

0:00:04.1 Katie Berlin: Hi, welcome back to Central Line. I'm your host Katie Berlin, and we have Debbie Boone, the sequel today. Debbie Boone is one of our favorite people here at AAHA. And we're so excited every time we get a chance to talk to her. And she is back for another episode of the podcast today to talk about something very exciting she'll get into in a second. Debbie, welcome back.

0:00:29.0 Debbie Boone: Thanks Katie. Thanks for asking me back... AAHA. I drink the Kool-Aid. I always laugh and say that 'cause I grew up in AAHA practices, so I am always thrilled to do anything with, this association and some of the best people and great friends are all involved in AHA, so thanks for having me.

0:00:49.1 Katie Berlin: Well, it's wonderful to have you. And, I also wanna send out a special thanks to CareCredit for supporting Central Line this year. CareCredit was our very first sponsor who jumped on when Central Line did not even exist and I am so grateful for their support. And, we actually had a meeting of the minds recently where they were like, we wanna have Debbie back, because they are also supporting and very excited about your new book, a Hospitality and Healthcare...

0:01:19.5 Debbie Boone: Yes, yes.

0:01:19.5 Katie Berlin: So tell us a little bit about that.

0:01:21.3 Debbie Boone: Well, I think, first of all, I wanna tell you how it came about because it really is one of those networking flukes. I was at the AVMA Convention last year and I had a cup of coffee with a friend of mine, Brenda Andresen... And I said, you know, I've got this book in my head. I've always wanted to write it, but I just can't make myself sit down 'cause there's so many other things I'm doing. So two weeks later I get this call from Brenda going, Hey, you know what... That book CareCredit would like to, help you and sponsor your writing of this book? And I went, really? She said, yeah, can you get it done by AVMA... I went, oh my gosh, that meant I had to write a book in three months...

[laughter]

0:01:58.3 Debbie Boone: Yes.

0:01:58.6 Katie Berlin: Wow...

0:02:00.1 Debbie Boone: Yes. So on top of all the other work I was doing and, and speaking of presentations and client work... I cranked out a book in three months. Now you may think, holy crap, but the truth was it was in my head I knew what I wanted to say and I had been speaking about this stuff for so long. It was just the motivation I needed to sit down and put it out on paper. And here it is. It really is. So this book is a little different. It was written broadly, not specifically for veterinary hospitals, but for medical caregivers because I talk about experiences from managing hospitals and teams and client situations that come up. But I also talk about being a patient because I am a 20 year breast cancer survivor. And my experience through the good and bad of human health pull those experiences in too because... They all make a difference how we treat our patients, how we treat our clients and our patients.

0:03:03.1 Katie Berlin: That is so true. So so true. And the subtitle, so your book is Hospitality and Healthcare, how Top Performing Practices Boost Team Happiness and Give the Best In-Care to Their Patients. And I really love that because it knits so much stuff together into one title. You know, you're talking about melding, healthcare with a hospitality field, which we really are whether we want to be or not. On any given day...

0:03:29.3 Debbie Boone: That's true. Yeah.

0:03:30.4 Katie Berlin: And also you're relating it to how to how much happier and, more balanced a team can feel, when they're doing this. Right. And, of course the patients benefit patients and clients, so...

0:03:43.3 Debbie Boone: Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. Well, we are trained in animal health to think about animal wellbeing. We even talked about, fear free, and training for animal behavior but we don't pay attention to the fact that humans are animals at the top of the chain.

0:04:00.1 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:04:00.6 Debbie Boone: And we need to use all those same tools that we use to make a patient's experience good. Is to make the client experience good, to bond them to us... In our practice to, build trust in relationships with those clients. Because I can tell you from personal experience, once you work in a practice like that... Life is so easy. I mean, your clients don't fuss at you. They say yes to all the stuff you offer them. You're not constantly battling people, who think that you're only in there to... Only in there for the money. I mean, how many times have we heard that? So the battle winds down, I mean, you might have a skirmish every now and then, but it's not an everyday thing. In fact, it becomes really rare. And I just wanted to share with people how that happened. You know, how do you get that to, work in your hospital and how do you build that culture that is built on relationships? It's not about the task. Not everybody in my practice was the most skilled person at medicine, but we were really, really good at people...

