

0:00:04.0 Katie Berlin: Hi, welcome back to Central Line. I'm your host Katie Berlin, and our guest today is Kate Toyer, who is from very far away. So it is a day later where you are. Is that right, Kate?

0:00:19.2 Kate Toyer: That's exactly it. It's currently Wednesday, in Australia. So Wednesday morning, which is, I believe it's Tuesday afternoon back there, sort of, for most of the US.

0:00:31.4 Katie Berlin: It is. Yeah.

0:00:31.9 Kate Toyer: Yeah, yeah.

0:00:33.0 Katie Berlin: That's crazy to me. Like for some reason I have the hardest time with time differences. I cannot fathom that you could be 18 hours ahead of us, that just... That seems like science fiction and it's impossible. So, I'm 44...

0:00:46.5 Kate Toyer: Yeah it is kind of weird.

0:00:48.1 Katie Berlin: And I still have not figured this out. [laughter]

0:00:49.8 Kate Toyer: Yeah. It is kind of weird isn't it. And I think it's sort of one of those things like we kind of impose that like a structure of western society where we structure this whole sort of thing around the week and sort of and what not and...

0:01:12.2 Katie Berlin: It's true, it's all made up. Well, Rules Schmules. [laughter] And that sort of gets to what we're gonna be talking about today, is like sometimes it's okay to think about things a little bit differently. And, in fact sometimes it's necessary. But before we get into that, would you mind just giving us a little bit of a biography of yourself and how you came to be here?

0:01:39.8 Kate Toyer: Sure, absolutely. So, walawaani everyone, which is, walawaani is the welcome greeting in the local language of the Walbunja people of Yoon nation, which is the local Aboriginal people and the land from where I come from, which is on the south coast of New South Wales. So it's about four hours south of Sydney. I think most people in the US have a rough idea of where Sydney is. So I am a clinical veterinarian. I have, co-owned a practice with my wife. I've co-owned that for over 20 years, which dates me. Yes, everyone I did actually graduate last century. So that gives you, some sort of sense of my age. So, I guess I'm kind of fitting the, I fit in the profile...

0:02:36.1 Katie Berlin: Experience.

0:02:37.4 Kate Toyer: For an American Animal Hospital Association, sort of experienced practice owner. I'm all there. [laughter] So, I am also a trans woman. So, which I don't know, sort of, how many of the listeners would, use that language a lot. I feel like it's reasonably exposed nowadays, but it basically means that I was assigned male at birth. And I transitioned, to female around about 10 years ago now actually, but certainly publicly about sort of 7 or 8 years ago actually, sorry, publicly. But there's a bit of a story to that which, we might go into if that's okay, Katie, in terms of how I got there. Yeah.

0:03:35.7 Katie Berlin: Yes. I definitely want to want to do that.

0:03:36.0 Kate Toyer: Yeah. Well let's start at the beginning. When I was a child, and if any of you have read my bio on the things, and we write these bios and I'm not sure how many people read them, but we'll go over it. When I was a child...

0:03:55.3 Katie Berlin: You had the best bio that anybody has ever sent me for this podcast, I sent it to our entire DVM team, 'cause I was like, you have to read this bio. Like, she's the best. So, good bio. Just gonna put that out there. Also, good photos. [laughter]

0:04:09.2 Kate Toyer: Nice, thank you. I did like the photos. So, when I was a child, when I was growing up, I wanted to be two things. I wanted to be a veterinarian and I wanted to be a girl. So, and this is back in like sort of the... I was born in 1972, so this is back in like the '80s, sort of, as far as that goes. And you didn't see a lot of trans veterinarians out there, [laughter] there's not that many of us now that are that visible sort of. There certainly was bugger back then. Oh, excuse the language too, listeners. Slight trigger warning sort of. I promised I would try and be careful about my language and I'll do my best. [laughter] So, but I, so as I was growing up, I was trying to understand who I was as a person, which I think everyone does.

0:05:09.6 Kate Toyer: And at around the age of, it was probably, and look and I'd had these feelings for some time and kept them to myself since I was like sort of quite young, about six, whatever. But around the age of sort of 13, 14 years old, I told my mom who was a single mom, and I told my mom that I didn't really feel like a boy and I felt most comfortable when I was sort of, and the term I used at that stage was pretending, to be a girl. So sort of, getting dressed up and doing all that sort of type of thing. And my mom who passed away recently, sort of, and she was, I loved my mom dearly. Absolutely. She was a wonderful person. And we don't really have time to go into how wonderful she was but, I loved her dearly, but she had no idea how to deal with this. This is pre-internet days, this is before you even, this is back when you actually used to look up in the file, like the actual card catalog in the library. You'd actually look up sort of for books.

0:06:27.2 Katie Berlin: The Dewey Decimal system.

0:06:29.9 Kate Toyer: The Dewey Decimal bring back the Dewey Decimal System 301 to 323. That was my jam for veterinary science. So...

