

0:00:04.9 Katie Berlin: Welcome to a very special episode of Central Line. I say that before every episode but for real this is special. Look at her coat.

0:00:13.1 Laila Proença: Hello.

0:00:15.2 Katie Berlin: This is Laila Proença.

0:00:18.2 Laila Proença: Hello.

0:00:19.7 Katie Berlin: Dr. Laila Proença and she is an amazing wonderful warm beautiful person. Also very smart very brilliant. And I met her after I essentially socially stalked her at the AVMA Convention in July. And now here she is.

0:00:34.2 Laila Proença: I'm glad you did.

0:00:36.6 Katie Berlin: We're here on site at the very first AAHA Con. So AAHA Con 2023 here in San Diego which is very close to where you live.

0:00:44.4 Laila Proença: Yes very close.

0:00:44.6 Katie Berlin: And it's a beautiful day outside and yet you have taken some of your time to be inside talking to me and I really appreciate that.

0:00:53.1 Laila Proença: Yes.

0:00:53.4 Katie Berlin: Thank you so much.

0:00:55.3 Laila Proença: Thank you for having me here. I really like it.

0:00:55.4 Katie Berlin: Laila... See that was totally persona.

0:00:58.9 Laila Proença: That was yes.

0:01:00.7 Katie Berlin: We're going to talk about that in a second 'cause I asked permission but I really want to talk about that. But Laila would you just introduce yourself to anyone who has not seen you in your fabulous coat?

0:01:08.0 Laila Proença: Yes.

0:01:08.4 Katie Berlin: Who are you and what are you passionate about?

0:01:10.7 Laila Proença: Yes. I'm Laila Proença. Should I look at the camera or at you?

0:01:15.6 Katie Berlin: It doesn't matter.

0:01:17.3 Laila Proença: Yeah?

0:01:18.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah, me. Look at me.

0:01:20.0 Laila Proença: Well I'm Laila Proença. I am the founder of VETAHEAD. VETAHEAD is one of my passions. It is a business but I actually see that as a movement. A movement for change. So we have no species left behind. So basically we teach veterinary professionals, technicians, veterinary students about ZooMed which is Exotic Animal Medicine. It's a huge gap. We don't learn that at school. And there's so many owners that have them as pets and love them deeply and as veterinarians we are passionate about it. About 40% of us really really love it, but we don't know what to do so I just... In going to conferences and speaking about it and having people come after and talk to me. And I noticed a recurrent comment which was, Oh my God I was about to give up and I was so inspired from what you said and that was so recurrent and I was like okay how can I... And this was pre-COVID. I was like how can I help everybody because I can't be everywhere? And the message is so simple. The message is like no species left behind. And we don't practice exotic animal medicine because exotic animal medicine is... Can we curse?

0:02:41.8 Katie Berlin: Yes. Well I mean that's up to Casey.

0:02:44.5 Laila Proença: Maybe we put a beep. I won't curse. I'll make it easy for you. My persona doesn't curse.

0:02:47.9 Katie Berlin: It wouldn't be the first time.

0:02:49.1 Laila Proença: My persona does curse I've been told. But it's just exotic animal medicine is based on fear. It is really made for people to fear what they're doing, fear mistakes. They're like I can't believe you did that. It's very judgmental and ZooMed patients are more alike than they're different and they are not difficult. It's just the same medicine. There are just a few details that we need to follow and I really wanted people to know that. So to encourage them and to teach them. And then at the time I was like it has to be online but I was like how am I going to convince people you can learn medicine online? And then COVID came.

[laughter]

[vocalization]

0:03:30.4 Laila Proença: Today, it's no longer a hurdle.

0:03:37.0 Katie Berlin: Now they're like, You're not gonna make me get on a [0:03:37.3] ____.

0:03:37.8 Laila Proença: I know and now it's like we say we are not webinars. We are VETAHEAD 'cause it's definitely not a webinar. But Yeah, that's how it came and everything about me is different the way we teach. It's really thought through and there's so much love into it. But that's one of my big passions. And I also love to speak about leadership and feminism and equality and gender equality is very big on me. It's always impossible to separate those things. And also race equality some of the life choices I made I got really confronted with all of that. And I was like, Okay let's put that too under the I'm passionate about and it's definitely another goal another thing to fight for. So Yeah, I think that sums up. I'm also a mom and Brazilian all of that, so immigrant and all of that.