0:05:08.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Which is sometimes a much, much harder skill to teach and learn.

0:05:12.1 Debbie Boone: [chuckle] It's true.

0:05:13.2 Katie Berlin: So that's why books like yours are so important. And I'm really, I'm excited from a purely selfish level because I'm getting to talk to a lot of authors lately.

0:05:22.3 Debbie Boone: Yeah.

0:05:22.4 Katie Berlin: And it's very exciting because I love books... Grew up, with my nose in a book like was the kid with the flashlight reading under the covers, after bedtime, like stacks of library books and at a time yeah.

0:05:34.8 Debbie Boone: Me too. Me too. Me too.

0:05:34.9 Katie Berlin: And you could tell just by looking behind us, like what's important to us. Right.

0:05:37.6 Debbie Boone: Exactly.

0:05:38.2 Katie Berlin: Before this, we were talking about how we have to be red piles that will outlast us for sure.

0:05:43.1 Debbie Boone: Yes.

0:05:43.1 Katie Berlin: Which is a good way to be. But I was wondering if you could talk to one author, living or dead, who would it be?

0:05:51.9 Debbie Boone: You asked that question and I thought, wow, I think talking to Mark Twain would be the most fun.

0:05:57.3 Katie Berlin: Oh yeah. He would be fun.

0:06:00.5 Debbie Boone: Yeah. And plus his insights on how people work. Because he understood as this kind of pragmatic point of view of how people manipulate each other, what's important to people and how there was humor in all of it too. So I think finding the humor in everyday life is, what makes life much easier for us. If we could just look back and just... Go, oh my gosh. And laugh.

0:06:29.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:06:30.2 Debbie Boone: You might as well laugh.

0:06:32.3 Katie Berlin: I love that answer. That was not what I expected at all. I was expecting a business, author or somebody like that. But I love that answer 'cause it surprised me, but I can totally see it. Okay. So let's get into your book.

0:06:47.5 Debbie Boone: Sure.

0:06:48.2 Katie Berlin: I had the chance to read a little excerpt of it, and I loved something that you did in there, which we don't see that often, which is that you talked really candidly about your experience as a patient, which requires a certain amount of, self-awareness and a little bit of bravery. I think for a lot of people wouldn't even occur to them to do that. And I was wondering if you could just tell us a little bit of that story.

0:07:15.3 Debbie Boone: Sure, sure. Well, I've said many times out on my podcast and talking to others that I am a 20 year breast cancer survivor. And I put that out there because I could remember being a breast cancer patient and having somebody come up to me and say it's been 20 years was like, somebody gave water to a drowning man, because that just adds to your hope that you will make it through. So I've always been really open about that and the fact that I've kind of been through the gamut. I had chemotherapy, radiation, mastectomy, and reconstruction. So you name it, they did it to me. And when I started that journey, I tell the story in the book 'cause it was bumpy to begin with. And I went to my sister-in-law who was a plastic surgeon, and I had had fibrocystic lumps removed before I was used to that.

0:08:12.6 Debbie Boone: So I found another one. It was making me uncomfortable because I was

sleeping on it was kind of pushed up against a rib on my left side. So I went to Maryanne, I said, do you think you can aspirate this cyst? And she goes, sure, just come on over to the office, I'll do it for you. Well, as she tried to aspirate it, it was solid. There was nothing there. So I could tell by the look on her face, she was starting to get a little panicky. She sent me over to a radiologist. The radiologist that she referred me to wasn't there. So I got her associate. Well, I'm laying there on the table waiting to get an ultrasound and having had, a non conclusive MRI. I mean, oh yeah, mastectomy, I mean I'll get it there. Mammogram. And the doctor is talking over my head. It's like, I'm not there at all, like an inanimate object. And she's talking about her impending visit from her mother-in-law because her mother-in-law apparently is kind of a witch, and she's really stressed.

0:09:10.2 Katie Berlin: And she's talking to someone else.