0:06:41.5 Katie Berlin: So we're Dewey decimal old is what you're saying? [laughter]

0:06:44.1 Kate Toyer: Exactly. We're Dewey Decimal old. And I told my mom, and she was kind of... She was quite nice about it, but she was probably freaking out internally. She sought the advice of my uncle, who was, and her sister, who was an Anglican minister at the time. And they talked to me and they made it abundantly clear that this, who I felt I was, like sort of transitioning and there were like trans women around at that stage. Like you had sort of, this is we're after sort of, Jorgensen and we're after [0:07:42.5] _____ and sort of, but most of the trans women tended to be in either showgirls or, sort of that type of area sex work, that sort of type of thing. And my aunt and uncle made it abundantly clear that if I was to transition, if I was to become a woman, that I would be unlovable. [chuckle] And sort of, warning again listeners, trans people's journeys can be quite hard to talk about. So occasionally it gets emotional when you are told that who you are is unlovable.

0:08:32.5 Kate Toyer: That's a challenging space. That's a really challenging space to actually be

in. And I guess I, and I love my mom dearly, and I didn't want to be unlovable, no one wants to be unlovable. No one wants to be rejected by society. So I buried all of that.

0:08:57.0 Katie Berlin: No.

0:08:58.0 Kate Toyer: I just shoveled it under the carpet and just said, all right, okay, that's not achievable. I can't do that. I can be a veterinarian. So I put all of my energy into being a veterinarian. And I went to school and I studied, I went to sort of a public school over here in Australia. So like your, I think like your state schools, is it state schools in the US? Like sort of, that are just publicly funded? Like sort of. My mom was a single mom.

0:09:33.0 Katie Berlin: They still cost a lot.

[laughter]

0:09:33.4 Kate Toyer: They still cost a lot. Okay. Yeah. So I'm a big advocate for free education, don't get me started on that. We won't get to any of the Trans story.

[laughter]

0:09:46.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah, that's a second podcast. [laughter]

0:09:48.4 Kate Toyer: It's another podcast entirely. [laughter] Free education for everyone. Probably not gonna go down well, but that's okay. So my mom was a single mom, but she absolutely doted on me. And so I got through, I went through school. I got them sort of, achieved what I needed to do to get into university, to study veterinary science back then, a bachelor of veterinary science degree was an undergraduate degree, in Australia. So I studied a BVSc at Sydney University and graduated, from there. And I met my lovely wife, the gorgeous and adorable Tara Cashman, who unfortunately listeners you won't get to hear, and you won't get to see, unlucky, bad luck, sorry. But she is absolutely...

0:10:47.0 Katie Berlin: Maybe next time [laughter]

0:10:48.0 Kate Toyer: Yeah, maybe next time. Because oh, it's like, honestly, she's sort of if you think mine, she's amazing. She's just amazing. But, so we met, I fell in love, I adored her and we got married and we did all of the things that you're supposed to do, like that society tells you you're supposed to do. Like we got jobs, we started, we bought property. We started to sort of, build a house. We had children, and somewhere in there I had bowel cancer. That was not an enjoyable experience.

0:11:40.8 Katie Berlin: Oh my gosh. I didn't even know about that part.

0:11:43.0 Kate Toyer: Yeah. Yeah.

0:11:43.9 Katie Berlin: I haven't done my homework. [chuckle]

0:11:46.9 Kate Toyer: Sorry. Yeah, no, it's one of those things that doesn't come up. Everyone gets sort of really focused on the, no offense, sorry. Everyone gets really focused on the trans stuff,

which is kind of cool. I actually, I had bowel cancer in 2003. I was diagnosed. I've got a chronic liver disease called primary sclerosing cholangitis. And that also has ulcerative colitis associated with it. And the ulcerative colitis predisposes you to bowel cancer. So I had a total colectomy when I was 33 years old. I think I was, no, 31 years old, 2003. So I had total colectomy. One of the things that sort of made me a massive advocate for mandatory pain relief after any sort of abdominal sort of laparotomy surgery, is anyone out there who's had their guts opened up, and sown back up again. Wow, that hurts. That really hurts a lot.

0:12:48.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. That's a perspective you won't forget.

0:12:53.6 Kate Toyer: Yeah, definitely not despite the experience that made me work out that I absolutely despise opioid drugs. Because I was on opiates for pain relief afterwards and I ended up with paranoia and, it was horrible. And it's... But anyway, moving on, [laughter], moving on from that. So...

0:13:14.4 Katie Berlin: You keep opening up little doors that we could go down for like, an hour here, 30 minutes here. So I'm just gonna keep making a note of the doors.

0:13:23.9 Kate Toyer: Good. Yeah, sort of keep the... Everyone's life is a journey, isn't it? There's like little pathways off on the side.

0:13:31.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:13:31.6 Kate Toyer: Like little diversions sort of thing. It's like those tourist routes. There's the freeway and then there's little tourist routes and it's the tourist routes where you often learn the most I think about a person.