0:04:50.8 Katie Berlin: And I heard you tell your story a personal version of your story on the stage at AVMA at your lecture and it really resonated not just with me but I looked around. This was not a lecture on Zoo medicine.

0:04:56.7 Laila Proença: No. It was...

0:04:58.5 Katie Berlin: This was a lecture on basically what it's like to be a woman who speaks her mind and says no sometimes and has opinions and isn't afraid to express them AKA a difficult woman. And I certainly can identify with that more so the older I get. But you telling that story, I mean I looked around this room it was a full room. I think there was one dude like you go Dude at least people who identified as women and who could really relate because I looked around and there were tears in everyone's eyes a few times during your talk. And I think people just saw themselves. And that was so powerful to me. And I am terrified of exotic animal medicine. Terrified. Absolutely.

0:05:47.5 Laila Proença: As is everybody as I was too.

0:05:48.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. I don't want to touch a bird. I don't think I can be in the same room as a bird 'cause I'm worried I'm going to kill it just by looking at it funny. And if I had had VETAHEAD when I was in general practice I would've absolutely used it. And I love how passionate you are about it but it was the personal story and that connection that really made me just say immediately kind of creepily I love this woman.

0:06:16.0 Laila Proença: Creepily... [laughter]

0:06:18.1 Katie Berlin: She's my person. Yeah, it was a little creepy. I was like we're gonna be friends 'cause she doesn't have a choice about this. I'm going to go up and I'm just going to wait to talk to her.

0:06:25.6 Laila Proença: No that lecture was... This is a lecture I gave probably three times only. I think that was the third time. And it's a lecture every time I tailor it a little bit because I put stories in and I take them out. I'm like, Okay, maybe this is too personal I shouldn't say that. And then I go screw it. I have to say it. And that specific one it brought tears to my eyes 'cause as I was speaking I could see people nodding and becoming emotional. And I was like F, I'm not alone and it is very... It's a lonely journey. It's very lonely I don't want people... I don't want to glamorize being difficult because it sucks. It's really isolating. I cannot have romantic relationships because I just don't tolerate BS. And I think it's just basic standards. You just want someone that their words match their own actions. I mean pretty basic. Someone that is reliable pretty basic respectful pretty basic, intelligent. Self sufficient. I don't want to raise anyone. I'm like pretty...

0:07:47.3 Katie Berlin: Really just ticking off the boxes here though.

0:07:49.1 Laila Proença: Pretty big.

[laughter]

0:07:54.3 Katie Berlin: It's a lot of boxes.

0:07:55.2 Laila Proença: Can he be hot too?

0:07:56.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I mean...

[laughter]

0:08:02.4 Katie Berlin: And then underneath it all they have to not just be all those things but appreciate understand that you are the way you are. And that is something to love about you not something to tolerate about you.

0:08:10.4 Laila Proença: No it tends to compete and I don't know how to make that equation work. It tends to become a competition. I swear to God. I'm not trying to compete with them. I don't even care. I just want them to have their friends and their life it's just... I cannot hear the word emasculated again seriously. It is like a trigger. I can't. I am not responsible for your testosterone levels there are shots for that but...

[laughter]

0:08:40.2 Laila Proença: Is this the way it's supposed to go. But I think...

[laughter]

0:08:48.0 Laila Proença: I mean, poor my son. I have a son so I raise him to not do these things. I really think that I'm trying to raise the man I wish there was out there and I even broke up. I really ended my marriage because of them because I was just scared because my kids don't handle change really well because of the story and abandonment and all of that. So I was scared to break up with my ex-husband 'cause I really thought that they're going to freak out or it wasn't fair to them. But then I realized that I had to do it for them because I could not give them the example that a woman needs to shrink to stay with someone or to conform to being married and having a house on the hills.