0:09:11.4 Debbie Boone: Yeah.

0:09:11.7 Katie Berlin: Right, it's not even you.

0:09:12.8 Debbie Boone: She's talking to her nurse, she's just talking over my head and she's telling all this stuff about, the cleaning the house and buying the groceries and, and how stressed she was. And I can't help but laying there thinking, you are not the most stressed person in the room. I am the person who's laying here waiting to find out if they have cancer, and you are completely ignoring me. So there was no empathy. It was just, and the second thing that she did was, say, you need to come back because your sister-in-law's messed around in there and now there's so much blood we can't see anything. So basically she just kind of threw her under the bus, as from one professional to the other. And I was like not, that was not professional at all. And then, it took me three different times back before they finally decided to do, intake a sample so I could have a pathology report.

0:10:04.0 Debbie Boone: So they came back, called me back and told me to come back. October 1st, breast cancer awareness month begins my husband's birthday. So it was easy for me to remember. They send me in the x-ray room with a bunch of equipment and sitting on the back of one of those mechanic rolling stool with no back on it. And a doctor came in who I had never seen before, that I later found out was just an intern who was just there shadowing. And they sent her in to tell me I had breast cancer. So she says, I'm sorry Ms. Boone, I'm sorry to tell you I have breast cancer. Well, I've been in medicine a long time. So I said, what kind? And I think she was stunned by the question because she looked at me and goes, the usual kind. And then I said, could I please see my pathology report so we can move on with this? And she didn't know what to do about that because I look around and I thought, if I had been prone to falling apart.

0:10:58.5 Debbie Boone: I was in a fairly open place because you people were walking by all the time. I was sitting in this room that was a dungeon because they hadn't turn the lights on. It was dark, but there was windows, but there was still dark. And then, if I had broken down into tears, there was not even a box of Kleenex there. So it was just so inappropriate and so unthoughtful for me, the patient and for somebody who grew up in the restaurant business, thinking about serving others and hospitality, that's just the way I was raised. And I always laugh, it's southern, it's the cliché of southern hospitality, but it's the thing.

0:11:40.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:11:41.1 Debbie Boone: So how did we veer off the path? What could they have done better? And I talk about that in the book, going through and saying, here's the, here was the points of connection that they had opportunity to make. And so after I got diagnosed, of course, they sent me over to an oncologist. And the oncologist, my husband had met me by then. We were there, looks at my little one page paper chart, remember it's 20 years ago. He doesn't look at me. He shook my hand and said, hello. And never offered any empathy. Just said, here's what we'll do... Didn't even involve me in it. And when we walked away, my husband looked at him and said, he will not be your doctor because to him you are a chart number. He doesn't care. So fortunately I had some connections and networked myself into Duke to one of the top oncologists in the country. And I was treated there, and my experience at Duke was 180 degrees different.

0:12:46.5 Debbie Boone: It was empathetic. Somebody touched my hand he felt sorry for me, told me we got this, we'll be with you. And I felt like I had a teammate to get me through it. I did not feel like I was alone anymore. But even the CSR at the front desk at Duke, and this is so funny, I was talking to one of the Zoetis reps yesterday who was also treated there, and I was talking about this receptionist and she said, you're talking about Queenie? And I said, yes. 20 years later, she said everybody that walked in, she knew them. She knew their family. She just knew and she was encouraging and she was a cheerleader and she was at the front desk of a huge hospital oncology office, but she always made you feel like you were the only patient there. And those are kind of hospitality experiences that I'm talking about. But we can do that in a veterinary practice. If we just take the time and it doesn't take much time. It just takes awareness and a little bit of effort.

0:13:49.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah. And arguing with a client who doesn't feel treated well, does that takes a lot of time and emotional energy, so.

0:14:00.7 Debbie Boone: Yes. Yeah.

0:14:03.5 Katie Berlin: This really resonated with me because I'm sure that I'm not the only one listening to you tell that story who has had similar experiences in the human medical world? I mean, as we get older, if we're lucky, I guess we see the doctor more as we get older. 'Cause we didn't have to that much when we were younger. And I definitely have had a couple of years where since the pandemic really where I've seen a lot of doctors for a couple of major things and yeah, it is night and day difference how you go into a medical procedure, for instance, if you feel you've been heard before you get there.