0:13:42.6 Katie Berlin: The tourist route to bowel cancer is not one I probably would recommend.

0:13:47.3 Kate Toyer: Like jiggling, nothing that I would like to recommend.

0:13:53.0 Katie Berlin: 1 out of 10 would not recommend.

0:13:56.0 Kate Toyer: 1 out of 10 would not recommend exactly. So, mind you gave me an incredible perspective on, seizing life, I think, and sort of just living each day as it comes. And it will come back, I will come back into my story. So, basically, yeah, we sort of continued built a practice, sort of fell into partnership with another vet. Built a practice up, and we kind of had this almost from the outside, what looked like this perfect life. It was like, mom, dad, sort of three children. We had the practice, I'd sort of done what's called memberships over here, which is kind of like a pseudo internship residency sort of thing. We have a different, we have a slightly different pathway to specialization in Australia, compared to the US. I'd done memberships in veterinary surgery, I won the college prize for, I did an education series, an online education series that year for, on arthritis, degenerative joint disease. For what was called at that stage, the postgraduate foundation or the Center for Veterinary Education at Sydney University. Won the college prizes for that. Everything was like, perfect. My wife is a veterinarian as well. She also sat in past memberships in veterinary dentistry, you know, and I was sort of on the surgery chapter committee of the college. It was all, all looked amazing from the outside. And...

0:15:33.3 Katie Berlin: On paper you had it all.

0:15:35.5 Kate Toyer: On paper I had it all, I was like, I had the lot and, sort of, should have been, should have been... And look, and I wanna say this, I was happy, don't get me wrong. I was actually happy but there was this sort of thing, and it was this thing was that I wasn't a guy. I wasn't male. So I told my wife and after, and this is when the internet starts to sort of really ramp up, doesn't it? 2000, 2005. We're really starting to sort of, Internet's starting to really ramp up. You're getting things like Facebook groups, you're getting sort of, chat rooms and whatnot for people to explore and listen to each other, and learn from each other's stories.

0:16:33.4 Kate Toyer: And I did a little bit of sort of, investigating there and I can sort of, said to my wife, I need to tell you something, I don't feel like I'm a guy. Like that's not who I am. And, so we went on a bit of a journey then for a while. So I did do some exploration on who I thought I was, like gender wise, and explored lots of different concepts of gender, sort of so, non-binary gender, gender queer, gender fluid, sort of, there's lots of different sort of, there's lots of different genders out there. So, another warning everyone, there's not just two genders. Bad luck, sorry, sort of we've decreed it. The trans Illuminati have decreed it. There's more than two genders. So, I tried exploring all of them.

0:17:38.9 Kate Toyer: Well, not all of them, but certainly a lot. After a while, probably about one and a half, two years of sort of exploring that, it became very obvious that, no I was binary female, and that's my gender, sort of, and I know you had the wonderful Ewan Wolff on.

0:18:02.4 Katie Berlin: Yes.

0:18:04.3 Kate Toyer: Not that long ago, and they identify as non-binary. And, that was certainly an area I sort of tried to, I explored and just didn't fit for me, and that's just, that's cool. Like sort of, sometimes these things fit for some people, and not for others. As I said, there's more than two genders, but mine is binary female. So we started the process of doing all of the things to actually make who I knew I was inside, to make that obvious so everyone else sort of understood who that was. And that's for me, and I would like to say that everyone's journey is different and everyone's needs are different. And sort of, regardless of your sort of gender and how you identify, but for me, that did mean pursuing medical therapies. It did mean... Sort of basically, I'm kind of like, I'm a bit of a girly girl, I love spinny dresses. I love skirts. I love like, my wife's female. Like she's binary female as well. She loves jeans. She loves her jeans and a tee and stuff like that. And there's times when I do wear jeans and a tee, but also I love my skirt. I love my dresses. Sorry we've been joined by a little friend. Sorry. Hello, Mrs. Cooper.

0:20:15.0 Katie Berlin: The walk is over. [laughter],

0:20:16.1 Kate Toyer: The walk is over. Yes. The dog walk is over. Yeah. [laughter] So welcome to the noise. And, yeah, and sort of started doing quite a lot of different things. So there's a lot of stuff like, 'cause I transitioned fairly late, like I was 40, 41 or 42 when I started HIT therapies, and other things. So there was a lot of other stuff like laser hair removal, particularly on the face and all sorts of other things there. And eventually I changed my name legally, and we sent a notification out to our clients and said, "Okay, from this point Adam, who I was known as then will be known as Kate and sort of transitioned and yeah". And that was seven years ago. Yeah.

0:21:23.6 Katie Berlin: And it was all smooth sailing, right? No problems. [laughter] just.

0:21:27.8 Kate Toyer: So easy.

0:21:28.8 Katie Berlin: No bumps in the road along the way.

0:21:34.1 Kate Toyer: Ah, so easy, no bumps in the road. [laughter] Yes. I think so, I afraid it's...