0:09:40.1 Laila Proença: And it was the best decision ever. Even my son a month later he was like mom you're so happy and they both get it. And they both tell me mom... Again and I shared in that lecture I made a mistake again and I had no idea how I did it. I was in a relationship with a narcissist and I have never had a relationship with a narcissist. And I don't know I consider myself super smart and how come I didn't see all these red flags? But at the end they're like mom... And I was talking to them I'm thinking about I'm going to break up and we were really a family and etcetera. And they're like mom we just want you happy, if he's not being good to you. And then I said something like, Okay I'll never date again guys don't worry I'm never going to bring another guy to our house. And my son was like why are you going to make this mistake? My son is 15 and he was like, Mom you're so young. You're a great person you deserve love. And I was like, Oh my God how old are you dude.

0:10:44.5 Katie Berlin: You're doing something right there it's what that means.

0:10:47.1 Laila Proença: And then he said you my Spider-Man. I know. That was like really? I know. That was the best compliment ever. Mom you're my Spider-Man. I was like, Oh my God. Okay okay I'll keep doing this you will not break my soul. So sassy queen bee and I think

VETAHEAD is a lot of that, because VETAHEAD goes really against everything. Against everything that has been taught. We are really trying to change our dynamic our culture goes against everything. People think that ZooMed pets owners won't pay for appointments which it couldn't be further from the truth. They think they won't take them to the vet which again it couldn't be... It's like such an untouched territory waiting there for the market to realize that. And they think that you're going to be poor if you do ZooMed. I'm not poor and that's another problem. I usually make more money than my partner and that's a really huge problem. I have not met a man yet that is okay with that. I really haven't. I don't care what they say. I don't care if they say I love strong women like, Do you really? You like the idea of it 'cause it's shiny. But...

0:11:57.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I mean it's definitely not easy and...

0:12:01.3 Laila Proença: Is it really not easy?

0:12:03.8 Katie Berlin: It's not easy.

0:12:04.5 Laila Proença: To be with a strong woman.

0:12:04.6 Katie Berlin: No. I mean it's not easy to navigate relationships as a strong woman.

0:12:07.3 Laila Proença: Oh, no it's not. Oh, no.

0:12:08.6 Katie Berlin: I think it can be very easy. It just depends. Relationships are complicated no matter who you are. They're complicated and they're complex and a lot of people settle. And...

0:12:20.1 Laila Proença: Right.

0:12:20.5 Katie Berlin: If you're a person who doesn't like to settle or you're in a phase of life where you're like, Okay anything less than a hell yeah is settling.

0:12:25.2 Laila Proença: You see but I don't know. I don't mind settling. I just don't want to shrink. Settling is fine. I just don't want to shrink. Some routine is okay.

0:12:37.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

0:12:39.9 Laila Proença: But having to literally... It's the image of literal... You know the cat in the bottle. It's literally doing that. I'm not that flexible. I'm really not.

[laughter]

0:13:00.8 Laila Proença: I just dated someone. I was engaged to someone lovely and he absolutely did not want me to shrink. I really believe that he's the most supportive person. But I was shrinking myself because we were in different spots in life. And I was doing it to myself because I felt like being around him I couldn't be the only one who was big or wanted to feel big and be big and do big. And that's where I am right now. Just do all the things and feel all the things. And that was a really hard choice because this is a profession. Veterinary medicine in general is a profession that attracts people who are used to having to fit into boxes. And we had to fit into certain boxes to get into school in the first place. And then we had to fit into boxes to get out of school. And then we

had to fit into boxes to get jobs and keep those jobs. And we're suffering the Consequences of that now as a profession where everybody feels like there's one way to be a vet. And if you're not good at it it's your fault. And people are burning out and taking too long I think to figure out that there are other ways to do it.

