick team check-in

Take 2 minutes at the beginning of the day to align on caseload, staffing concerns, and potential stress points. A simple “What do you need today?” can help surface issues early and build team trust.

### 2 Normalize asking for help

Encourage doctors, technicians, and support staff to speak up before stress becomes overwhelming. Make it clear that asking for backup during a busy day is a sign of awareness, not weakness.

### 3 Protect break time and create space to reset

Even short breaks can reduce fatigue and improve focus. Build break coverage into the day so team members can step away, eat, hydrate, and decompress, with access to a quiet space after difficult cases or emotional interactions.

### 4 Debrief hard cases and allow time to reset

After euthanasias, emergencies, adverse outcomes, or difficult client encounters, offer a brief debrief so staff can process the moment, clarify next steps, and move forward.

### 5 Watch for signs of overload

Irritability, withdrawal, reduced focus, mistakes, tearfulness, and exhaustion may signal someone is struggling. Encourage leaders and peers to notice changes and check in early.

### 6 Reduce avoidable friction

Small workflow frustrations add up. Clear communication, structured flexibility, defined roles, and efficient handoffs can reduce daily stress.

### 7 Encourage use of PTO and recovery time

Time away matters. Support staff in taking scheduled time off and make rest easier to request.

### 8 Recognize effort, not just outcomes

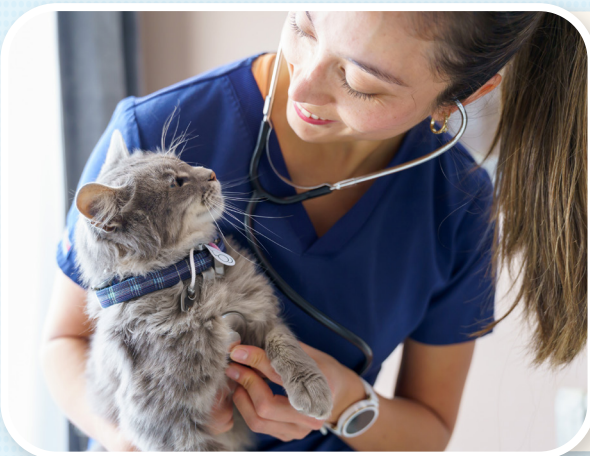
Acknowledge teamwork, compassion, adaptability, and problem-solving—not just productivity. Specific recognition can help staff feel seen during demanding weeks.

### 9 Make support resources visible

Post mental health resources in staff areas, include them in onboarding, and revisit them in team meetings. Visibility can reduce stigma and make support easier to access.

### 10 Use buddy support on tough days

Pair team members informally so no one feels isolated during high-stress moments. A quick check-in from a trusted coworker can go a long way.



## What leaders can do

- Practice leaders set the tone. Supportive leadership starts with consistency, empathy, and follow-through.
- Check in early when someone seems off.
- Model boundaries, breaks, and respectful communication.
- Reinforce that asking for support is appropriate in the workplace.

**ASPCA**® PET HEALTH  
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## Reminder for veterinary teams

A strong clinic makes room for support, recovery, and honest conversation so teams can care for patients without losing sight of their own well-being.

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