Dr. Debbie Stoewen is a licensed veterinarian and registered social worker with a PhD in the field of veterinary medical communication. With 25 years of practice experience, including being the founder and sole proprietor of a companion animal hospital, she is well-versed in the daily realities of veterinary practice. She adds to this an advanced understanding of personal well-being, interpersonal dynamics, and veterinary-client-patient communication, giving her a unique vantage point on the social aspects of practice.

Debbie is committed to advancing “quality of care,” to benefit patients, clients, and the teams that provide that care. As Pets Plus Us’ Care & Empathy Officer and the Director of Veterinary Services, she provides a fully accredited, evidence-based continuing education program called The Social Side of Practice for veterinarians and their teams across Canada. This includes veterinary wellness, veterinary-client-patient communication, teamwork, organizational culture, and leadership.

To find out more about this program:
Call 1-800-700-3391
Email care@petsplusus.com
THE SOCIAL SIDE OF PRACTICE - CHAMPIONING PET OWNER HAPPINESS

At Pets Plus Us, community is just as important as membership and pet insurance coverage. On the one hand, community means engaging with Canadian pet owners and the pets they love. On the other hand, it means partnering with veterinarians and their teams – those who are just as passionate about pets, responsible pet ownership, and pet health as we are. We thrive on the magic that happens when we’re all in it together, sharing our experiences and expertise.

The Social Side of Practice is an integral part of that sharing. This unique, fully accredited veterinary continuing professional development program reflects our commitment to you, your practice, and the profession. It's designed to help you and your team do what you do even better by providing insight, guidance, and strategies on the non-medical aspects of practice so you can offer the very best to your patients, clients, and each other.

MODULE 1: VETERINARY WELLNESS

Companion animal practice is ever more challenging with rising client expectations, rapidly advancing technologies, and ever higher standards of care. All of this can add to the daily stress of practice, affecting personal and professional well-being.

This module consists of four sessions that provide the knowledge and tools to help you and your team be well. With a focus on improving communication skills, preventing compassion fatigue, promoting compassion satisfaction, and increasing you and your team be well. With a focus on improving communication skills, preventing compassion fatigue, promoting compassion satisfaction, and increasing your and your team's ability to offer their very best – to clients, patients, and each other. It's designed to help you understand the aspects of practice that make us vulnerable, and take steps to address the consequences, it is important to understand the aspects that replenish us – and intentionally build these into practice life.

This session covers:
- The underlying social dynamics that make euthanasia discussions so difficult
- The communication principles that enable greater effectiveness with end-of-life decisions

Euthanasia conversations contend with issues of monumental consequence. The manner in which end-of-life is discussed has the potential to alleviate or aggravate client grief, influence client and professional satisfaction, and create or destroy long-lasting veterinary-client relationships. Compassionate, skilled conversations make a difference. They not only foster client decision making and reduce animal suffering, but also enhance both client and veterinary satisfaction and well-being. Effective communication is one of the most important contributors to high quality end-of-life care.

Session 2 • COMPASSION FATIGUE – WHAT IT IS, WHAT IT ISN’T AND WHAT CAN BE DONE

Compassion fatigue can affect anyone in the role of healer, helper, or rescuer. For a number of reasons, those in the veterinary profession are especially vulnerable. Profoundly significant, it is recognized as the greatest threat to personal, professional and financial success among those who truly provide compassionate care. Compassion fatigue can not only affect physical and mental health, but also professional competence and success and vocational direction and development, ultimately impacting patients, clients, team members and the bottom line.

This session covers:
- What is compassion fatigue
- Why veterinary team members are especially vulnerable
- How compassion fatigue affects individuals, teams, and practices
- How you, your team, and practice can manage it

Session 3 • COMPASSION SATISFACTION – FLOURISHING IN PRACTICE

There has been a growing focus on the pathological aspects of practice that can detract from veterinary team members’ ability to offer their very best – to clients, patients, and each other. Just as it is important to understand the aspects of practice that make us vulnerable, and take steps to address the consequences, it is important to understand the aspects that replenish us – and intentionally build these into practice life.

This session covers:
- What is compassion satisfaction
- How compassion can lead to fatigue or satisfaction
- Ways to create an optimal environment to flourish in practice

Session 4 • THIS IS YOUR LIFE – LET’S TALK ABOUT IT

Veterinarians are at particularly high risk for suicide – about four times the risk compared to the general population and twice the risk of other healthcare professions. There are a number of potential reasons why veterinarians are especially vulnerable, including work, personality and mental health related factors. Suicide is considered “a permanent solution to a temporary problem,” and is not an individual, but a community issue. Given the increased risk in our profession, every team member should be aware of the reality of suicide. It’s time we talk about it.

This session covers:
- The myths and facts about suicide
- The risk and protective factors
- The warning signs and how to respond