0:14:18.0 Laila Proença: No and even again the whole concept of VETAHEAD, the whole way we teach and the whole approach we have is completely against the flow and very often people come. It just happened last week. I shouldn't say very often. We don't have many people coming and "being haters". Our community is very healthy. They're the VETAHEAD-ers which is super cool I love this name. But here and there will come a person that should be a person mentoring others that should be a person... It's a person with a name, a person with a platform. And they come and they will make a nasty comment like... Very like, Oh this is so wrong you shouldn't be doing this. And I'm like not here. And that's the part that's been difficult. My answer on Instagram is like, Dude it's usually a dude. It's like you have my phone number. Don't pretend you don't know me. Don't come here in my house say those things. This is not professional and I will delete this if this continue. And I say if you don't have my phone number anymore DM me and I'll give you because this is like what are you doing? And I'm just like... And then behind it comes a lot of people today that is speaking up. So it's really cool that part.

0:15:45.9 Katie Berlin: Yes. The third party army, David calls it.

0:15:48.4 Laila Proença: Yes, I have never had this experience before but I can't just pretend this didn't happen. It did happen. Of course the dude never texted me or called me. But I literally said that and I put it there. This is not okay. You're not going to talk to me like this. I put my boundaries right there and if this continues I will delete it. And it's always someone with a big name and I don't care. You should be using this for good. It's like, Okay you don't agree with me so what?

0:16:21.7 Katie Berlin: So you had said that's one of the things that I love about you is that you're just like, Not in my house. And before we started recording you talked about your village and how even though you're not a person who trusts easily trusting and believing the best intentions in people is what has led you to have a village as you call it that really supports you, lifts you up, takes care of you when you need that. And it sounds like the VETAHEAD community is part of that village.

0:16:56.6 Laila Proença: It is. Really and...

0:16:56.7 Katie Berlin: That's amazing. That's amazing.

0:16:57.6 Laila Proença: It is amazing. I'm very proud of it and I'm very proud of the people I did decide to trust. I am more... Again trust is very difficult for me as I think it might be for a lot of people but I look like this outgoing person which I am, but I let you be friends with my persona. That's very easy. But be friends with Laila that's very hard. You need to come with a little hammer to break some bricks to come in, and I keep putting them back as you break them I'm really good about it. I'm really broken inside as in I am very strong. But at the same time I'm very sensitive and I really hurt when something happens to me. Not this type of comment on Instagram that doesn't faze me, but if I let you in and something happened or if it's completely gratuitous and you're like, Why? Why are you doing this to me? I'm just existing. I didn't do anything to you and so much of it. Even in my residency which I quit, I'm so proud of it. You're supposed to be my mentor why are

you breaking my soul? It's really deep. It deeply hurts me and it takes time to grieve about it.

0:18:24.0 Laila Proença: And yeah. So inside, even though I look like this really strong person that keeps conquering, and I am, inside is, leaves a human that is very sensitive.

0:18:38.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:18:39.9 Laila Proença: And it is hard sometimes to navigate because sometimes you just wanna crawl in your shell and just stay and just be regular. Like, I can't, one time I went to a therapist and he was like, Okay, what is your goal? I said, I wanna be sweet. He said, what?

[laughter]

0:18:55.4 Katie Berlin: I just, I did not expect you to say that.

0:19:02.3 Laila Proença: I swear to God. He was like, what? I said, I just wanna be sweet. He was like, What do you mean? I said, you know those people that everybody's like, Oh, such and such is so sweet. Yeah. I'm not like that. I don't wanna be that person.

[laughter]

0:19:20.9 Laila Proença: That person might be like at therapy being like, God, I wanna be strong. I know it's something...

0:19:24.0 Katie Berlin: To be sweet.

0:19:24.1 Laila Proença: I wanna be the kind of person who draws boundaries and says not in my house. Like, the grass is always greener.

0:19:31.4 Laila Proença: No. But I do that today 'cause I have some stability that allows me to... No, I guess I was bold like this without knowing since I was a little kid, not knowing what was I doing. I was allowing myself to act like, a white man. Without knowing that that that is what I was doing. And I could not understand why it generated so much conflict. I was just like...

0:19:57.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I can see what I'm doing all the time.

0:20:01.1 Laila Proença: I'm just doing what the guy did. Like, it took me a long time to understand. And even, for a long time I was like, Oh, this feminist, what is wrong with them? And it's just like... Today it's like, oh, okay. It's a process. It's a process to figure out your place in the world. But at the end of the day, I'm very proud of who I am. That's actually my new tattoo on my arm. It says... Is in Portuguese, but in English is something, to the effect of, continue to be passionate about the woman you fought so hard to be. Like follow this path and says Love grandma, which is my... Again I love her so much, but she was a trailblazer. How do you say that?