0:14:42.5 Katie Berlin: And you know that the doctor knows everything in your chart and everything that you've told them. And I go to a network of hospitals in Boulder of doctors in Boulder that I don't live in Boulder. I actually live pretty far from Boulder, but I go there because they were so great to me the first time I went that now that's just the default is I look for doctors in that network because they are, they are great and their teams are great and they never make me feel rushed or, like I'm silly or, yeah. You know, like I'm just kind of a gnat to be brushed off. And yes, we have all done that. I think in VetMed we have all either brushed someone off or wanted to [laughter], I guess we're stressed and busy and, I get that like, I've been so stressed. But what you said about you not being the most stressed person in the room really sank in it doesn't matter how bad a day we've had, there's a very good chance that the client you're sitting across the table from is very anxious.

0:15:46.3 Debbie Boone: Yes, yes.

0:15:46.4 Katie Berlin: So I just, I think that connection really brought this home so quickly, in the part of the book that I read. And, it made me really wanna see where you went with that. So I'm excited to read the rest of it. Good. But you also talked about something, in that chapter. You talked about how it can be really human nature to sort of dehumanize an other. I'm saying other as a verb other people. Right. And it makes it easier to not treat them well when we do that. Yes. Whether or not that's the goal. Right. And I think this is something that probably is pretty common. You've been in a lot of vet practices have you seen a lot of this?

0:16:28.9 Debbie Boone: You know, it's not blatant. But it's subtle. And I think that's where we miss the cues that how subtle this is. I'll give you an example. So my publisher, is a woman and she talks about being adopted. And when you go into the doctor's office, they want you to fill out your family history. She said, I don't have family history. So even as something as simple as understanding that on the form you could put, if you were adopted and you don't know your family history, just check this box. And then even when she writes on it, people still don't pay attention to it. And they still go and they ask her and she, it upsets her because she says, I don't know it and nobody is listening to me. So it comes back to being heard and paying attention to people.

0:17:16.8 Debbie Boone: But you know, I can tell you that sometimes you go and you judge people and you look at their clothing and you think, oh, he'll never afford what I'm gonna offer. So I won't even bother to offer. And for many years, I did some work with Zoetis and did lunch and learns and they always made me tell this what I call the chicken story. But, and I tell it in the book, but we had a client come in one day who was not, actually not our client at that time, and it was Saturday morning and this is an 11 doctor practice, so it's open 24 hours a day. It's usually a zoo all the time. And he comes in carrying a chicken under his arm and he wants to be seen by the veterinarian. And we say, sure, whatever.

0:17:55.6 Debbie Boone: So we put him in and we find out that this chicken has tried to cross the road and didn't quite make it. And she broke her leg. So she needed a surgery with an orthopedic pin placement. So we talked to our surgeon, she goes, yeah, I can do it. And we go and give this man an estimate for this chicken. Now you gotta figure this is like 2006, the estimate's over \$700 and chicken at that time you could buy one for two bucks. Right. She just got a new chicken anyway. He says, sure, let's do it. And puts his deposit down and leaves Henrietta for us to do her orthopedic.

0:18:29.3 Katie Berlin: Henrietta.

0:18:30.8 Debbie Boone: Yeah. Well, you know, three days later he comes back, picks her up, pays his bill. You know, he's absolutely thrilled because he was stunned at the level of care. And then as we find out the whole story, at that point in time that he had been to two other veterinary hospitals. And the first one... Now, you gotta figure. This is rural North Carolina. The first one was this regular vet. And she said, "I'm sorry, I just don't know anything about poultry. You gotta go somewhere else." And the second one was this old school guy up there, and he looks at him and says, "Man, you know, this is a chicken. Wring its neck, eat it for lunch, move on." Well, [laughter] that was kinda horrible story for us to hear, and he didn't appreciate it much either. So he left and came to us with the chicken where she got care. But then we find out that he's a human physician and we've done all this complicated surgery, and he goes back and tells everybody at the hospital what we've done, and we've got this whole great new client referral base coming from all these

people at the hospital. And he transferred all his animals to us. And he had 20 pets. He was a hobby farmer.