0:21:39.4 Katie Berlin: I read an article on you recently where, I think it was from Australia and it had sort of indicated that things weren't really that hard for you. I mean, it was a fine article it was a good piece, but it kind of glossed over, I think probably what it was really like to tell your clients...

0:22:05.7 Kate Toyer: Yeah.

0:22:06.4 Katie Berlin: Because you're in a small town, right? Like, you're not in a big city.

0:22:08.8 Kate Toyer: Yes so...

0:22:09.8 Katie Berlin: You're in a country town. What was that like? How did people react?

0:22:15.2 Kate Toyer: Yeah, so look we're in a... SO the town we're in has a resident population of around about 14,000-15,000 people. So it's fairly small sort of it's not super small, but it's relatively small. It's small enough that you go down the local supermarket and you know sort of three or four people in there and because you've been treating their animals you know.

0:22:41.1 Katie Berlin: Right.

0:22:41.4 Kate Toyer: There's only...

0:22:42.0 Katie Berlin: Hopefully you can remember their names. [laughter]?

0:22:44.5 Kate Toyer: Oh, no, never. Oh gosh, I'm so bad. [laughter] I can remember their dog's names.

0:22:50.4 Katie Berlin: Me too, same.

0:22:50.8 Kate Toyer: Their pet's names, but it's never their names. Yeah. So, and look at, and we were sort of, like I said, we were kind of the poster child, the poster child family, like mom, dad, the three kids, we had the local veterinary business. Vets at this stage are still, and they still are realistically, they're still sort of regarded as pillars of society. Like you're there and everyone wants to be a veterinarian, don't they? Everyone will be coming in. I'm like, oh, my son Johnny wants to be a vet when they grow up, or my daughter Sally. And so telling my clients, yeah, like that was certainly embraced myself for that. Like we braced ourselves for that. What we did do, I guess, and I'd probably say, I would say a couple of things. I think certainly I have an enormous amount of privilege a huge amount of privilege realistically.

0:24:03.3 Kate Toyer: I'm white. Okay. I've got a stable family life, a partner who really loves me. I've got stable housing. I'm well educated, and I was reasonably well off social-economically, so I

had a mountain of privilege sitting behind me to be able to do this. But there was still very much the question of... Okay, will this all just completely and utterly blow up in our face? What are people gonna say? And what are they gonna do? Because it's not something, I was probably the first person locally to make it really, really obvious and really clear that I was transitioning. And so yeah, when I came out, this was when we went public, it was around 2015 and this is only like a year after, I think it was 2014. Laverne Cox was on the cover of Time Magazine. It's like the legendary transgender tipping point cover.

0:25:39.0 Kate Toyer: And the environment was quite different back then. If the listeners haven't seen, there's a documentary called Disclosure that is narrated by Laverne Cox, it's actually written and recorded by a whole gender-diversity team. But it looks at the depiction of trans people through media in movies and whatnot. And it's really quite, it's disconcerting. It's quite, it's heartbreaking and it's disturbing in terms of, it really focuses down on the fact that over the years, trans people have basically been the depiction of trans people in the public eye has been as jokes. We've been the butts of a joke or we've been some evil weird freak, like out of silence in the lambs or something, and this is sort of, this is what people knew about. This is what they were exposed to about trans people. They weren't exposed to someone they knew their transitioning, just your average everyday trans person just doing their life, which we've been doing for centuries, like genuine centuries [chuckle]

0:27:05.9 Kate Toyer: I think it's sort of and a lot of people don't quite realize like a modern phenomenon. It's like, no, it's not a modern phenomenon. It's just because frankly, half of the records from the Berlin Institute were burned during the 1933 Kristallnacht riots and that type of thing. So, we sent that email out, we sent an email out to all of our clients and told them what was happening. And I have to say, the response overwhelmingly was incredibly supportive. It really was super supportive, the people. And, I think this is really important for the veterinary profession as well. The veterinary profession, generally we want to be inclusive. Like we really do want to be inclusive. We want to welcome people. And overall we are actually kind of a really nice bunch of people. What we don't do well is yeah, exactly. What we don't do well is that we don't know how, sometimes we just don't know how, we don't know. We don't know where to go to hear the stories. We don't know where to go to find the information out that we need to know.

0:28:30.6 Kate Toyer: We don't know what voices to actually listen to, to be able to actually to be inclusive. And so, we get sort of we get a little bit afraid and we sort of and sometimes I think we either through a lack of understanding or through fear, we just kind of shut down and close off. But yeah, so that kind of went well. But I think the sort of the challenge is, is that as inclusive as an individual might be and as welcoming as an individual might be, society itself is still horrifyingly challenging for anyone from any minority, sort of, regardless of what that minority is be you black, Asian sort of have a disability, whether you are trans LGBTIQQA sort of neurodiverse. It sort of regardless of what that minority is, society is not that welcoming. Like it's sort of it's really, really tough. And sort of I think in the, we sort of talked a little bit in our prep stuff about that series of tweets that I wrote where I was being incredibly sass, so I think at the time. Well, again, I was obviously I was fairly annoyed with something. I was sort of.