0:20:43.2 Katie Berlin: Trailblazer.

0:20:44.3 Laila Proença: Trailblazer. Yeah. But it's a very lonely journey.

0:20:47.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:20:48.2 Laila Proença: Like if anyone goes to the therapist to say, I wanna be a trailblazer, know that you're going to be alone.

[laughter]

0:20:57.4 Katie Berlin: You know, I don't... I mean, I understand like, I can't invalidate your feelings. Like you, I understand it feels alone and also like, you're so not alone.

0:21:07.0 Laila Proença: Right. But it took a while for me to find my village. That's what I'm trying to say. Like today. I don't feel, Well, there is still, I'm not gonna lie. I'm saying too much to you. Damn it, Katie.

[laughter]

0:21:22.3 Katie Berlin: I love, this is why I love you because.

0:21:24.4 Laila Proença: I still cry at night so many nights.

0:21:28.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Yeah.

0:21:28.7 Laila Proença: It's so overwhelming.

0:21:31.0 Katie Berlin: You talked about your persona, here a few times. And, I don't know if anyone here has read books by Glennon Doyle, but I know you have.

0:21:39.7 Laila Proença: Yeah.

0:21:40.0 Katie Berlin: We bonded over Untamed, I think. But her book before that Love Warrior, she talked about, where she was talking about trying to save her marriage. And she talked about her representative. And she would like, Send her representative into situations. She'd be like, Okay, you know, my representative is going to marriage therapy. Like my representative is going to pick up the kids from school. And like, it never really felt... She felt like she had to sort of put this person forward. That was Glennon that everybody saw. And I think a lot of women especially can relate to that, of like, Okay, if I just got this email from this guy and it was like pretty rude. But if I want to email back, even if I'm saying no, it has to be nice. That's my representative, writing that email, because I wanna be really rude back.

[laughter]

0:22:31.0 Katie Berlin: And like when you came in, you were like, Oh, I've gotta put my persona on to be doctor and not just Laila. And like, I just wonder if you could just say a little bit more about that.

0:22:46.7 Laila Proença: Yes. It's funny. So I'm doing DBT therapy. It's Dialectical Behavior Therapy. I don't know if you ever heard about it.

0:22:52.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:22:53.7 Laila Proença: But it's full of acronyms, whatever, stop in duress So it's like how you modulate your behaviors, how you can... It's not for you not to feel, but for you to be able to manage your feelings, your emotions and etcetera. So it's funny because the whole thing is for you not to escalate. The whole DBT program is for you to learn ways and tools for you not to escalate and find a... You're not gonna be able to not feel it but don't escalate, etcetera. And I've been doing it for a few months already and I keep telling my therapist, but I want to engage.

[laughter]

0:23:33.9 Laila Proença: And I came up with like an acronym from engage that will be positive every letter. And so every time and I'll tell them, but I wanna engage and now I can't because this is all positive. They may. I wanna engage.

[laughter]

0:23:47.4 Katie Berlin: Like, fine, here's how you can engaged.

[laughter]

0:23:52.1 Laila Proença: Just put a smiley face at the end.

[laughter]

0:23:57.2 Laila Proença: I love the passive aggressive American way...

0:24:00.4 Katie Berlin: Emojis stuff.

0:24:00.7 Laila Proença: Emojis. Definitely have helped a lot.

0:24:01.3 Katie Berlin: When it comes to that.

0:24:02.5 Laila Proença: I know. Don't you just hate it when someone says, Oh, I'm so sorry. I wish I could help you. Nope, you didn't. Like. I'm sorry.

[laughter]

0:24:11.8 Laila Proença: Just say you don't wanna help. And I'm fine with that.

0:24:12.0 Katie Berlin: Per my last email.