0:19:31.4 Katie Berlin: Wow.

0:19:31.5 Debbie Boone: And so he transferred all of 'em. So this is the story of not judging people. You don't know... And I've had... You know, I've run hospitals for 23 years and worked the front desk a lot, and I was always the one who did the money talks and stuff. But I've had clients who I knew were multimillionaires refuse something as simple as Rimadyl for their dog. And people of modest means hand me a credit card and say, "Take care of my animal. If you need something else, I'll go find another credit card." I'm like, "I gotcha." So we can't judge people by what they look like because you don't know. And you don't know the animal's place in the home either because that matters too. And you can't change that. That is their perspective you kind of change.

0:20:31.1 Debbie Boone: But the other one is, in our practice, we had a big deaf school that a lot of people came from for all over the United States to learn, and many deaf clients because of it. And so one of our groomers spoke American sign language. And she spoke the shortcut version, not the where you have to spell everything out. So it was great. They knew we had an interpreter. Could we have written notes back and forth? We could have, but these were all things that we made sure that people knew we had available. And those are thinking outside the box, they're thinking over yourself. And then also understanding your own biases, because a lot of times, we feel, "Oh, we're a good person. We're kind to everybody. We're not biased." Yeah, you are. It depends on how you grew up and what your circumstances are around you.

0:21:41.4 Debbie Boone: And we also have to understand that our brain evolved when we were growing up in tribes of people. So our limbic brain kicks in when anything's a little bit different. And then you're like, "Oh, are they dangerous? Or are they like my tribe? Do I need to watch out?" But when you know that stuff about yourself, you can catch your brain going down the rabbit hole and stop and go, "No, that's nonsense. This is foolishness." I need to stop and talk to myself and go, "This is ridiculous." But that's human nature. That is our brain telling us lies. I give a whole session about this at AVMA. And we do tell ourselves lies. And we don't realize that we do it a lot of times, we just...

0:23:38.8 Katie Berlin: Yes.

0:23:40.1 Debbie Boone: It's... I love that implicit bias study from Harvard. And I encourage people, and I encourage them in the book, to go and take that implicit bias because we are biased. No matter what our skin color, no matter where we live, no matter how liberal we think we are, yeah, you're biased because you grew up in a community of people who told you what to believe. And so, yeah.

0:24:06.2 Katie Berlin: So true. And even, like you say, a lot of it is unconscious, a lot of it is stuff that you may not even realize until after you take the implicit bias assessment, which I'll link to in the notes, 'cause that is really good, and just see if you actually do have one. Because it's not about conscious reaction, it's not about looking at someone and saying, "Oh, that person is X," it's about the connections that your brain naturally makes, which is something that, like you say, we're wired to do. And it helps us process all of the bazillion things that we take in every single day. We have to

make associations without thinking about them, or we would be literally overwhelmed and we just be catatonic because we couldn't process anything.

0:24:52.1 Debbie Boone: Just too much information overload. So we sort it out into things that make sense. And it's very similar to... Think about those things that come over on social media where the letters are all screwed up, but you can still read it. That's our brain's job. It figures that stuff out, sorts it and makes it logical as best it can. But sometimes the logic is wrong. And that's when we have to step back. And that emotional intelligence kicks in that says, "Okay, does this make sense? What am I doing to myself? What am I doing to other people? And am I just basically entrenched in my beliefs to the point where I can't learn anything new? No, I'm not gonna be that person. I'm gonna be learning all the time."

0:25:34.3 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Yeah. Hence all the books, right? [laughter]

0:25:37.1 Debbie Boone: Yeah. [laughter]

0:25:37.9 Katie Berlin: Hence the TV red pile that is never ending. And what a gift that is.

0:25:41.8 Debbie Boone: It is.