0:30:08.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah. I mean, this was a series of tweets just for context for people listening. Like this was a series of tweets that went out, I think you put it out last summer in 2022, and it was just crushing to read. It was, you would say like how to be a successful trans woman, part one. And it really like showed very concisely that the reality for you is something that was probably

pretty unimaginable for most people. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt, but I wanted to give a little context there. 'Cause that was one of my first like pieces of information about you and I was like, oh my gosh. Like this is a lot. Like this person has had a lot in her life to deal With.

0:30:57.3 Kate Toyer: And I think that was.

0:30:58.1 Katie Berlin: I didn't even know about the bowel cancer.

0:31:00.5 Kate Toyer: Yeah, no, exactly. I think that's it. And it was sort of, and that's kind of me, like sort of, like it's challenging enough for me, like and I'm, as I said, I really like, I've got a lot of privileges. I've got a lot of stuff going for me, I've got passing privilege, like sort of, if I don't really want to be exposed as trans, then I don't kind of have to so sort of I'm white, like sort of trans women of color. Like it's genuinely heartbreaking sort of the attitudes and the statistics around the abuse that society sort of hands out to trans women of color in particular. It's sort of... It genuinely, like it's the sort of thing that I do find incredibly challenging to talk about because it's just so horrendous. The rate of violence against trans women, and particularly trans women of color, is insanely large. It's just ridiculously large. And to the point where the... It's some phenomenal number, sort of, 60 or 70% of trans women of color have been sexually assaulted and sort of, these are numbers that are just bonkers. Absolutely bonkers.

0:32:40.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:32:42.3 Kate Toyer: Not to mention, last year there were 28 trans women of... Trans women who were trans or gender diverse, people, most of them female identifying, were murdered in just in the US that doesn't include the rest of the world. And it's like two a month, that's every two weeks. You're just like, what the hell? That's bonkers. So...

0:33:12.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Inconceivable numbers.

0:33:17.0 Kate Toyer: It's just inconceivable. And it really comes down to... And that's just the, that's the hate that's thrown at you by society. And that's just the direct violence. And I've been abused in the street and whatever, and I'm just like, I'm 50 and I've got money and I've got sort of, I've got social standing. I've got very good friends and an extraordinarily supportive family. It's sort of, someone throws hate at me in the street. It's like, get a life. Genuinely just get a life. I'm sort of, but that's when you are 12 or 14 and you're a child, and going back to how I felt and there's a whole society is telling you that you are wrong somehow or unlovable or that you are who you say you are. You just, you're either lying or making it up. It's an intense, that's a really intense thing. And you're 12 or 14 years old. You don't know how to emotionally deal with that. What do you do with that? Sort of how do you deal with it...

0:34:44.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah, the most 12 year olds are worried about what to do with their hair or like, do they have the same type of jeans as everyone else. Like 12 year olds. Everything is a huge deal and most of it doesn't matter at all. And to be questioning, who everyone thinks you are versus who you feel you are and have people tell you that's not right. I cannot imagine what that must have been like, or what that must be like for kids. I just cannot imagine that.

0:35:18.1 Kate Toyer: And I think this is sort of... And this touches a little bit on some stuff that we did bring up in our pride stuff as well. But I think it is so vital to understand it. It's just like,

when you tell that child that they're unlovable, or you say to them, no, you can't play sport with your mates in the sort of, you can't go and play sport with your friends. Sort of, in the girls team or the boys team, and when you say that to someone who's 13 or 14, it's like, no, no, no, you're not allowed to play with us. It's like, what the hell? It's...

0:36:11.9 Katie Berlin: Right.

0:36:15.0 Kate Toyer: Astoundingly, there's a level of me that just can't understand that because it's just sort of, there's no way you would ever, if your child came home, and listeners too have children, if your child came home and told you that the schools, and your child is cis, cisgendered, say your child is a cisgendered girl. If your child came home and told you that, basically all of the kids on the school's, or the school said that they can't play on the girl's softball team, is softball a thing over there in America probably? I'm sort of, or the girls' hockey team, let's call it the girls' hockey team. Your child can't play on the girls' hockey team because she's got red hair. You'd be like, you'd be there, with the pickaxes at the principals store, genuinely [laughter] You'd sort of, there's nothing would be able to stop you as a parent.

0:37:20.9 Kate Toyer: So the idea that sort of saying, this, we're not gonna let you play because you are trans, it felt like what, the kid's 12 or 14 for crying out loud. Like sort of just let them play. And so I think that's really, really, that's a space I find really challenging that's a space I find very challenging to be nice about the people who wish to try and institute those types of rules. Because I think those rules are frankly cruel. It's sort of, and that sounds brutal and horrible to actually say about someone, but I do sort of, I think those rules are cruel. And I think that, sort of... When you understand 86% of trans people, and trans youth have considered, have had thoughts of suicide. Sorry, I should have given a trigger warning about discussions about suicide. But sort of...