[laughter]

0:24:13.1 Laila Proença: Per our tourism, no, I'm kidding. But, the persona. So I think my persona, it's not someone different from who I am. I'm very raw, which also it's amazing, but it also comes with it's consequences, my persona just hides my weak spots. My persona just wears a very thick shield, to not allow anyone in. So, it's not that my persona won't get into a conflict, it's just that I

won't let you see my weak spots. When you're driving, like the side, what is it called when you can't see on the mirror?

0:24:56.8 Katie Berlin: Side view mirror?

0:24:57.6 Laila Proença: No. Like when you're driving and there's a blind spot Oh...

0:25:00.3 Katie Berlin: Peripheral vision.

0:25:00.4 Laila Proença: A blind spot. Oh, a blind spot.

0:25:02.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:25:03.3 Laila Proença: Yeah. I won't like...

[laughter]

0:25:05.0 Laila Proença: I have a blind spot right here. Like, I actually can't see it. It's really bizarre. I'm holding my... For people listening, I'm holding, while, Laila laughs at me. [laughter] I'm holding my hand. 'cause she's like I know what peripheral vision is. I'm holding my hand...

0:25:19.2 Laila Proença: No. It's 'cause like [laughter] see we just shared stuff that we shouldn't be sharing.

0:25:24.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah. [laughter]

0:25:25.3 Laila Proença: I just won't let, because if I don't let you in you can't hurt me.

0:25:29.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

0:25:30.6 Laila Proença: It's really sad though. It's really sad. I'm very aware of it.

0:25:33.7 Katie Berlin: Well, and I think there are a lot of people who go through practice life that way, like they compartmentalize, until it's like they compartmentalize themselves into complete detachment...

0:25:45.2 Laila Proença: Yeah.

0:25:45.5 Katie Berlin: Or disengagement.

0:25:46.6 Laila Proença: Yeah.

0:25:47.0 Katie Berlin: Because we feel so much...

0:25:49.3 Laila Proença: I want to engage.

0:25:50.1 Katie Berlin: All day. Yes. Whether we're angry or defensive or like a client is giving us a hard time about something and we need to react. Or we need to respond rather than reacting, or

we're upset because of a convenience euthanasia.

0:26:03.9 Laila Proença: Yeah.

0:26:04.1 Katie Berlin: Or because of, whatever and moral distress. And we just put all that, we just hide all that behind the persona.

0:26:13.8 Laila Proença: You see. No. So it's interesting you say, and I didn't mean to cut you, but I feel like my persona... I still won't do all of those things. And I get in trouble a lot. I just got recently, I have never had an ethical... Like when they go to boards and complain about you. I forgot the name it receives. Anyway, I'd never had a complaint before with boards and I had two recently. And one was... Again because I don't do those things, like if an owner wants to euthanize their pet and there is a treatment for it, I'm not talking about end-stage cancer that you could extend the life for two months. I'm talking about like a broken leg.

0:26:51.5 Katie Berlin: Like a broken leg.

0:26:52.3 Laila Proença: Yeah, or something like that. They go, I don't have money. Okay. Okay, so you need to euthanize it. I said, no, I'm not going to. What? You don't love animals? I said, no, I do. You don't. Like I say what... Sometimes I say it like that because they are putting me on the spot. Why can't I put them on the spot? It's almost like they are putting the onus and the responsibility of having that pet on me.

0:27:15.6 Laila Proença: And we take it. We take it as vets. I don't do euthanasia that I don't, Oh, but that it can be a whole podcast on that. Oh, but then the animal is going to suffer. Yes, but it's not on me. That's not... So I become very, it's the unlikability dilemma. No matter where I turn, I cannot be that person. But my persona is just less open. I still very vulnerable. I still share without letting you in. I likely let you in because then we had a personal connection through another friend. I was like okay, this might be safe. And then we started talking and I was fine. But, but yes, my point is... And it literally is an unlikability dilemma for me. It's like the whole lecture, the whole talk, it is literally that. It's like how I need to learn to get comfort being unliked by people.

0:28:13.7 Laila Proença: If I want to like myself. But it doesn't come without cost. That's what I don't want... I don't want to reproduce this idea of the superhero woman or that every choice comes with consequences. It's just what you're willing to, it's perfectly fine if the person chooses not to get into conflict.