0:25:42.6 Katie Berlin: But it is... I heard somebody on a podcast once, and I wish I could remember who this was, but I heard them say that the first reaction is what is... It might be your bias. It's what culture has taught you. And then the conscious processing of that and then the, "No, stop. This is just what you've learned, this isn't the truth," that's who you really are. And I think that really helps because none of us wanna think about ourselves as biased, but the fact is, like you say, we all are, and it's unconscious, and it's something society has drilled into us for whatever reason. And I do a lot of reading about weight inclusivity, and it's the same thing. We have these biases against people who are in larger bodies and we judge them right away unconsciously, but so much of what we learned is wrong, and it's social conditioning. And so treating everybody the way you would wanna be treated is the simple very ancient rule that is sometimes harder to follow than it is to say, but at the root of hospitality. And I think when people read the word hospitality, like, I've... My unconscious bias kicks in and I think, "Oh, they're saying the customer's always right," kind of thing. And that is not what hospitality is at all.

0:27:04.2 Debbie Boone: No. No, the hospitality comes with listening to people. And I talk about in the book what I call the three rungs of the stool. And so you have to observe people to see how you can serve them well. You have to anticipate something that they might need, and then you also are gonna make it personal because it... We've all been the experience, the cookie cutter, thank you very much, and you knew that it was, "They didn't thank me very much. They didn't even pay attention to me at all." [laughter] So it really comes down to how much attention are you paying to people? And when people feel like you are really trying to connect with them, even if you screw up, it's okay, because they can see that you really are trying. And it's like pronouncing somebody's name who is maybe from a foreign country. "I've done this so many times. It's really important that I get it right. Please let me practice with you." And people appreciate that you're taking the effort rather than just, "Can I just call you Joe?" And that's... [laughter] "No, you can't call me Joe. No."

0:28:09.7 Debbie Boone: Yeah. So we don't... And that's a little microaggression, isn't it? When you say... When you discount somebody's name. We need to pay attention to those little things.

Somebody said to me, "Oh, but you know, I get... Especially when people make me mad, it's really hard to do this." But I said, try to picture yourself as the lens of a camera. You're a telephoto lens. And so... Like, Katie and I are sitting here, we're having a kind of an intimate conversation together and everything's going good. But if Katie starts to get upset, then I need to... In my mind, rather than getting closer into that conversation and zooming in, I need to zoom myself out and look at it as an outside observer in this situation and goes, "Okay, what did I say that tripped whatever this trigger is that made her upset? And let me backtrack in my mind. Let me listen more intently. Did I miss a cue somewhere along the line?" And so you're pulling that lens back and looking at the big picture rather than getting right back into it, because you can't diagnose it that way.

0:29:13.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah, it's hard to see the label from inside the jar, right?

0:29:15.8 Debbie Boone: Yeah.

[laughter]

0:29:16.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:29:16.9 Debbie Boone: Exactly.

0:29:17.8 Katie Berlin: And it takes a little bit of the blame out of it, too, when you say, "Okay, this is a conversation in which something has gone a little wrong. This is a conversation between two people where one person has said something that triggered the other one a little bit, and what was that thing?" Versus like, "Why does she think I'm a bad person?" Which is so easy to do when you're emotional. And so say you're in a clinic, especially if you're not in a leadership position, because I know, as a leader, there are lots of resources out there. You have a lot of power if you are in a position at like a manager or practice owner where you can make changes or you can call a meeting about something. But say you're on a veterinary team and you feel like this is happening, like there's some client shaming going on or people are judging clients for not being able to afford treatment or for not communicating clearly, how can you sort of bring this up and try to help your practice nip it in the bud?

0:30:14.4 Debbie Boone: One of the things I consistently train managers and teams, ask questions. Ask questions. Because when we come at something, we go, "I really didn't like what you said about Mrs. Jones. I don't think that was very nice," then I then... I kind of feel attacked. But instead, you go...

0:30:30.9 Katie Berlin: Get defensive.

