So, you want to be a veterinarian?

Is it the right career for me? Am I too late to start studying again? Am I smart enough? I love animals, surely that's enough, right?

There are many questions that arise when you start thinking about changing careers or choosing your FIRST one out of school. I stress, FIRST, in this case because todays working world is all about transferrable skills and changing careers is not frowned upon like it was in our parents' days.

I was one of those little kids that loved animals and always wanted to be a vet, I later wanted to be a human surgeon and then in high school decided I actually wanted to be a marine biologist and work in conservation. So, I did a biology degree, and it was absolutely fantastic! I worked with so many different marine animals in different countries and one day landed myself a job working with dolphins overseas. It was there that I started to re-ignite my passion for the veterinary world. When I could see something was wrong with the dolphins, I would then have to call in the vet to help. I realised then, that I wanted to be that person that fixed them and made them better.

So, I came back home to Australia and made the leap to go back to university, 6 years after finishing my first degree. Wow was I in for a shock! It is not an easy thing to go back from full time work into full time study, but I persevered. There were also others in my degree in their 40's, who had careers in finance, accounting, law or arts before they started their vet degree and they all made it through as well! The Veterinary degree is the most challenging but also the most rewarding thing I have ever done. Now here I am, a qualified veterinarian working for an incredible team of professionals.

Here is what I have learnt over the last four years of the veterinary degree and almost one year as a clinical vet. This list is in no way exhaustive, but as a veterinarian it is important to consider the following traits as they are important in success:

- RESILIANCE – the ability to make mistakes or 'fail' and then bounce back stronger. The ability to not be afraid of needing help or being out of your comfort zone. The understanding that you are not perfect, you can never be perfect and that the beauty of the profession is having many people around you that will know something that you don't.
- TEAMWORK – carrying on from my previous point, we rely heavily on teamwork and respect. We need to be able to ask for help openly and give advice when called upon.
- A GREAT SUPPORT SYSTEM – whether it includes close friends, family, a psychologist, colleagues, a mentor, or anyone that you can lean on for support. This is key to your success and longevity as they are there to be a sound board for ideas, a shoulder to cry on and your loudest cheerleaders.
- A HOBBY/PASSION THAT IS NOT VET RELATED – something outside the vet world that you can do to take you outside of the vet bubble. I believe this is also true for any career

as it provides you the time and space to de-stress yourself and remain mentally positive, preventing you from heading down the road of burning out. Hobbies can be anything including reading, sports, hiking, computer games or board games.

- A LOVE FOR ANIMALS **AND PEOPLE! –** I hear it all too often…" I want to be a vet because I love animals and I never want to work with people". I hate to be the one to break it to you, but in majority of veterinary industries you would be dealing with people as much as the animals. This includes talking to clients, teammates, board members and many others. Yes, the animals are amazing, and being able to help them and spend time with them is the overarching theme, but you cannot forget about the people attached to the animals you treat.

Even if you tick all the above and other things that fit perfectly with being a vet, there will still be ups and downs. The ups are amazing and fulfilling, the downs can be exhausting but I truly believe that life is meant to be a series of experiences, good and bad, and that we are lucky enough to just go along for the ride, learning lots and teaching others along the way.

Finally, many people are not aware that being a veterinarian does not only mean working in a clinic with pets. There are so many amazing avenues you can take including being a farm animal vet, a wildlife vet, a government policy maker, a district vet, a fish vet, working for pet food company or a medicine/drug company, a sales rep, a business owner, or a specialist. Let's also not forget you can go literally anywhere is the world with this career!

If you or anyone you know is keen to know more about being a veterinarian, the VET HQ team are all more than happy to have a chat any time!

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