0:28:33.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:28:34.4 Laila Proença: If for them is easier that way. For me, it's easier the other way.

0:28:37.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:28:38.2 Laila Proença: And it's okay. It's okay. I just want us to have the ability to choose which side.

0:28:45.7 Katie Berlin: This AAHA podcast is brought to you by Care-Credit. Care-Credit understands that all veterinary teams are busier than ever. To help patients get the care they need,

the Care-Credit Health and Pet Care-Credit card allows clients to access a budget-friendly financing experience anytime, from anywhere on their own smart device. They can learn, see if they pre-qualify, apply, and even pay if approved, all on that smart device. With just a tap, they have a friendly contactless way to pay over time for the services and treatments their pet needs, whether it be a general, referring, or specialty hospital, as long as they accept the Care-Credit credit card.

0:29:24.8 Katie Berlin: You say it doesn't come without cost and that's true, but also there will be people who want to be this is a very atypical central line podcast.

0:29:38.1 Laila Proença: I'm actually going to take this, because I'm getting hot.

0:29:40.2 Katie Berlin: But there are...

0:29:40.4 Laila Proença: We're talking about so many things and I'm laughing so much.

0:29:45.0 Katie Berlin: There will be people that see that and that's exactly why they want to get to know you and they will be your true village. And that, I think, is just a gift because people who are sweet, and this is no shade to sweet people.

0:30:01.6 Laila Proença: I want to be sweet.

0:30:01.8 Katie Berlin: Right you wanna be sweet. But people...

0:30:04.4 Laila Proença: I was paying a professional to make me sweet.

0:30:06.1 Katie Berlin: People whose persona is sweet and they also are sweet who don't want to make waves and who don't want to say no and who don't want to draw those boundaries. There's nothing wrong... The world is full of different kinds of people but sometimes it can be very hard to know who is your real friend when you are able to be sweet to everyone. And being difficult, the quotes again, means that the people who are, Dude, yes. You just said it. And sometimes it surprises you. Before we sat down, I was talking about somebody that I had just talked to who really surprised me that he saw that about me and said, That's exactly why we need you. And that's not something you hear all the time.

0:30:56.1 Laila Proença: No.

0:30:58.2 Katie Berlin: But it makes me feel more valued than if someone was but you're so sweet, we'd love to have you join us. Because, of course, who wouldn't want a sweet person to join them?

0:31:09.7 Laila Proença: Yeah.

0:31:10.1 Katie Berlin: But that's not necessarily the same gift as it is for somebody to be yeah, you say no, you draw boundaries, you stand up for yourself, sometimes you're unpleasant, you're not afraid to piss people off, and I want more of that.

0:31:24.9 Laila Proença: Yeah.

0:31:25.0 Katie Berlin: And not for show, but because there's value to it and because they feel like

you're a truth-teller and they wanna have you.

0:31:30.2 Laila Proença: That's definitely what I'm attracting. It's just, growing up as a veterinarian, you are really afraid to be true to yourself because you will lose opportunities. You will lose.

0:31:43.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:31:44.0 Laila Proença: Don't...

0:31:45.9 Katie Berlin: You will.

0:31:46.2 Laila Proença: Yeah, students don't come to this like thinking I'm just gonna be true to myself and I'm not. Yes, you will. And probably we are changing the scenario for the ones after us because probably that's gonna become more common than not. Therefore, it's not gonna be a problem. That's my hope. But as I was becoming a veterinarian, I had to tolerate a lot to not miss out on opportunities, including a residency in ZooMed, which is extremely hard to get in. Extremely, pathetically hard. I don't know why, but it's made that way. But as I was able to stand up on my two feet and have financial freedom and things like that, that's when I felt empowered to start really being true to myself and actually creating my opportunities. Because the job I wanted did not exist. I worked for a lot of people, great people, don't get me wrong. It's just at the end of the day, that's not, like we were talking about this earlier.

0:32:46.7 Laila Proença: Being really passionate about what you do, like believing that you're changing something. You don't need to change the world and world peace. That's not what I'm saying. But it could be something small. But you truly believe in what you're doing and you have a vision on how you want to do it. That just did not exist.