0:38:44.6 Katie Berlin: I'll have one on the episode.

0:38:47.3 Kate Toyer: Cool. 86% of trans people, and the number's probably actually slightly higher in youth. 86% of trans people have considered suicide. 40% of trans youth have actually attempted suicide [laughter] That is just a... That is a bonkers number.

0:39:15.1 Katie Berlin: It's like it's made up numbers. Yeah. It doesn't seem it can be true, and yet it is true. And in the veterinary profession we focus a lot on these numbers right, because there's so many, there's so much data now about the suicide rate and the number of veterinary professionals who have considered suicide that those numbers seem too big, and that's two and a half percent, or something versus 40%. And I just can't... I can't get my mind around it. It's just staggering incredible.

0:39:50.0 Kate Toyer: It's so incredibly high, that it is sometimes hard to actually get to your head around. But I think the really important takeaway is that those numbers, those numbers of attempted suicide or thoughts of suicide, they drop to basically the same as a cisgendered child when that trans child is actually accepted by their family and by their community. So we know this, we actually know this stuff, when that trans child can actually participate in society, when that trans child can play sport, when that trans child can actually access the care that they need. When that trans child can actually talk to professionals and actually talk about who they are and how they feel as an individual. When that trans child can access when necessary, and I'm not saying that we're sort of... And please get away from some of the nonsense of... We need to make sure that we are very clear.

We're not talking about children taking bloody hormones at eight years old. That's just bollocks and sort of nonsense that's... It is misinformation. It is absolute misinformation.

0:41:07.5 Kate Toyer: But when you are 14, 15, 16 and you know you're trans, like I said, I knew I was trans at 14. It was just like... I was told I would be unlovable, so I just suppressed the crap out of it. And there goes the swear warning again. But yeah, when those children get that care, then we know that their rates of suicide attempt and rates of suicidal thoughts and depression and anxiety basically drop back to that of their peers, of their cisgendered peers. So why aren't we doing this this? This is just phenomenally bizarre to me, that we continually say, "No, we're actually... We want to protect children by actually by stopping them from accessing the care that they need."

0:42:08.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Makes no sense.

0:42:09.4 Kate Toyer: It makes no sense.

0:42:10.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:42:10.7 Kate Toyer: Absolutely. Makes no sense at all.

0:42:13.5 Katie Berlin: It's not gonna make, what people see as a problem go away. It's only gonna contribute negatively to the life and wellbeing of that child and that family. And that reminds me of what Ewan Wolff had talked about, where they had to leave Florida. Because of concerns for their safety and their child safety. And that's insane, this is the US. How is that possible? You shouldn't have to flee your home because you're worried about the safety of your child like that is unbelievable and yet it's the truth.

0:42:48.4 Kate Toyer: I think that's it. I think it is the truth and again, I've been incredibly lucky. I own my own practice, so I set the rules. Where it's just like, if clients... Only had a few clients who weren't particularly happy about me transitioning, a few clients tried to keep, basically would continuously use my old name and stuff like that and try and make out. And I was just like, "No, go, go somewhere else." I just, I don't need you. I really don't need you. But also I co-own and practice with my wife, and obviously my wife supports me. So it's just... And all of our staff support us. I'm sure that there's... I've sacked two clients directly, three clients directly basically for transphobic behavior. I'm reasonably certain that there's multiples of that, that my staff have actually not let come through the door. [laughter]

0:44:06.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:44:08.7 Kate Toyer: Because...

0:44:09.3 Katie Berlin: Which is kind of beautiful, right?

0:44:12.3 Kate Toyer: Mm-hmm.

0:44:13.3 Katie Berlin: I love...

0:44:13.9 Kate Toyer: Which is incredible.

0:44:14.4 Katie Berlin: I love that your staff supports you. It's incredible.

0:44:17.5 Kate Toyer: Which is...

0:44:17.5 Katie Berlin: I love that picture of them surrounding you, with their shields up. And being like you will not get close to her.

0:44:27.6 Kate Toyer: Yeah. And it's so true. And it's so vital and I think such an important message for your listeners out there. Is that we sort of... And I know you've mentioned in the past that some people have sort of have gone, "We're sort of... What's this stuff really got to do with it?" And I get that as well. What's this stuff got to do with veterinary practice? What's it got to do with the veterinary practice management sort of... Is it really sort of, is it really relevant? Shouldn't we just be talking about sort of the seeing animals and whatnot. But I think the sort of the... If you really want to be an ally, if you genuinely think that this stuff that I've talked about, like the... If you think that it's wrong and it's cruel for a child to think they're unloved or unlovable by society.

0:45:35.9 Kate Toyer: If you think it's wrong that someone has to wait for a ridiculously or insane amount of time, or even move states just to actually get the medical care that they need, in order to actually be addressed sort of their emotional and physical health. And believe me, it is a physical health thing. I'm physically far healthier now than I was before transition. So if you truly believe that that is not... That sort of if you're an ally and you feel that those are the... That there should actually be things that trans children should be loved, that trans people should be able to access care. What you can do is actually protect them. [laughter] Sort of just... Yeah. Form that shield and sort of...

0:46:38.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:46:38.7 Kate Toyer: And it doesn't have to be a one night thing, but sometimes, it does get tiring sometimes. It really gets tiring. We're getting quite emotional on this, and I'm talking very fast, so my apologies for that. Because I do talk faster when I get emotional. I'm sorry.

0:46:55.7 Katie Berlin: That's perfect.

0:46:58.6 Kate Toyer: But it doesn't have to be a one night thing. You don't have to go out with a sword and sort of smack them all down. But what you do have to do is actually be there, ready to shield them. Ready to ditch the client, that's gonna basically call the trans employee a freak or use their incorrect name or constantly mis-pronoun them, sort of... And I'm not talking about one-off episodes, I'm talking about constant stuff, I'm talking about direct and...

0:47:40.7 Katie Berlin: Like a passive aggressive way.

0:47:42.8 Kate Toyer: Yeah. That real passive aggressive sort of stuff. And be willing to make the sacrifice as a business owner, as a veterinary practice owner, which is sort of should be the listeners of this podcast, the American Animal Hospital Association podcast. As a practice owner, be willing to say, you know what, no, I don't want you in this. I don't want you here. And yeah, you might lose out, maybe lose out a bit of money, maybe that client was a firm. Maybe they were a good client financially, sort of thing. I'll give you the tip. It's absolutely nothing on the... I'm trying to think of a word that's not shit just on the stuff that...

[laughter]

0:48:31.7 Katie Berlin: Don't, don't bother.

0:48:39.0 Kate Toyer: Don't bother.

0:48:39.1 Katie Berlin: Sometimes there's just one word for something.

0:48:41.8 Kate Toyer: There is just one word. It's exactly. It has absolutely nothing... Go ahead. Sorry Katie.

0:48:52.8 Katie Berlin: I'm thinking about all the times and I'm just gonna say this as somebody who was never the boss, right? I was never a practice owner. I was always an associate or an assistant, or I was a receptionist when I started. And the number of times that clients didn't treat me well or questioned me in a way that showed that they doubted who I was and not just the decision that I made, and that I didn't feel like I had that backing. And I am, if you had a mountain of privilege behind you, I am a wash and privilege, I have all the privilege. It should be so easy, and yet I still felt sometimes they didn't have my back. And we're talking now about problems with retention and attrition, people leaving clinics, everybody's working short staffed. I don't know if it's like that in Australia, but it is definitely like that at every practice here.

0:49:53.5 Kate Toyer: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

0:49:54.1 Katie Berlin: And if I were looking for a job right now, I wouldn't just want a place where they practiced good medicine and they knew, they read the diabetes guidelines and they knew how to use the new diabetes drug and they had a surgical laser. I would wanna practice where I knew that if somebody treated me badly, that everybody in that clinic would have my back. And whether I am me or you, or somebody completely who looks and had a completely different life experience, I would want to know that we had each other. And without that, it is impossible to be your best self at work. And that's what I just don't understand is how people don't see that connection. That if we don't feel accepted for who we are, regardless of what that means, it is impossible to come to work and have your best day and give your best self. And I just... Yes, you're the owner, but your staff could make their own choices. And the fact that they not only accepted who you are, but also stood by you in that way, I just think that's so beautiful. And I feel that's a lesson that we all need to learn when it comes to our teams and the sanctity of our work. Is that that work needs to be a safe space, not just a space that practices good medicine.

0:51:20.7 Kate Toyer: Completely. I totally agree with you, Katie, and I think that it's... I don't think... I build safe spaces, it's kind of my talent. It's my sort of... It's like my superpower.

0:51:36.7 Katie Berlin: It's a good talent.

0:51:38.0 Kate Toyer: I'm sort of..

[laughter]

0:51:38.7 Kate Toyer: It's a good talent. Yeah. It is my thing, I'm good at building safe spaces.

And I think what we have built at our clinic is we have built a safe space for everyone. So that... You're absolutely correct about the retention and all that sort of type of thing, all of those things we have over here in Australia. We've got sort of a... We've got staff of six and over the last 20 years we've had 10 employees, eight of whom ended up having long service leave with us.

0:52:30.3 Kate Toyer: Now four of those employees have left and moved on for other reasons and sort of stuff like that. And stuff happens, sometimes something doesn't gel, sort of... And sometimes we make mistakes. Sometimes I make mistakes, God knows, some of the stuff I've done over the years. But I think when you create that safe space, it's sort of... I see so many veterinary practice owners getting their challenges, and their troubles are wrapped up so much in HR stuff and so much in culture and whatever. And I think creating that culture of an inclusive and safe space is so vital. And you can't do that by just being, just worrying about the animals. Because you can't come to work and just not talk about. What sort of a one-dimensional world would our veterinary practices be if we only came to work and we never talked about our lives outside, we never talked about our children, we never talked about the restaurant we went to with our sort of wife, husband/whoever on the weekend, had the most amazing food. We didn't talk about the sort of, "Oh, auntie Doris is staying with us. Oh my goodness, she can talk when she gets a wine into her."