0:33:03.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:33:04.5 Laila Proença: And I had to create it. And time to time, I actually have a talk that is CV does not get you a job because all the jobs I had, I did not have to give my CV. And all the times I had to give my CV. Not that my CV is not good it's excellent, but I didn't get the job because those are standard quote, like the standard...

0:33:25.6 Katie Berlin: That's not who you are.

0:33:26.6 Laila Proença: No, it's not who I am. So all my positions, they were created for me. And I was reflecting about this the other day. When I quit my residency that night I didn't tell anyone besides the people at UGA I'm quitting. And I was very vocal. I'm quitting because of this mentor, because he's toxic. I was literally drugging myself to be there, like three, like two antidepressants, an alpha to just to go to work.

0:33:51.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:33:52.0 Laila Proença: Drugged or not. It was like my talks with my psychiatrist were ridiculous. Okay, I need you to drug me enough for me to be able to tolerate it, but not too much because I need to practice medicine. How sad is that? And then I finally decided to break ties. And

that night I received a phone call and he literally that night offered me a position that did not exist. Like I have this vision. I wanna have ZooMed at VCA. We don't have anything. And I want you to be the director. I don't know what you're going to do. I don't know how it's going to happen, but I want you to do it.

0:34:30.8 Laila Proença: I know you're the person to do it. And I was like conflicting at the time. I was do I tell him that I just quit my residency because who's going to want someone that quit a residency? And he's very big on education. And I said, I just full disclosure, I just quit my residency. And there was a minute of silent and he goes like, Good, so you can start early. I was like, Yeah, I guess. So you see, when you close doors, definitely you attract people that will. And I'm very grateful. We're still good friends. I left VCA because I wanted to start VETAHEAD. I'm still really... I still love the company. I still work with them. I love their values and all. But yeah, you definitely surround yourself. But it's when you feel financial independence.

0:35:17.9 Laila Proença: I don't think I would advise people to just do that reckless. Hopefully it will become the norm. But it's not yet. So it is changing, though. The new generation is definitely more vocal about...

0:35:29.8 Katie Berlin: They are.

0:35:31.2 Laila Proença: Work hours and things like that, which I really, really like.

0:35:34.2 Katie Berlin: Yeah. And about what they will and won't tolerate in terms of how they're treated personally.

0:35:38.1 Laila Proença: Yes.

0:35:39.2 Katie Berlin: Personally and professionally doesn't have the same line between them as they used to. And I really appreciate that. The reason I wanted to have you come on was not to talk about ZooMed, exotic animal med, although everybody should check out VETAHEAD. And just it's pretty great.

0:35:58.3 Laila Proença: Thank you.

0:35:58.9 Katie Berlin: And I wish again, I wish that I had had that as a vet coming up through GP in a practice that saw exotics. And I didn't want anything to do with them. And I was like freaked out.

0:36:07.4 Laila Proença: I can see that. No I can see that.

0:36:08.2 Katie Berlin: That a turtle is gonna come in after hours or something. While I was the only one on. But I just... I wanted you to come on to be you. And you were.

0:36:18.0 Laila Proença: I think you... [laughter]

0:36:18.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah, got it. [laughter]

0:36:21.8 Laila Proença: I meant to...

[overlapping conversation]

0:36:24.2 Laila Proença: You definitely talked to Laila today. You definitely talked to Laila not to Dr Proença.

0:36:26.1 Katie Berlin: And Laila is a very lovely person with a lot to give.

0:36:33.1 Laila Proença: Thank you.

0:36:33.2 Katie Berlin: And I really, really I'm very grateful too that we met.

0:36:34.4 Laila Proença: Likewise. Likewise.

0:36:35.9 Katie Berlin: So thank you.

0:36:36.9 Laila Proença: You're very welcome. Thank you. AAHA. I hope you liked it.

0:36:40.0 Katie Berlin: Thank you all of you for watching and listening. You know how I feel about stories. And Laila has some pretty good ones. So I hope you enjoyed this treat. And we'll catch you next time on Central Line.

0:36:53.0 Laila Proença: Thank you.