[laughter]

0:54:04.4 Kate Toyer: All those sorts of things. They're a part of our life and sort of... And we do, and we bring those to work. Even when we say we don't, we do. Like sort of... It's the classic sort of, unfortunately, I'm sorry, this is the classic sort of privileged white person, particularly privileged white practice owner sort of thing. It's like, "Oh, just leave the home life at the door and sort of just bring, do the work." And it's just like... And then they prattle on about their, I don't know, their horse that they just bought or something. I don't know. But sort of, I'm sorry practice owners if I'm being very stereotypical.

0:54:52.0 Katie Berlin: No comment.

[laughter]

0:54:53.4 Kate Toyer: But we sort of... So we do that sort of, even though we don't think we do, we do. And to say that we should just leave these issues of, be that race, be that gender, be that disability, be that sort of whatever it is. To say that it's got no bearing on how we do our work, and our capability to actually do our best work and look after those animals and care for the animals owners. Because we are caring for pets, but we're also caring for the owners. I think this is really... I think you've touched on this on a few sort of podcasts in the past in this series of, "This isn't just an animal sort of centered profession. We're actually a people profession."

0:55:55.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:55:56.1 Kate Toyer: We're probably one of the most holistic professions that's out there. We sort of, we care about animals and people.

0:56:02.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:56:04.3 Kate Toyer: And that's amazing.

0:56:05.9 Katie Berlin: And that specific animal person combo is special, no combination person and animal is the same. So we have to understand that too. I love that about it.

0:56:17.9 Kate Toyer: Exactly. That's exactly it. And that's the thing that sort of brought us to veterinary science was if... Because if that wasn't what brought us to veterinary science, we'd be bankers or something. Like honestly, we could make money a lot easier elsewhere. So to sort of say that you can't, sort of talking about these things isn't really relevant to veterinary practice is kind of wearing a fairly narrow set of blinkers, in my view. And I think it's vital and you can't, I don't think you'd expect a trans employee to come to work and just go, "I don't want to hear about that other stuff." And then as soon as they leave the workspace, and they gotta go out and to an extent just fight to actually exist.

0:57:25.4 Kate Toyer: And as happened with Ewan and for a number of trans people across the US and sort of some of these sentiments are spreading around the world as well. Is that just accessing simple things, just being able to participate in society. Just being able to actually go out with your mates and go down to the local park on a weekend and sort of play sport with some friends, something that most of us would take for granted. For a trans person is like a minefield of challenges that they've got to interact with and address and overcome. Sorry, overcome was the word I was after. There is a minefield of challenges that they've gotta overcome just to actually play sport. To have a bit of fun on a Saturday afternoon.

0:59:09.6 Kate Toyer: And I'm not talking about Olympics here or whatever, and there's other people who can talk much better about trans people in elite sport where, quite frankly, that's massively overblown as well. But go and look up ACLU and they've got some great info on that and whatever. I'm just talking about some basic, being able to just go and socialize with your mates and not actually be worried that to an extent you're gonna be arrested. I've been charged with a criminal offense, which is really bizarre. And we got political, even though we weren't supposed to get political, we got political. I'm so sorry.

[chuckle]

0:59:21.4 Kate Toyer: Actually I'm not that sorry at all.

0:59:22.2 Katie Berlin: I still think... Yeah, don't be sorry, because that's the whole point. Is like, this isn't a political podcast and to me these are not political issues. They're made political because of the way certain political parties tend to address them and the differences they're in. But there shouldn't be anything political about allowing people to be who they are when who they are is not hurting anyone. And it's just them. Like you said, it's no different than your kid having red hair and being excluded from a soccer team because of red hair. That is who that child is. And I don't think anything about this is political. And that's why I wanted you to tell your story, because it's not about politics, it's about people. You are a person, this is about human rights and about the fact that if you are standing in that clinic. The person across the table from you could be trans, could be non-binary, could have somebody at home who is struggling with this. They could be going home to a situation that, just like the tweets that you put out last year, they could be going home to a situation that is unfathomable for most of us.

1:01:27.4 Katie Berlin: And I can't, as somebody who's had an occasional blip where home life is

not comfortable for me, I can't imagine the amount of stress that that has put on me just with a little bit of discomfort that I've had in my home life sometimes. I cannot imagine the effects of that accumulated stress over time on somebody's physical and mental wellbeing. And as we know, we talk so much about wellbeing in this profession now, thankfully, because we know that wellbeing has a tremendous effect on how we do our jobs. It's all connected. And you don't know what somebody is going through when they're not talking to you about it directly. And so to me, this is just a question of humanity.