0:30:32.1 Debbie Boone: Yeah. Instead, you go, "Can I ask you why you felt it was all right to say that about Mrs. Jones? Maybe it made me uncomfortable. So tell me what you're... Tell me what you were thinking about that." And people go, "Gosh, I really probably wasn't thinking at all. And really, that was kind of mean for me to say, "What, yeah, maybe we can all try to do a little bit better in the future." So we don't come at it like an adversary, we come at it as a collaboration and curiosity. I trained this the same way for when we would have people who are on your team. And maybe somebody is chronically late, and instead of going, "You're always late," just say, "What's going on in your life?" Because it might be that 2-year-old that has decided that every morning he would rather go to school naked than put shoes on. And it happens. It really happens. Or they're

looking after an elderly parent who has dementia. I mean, there's so many things that complicate our lives, and getting some people grace an opportunity to do better, always assume people are doing the best they can.

0:31:34.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:31:35.5 Debbie Boone: Yeah.

0:31:36.1 Katie Berlin: I love that.

0:31:37.1 Debbie Boone: You probably... I don't know if you listen to Brene Brown's podcast and reader books. And you'll see about five of her books back there behind me.

0:31:44.5 Katie Berlin: Same. [laughter]

0:31:45.8 Debbie Boone: Yeah. But I just love the idea that she said, always assume that they're just doing the best they can. And when we come at it like that, we tend to give people a little more grace because I gotta tell you, there's times that we need it, [laughter] that we don't do our best, that we are not...

0:32:11.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Exactly.

0:32:14.5 Debbie Boone: There... And so when we feel like we can get out a little grace in the world, I feel like karma brings it back to you when you need it too.

0:32:21.0 Katie Berlin: For sure. That assuming people are doing their best, even when you know they probably have better... You know, when you know there's probably better in there, there was a reason on that day why they did not offer that. And...

0:32:32.0 Debbie Boone: Yeah. In that moment, they weren't there.

0:32:34.4 Katie Berlin: Yeah. And seeking first to understand rather than judge. And that is so hard, but like anything, it does become more of an instinct the more you do it.

0:32:45.2 Debbie Boone: It does.

0:32:46.5 Katie Berlin: And that seems like a great place for team members to influence others around them rather than telling people what to do, is leading by example in that way. It's really hard. Gossip and sort of judgy talk is very, very difficult to get out of when it's happening. But we know they can hear us. Like, we're talking in pharmacy and they can hear us in the exam rooms, so...

[laughter]

0:33:07.9 Debbie Boone: Exactly right.

0:33:09.1 Katie Berlin: It's not middle of COVID anymore. [chuckle]

0:33:11.0 Debbie Boone: No. And you're going back to the hospitality thing. We do that to new people coming in too.

0:33:16.4 Katie Berlin: We do.

0:33:16.6 Debbie Boone: We do that... There's that old storming, norming and forming adage where people come in and people are... Like, day one, they might be nice, but then a couple of days into it, it's like, "Oh, this girl is incompetent," and they start the chatter behind their backs. Instead of going, "Let me go help you do this and be better at it," or, "Tell me what you don't understand and let me teach you," it's like, "Eh, I'm so much better than them." This is the attitude, is like, "Oh, I was never this bad as a baby tech. I'm so much better than them. I can't believe that they hired this incompetent person." But you forgot how incompetent you were the day you walked in the door.

0:33:51.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah. [laughter] Exactly. [laughter] When I walked in that door that first day and I was like, "I have an ear infection appointment and I have no idea how to treat it." [laughter] I knew how to balance like a crazy endocrine nightmare, but I did not know how to treat a simple ear infection with the medication we had on... We have all been there. And judging is just gonna make the environment very uncomfortable for everybody.

0:34:19.1 Debbie Boone: It does. It does. And the other thing is, if you're afraid to make a mistake or you're afraid to confess your mistakes, which is really bad for patient care, there was a really interesting study in human health and they had a culture where it was absolutely okay and encouraged to go and say, "I screwed up." And then there was the other one that's... Was so secretive about making mistakes because they figured they were gonna get nailed to the cross, that they wouldn't say anything. So the culture that had the great culture actually made more mistakes or documented more mistakes than the one who didn't. But they had much better patient outcomes. Why? Because they confessed their mistakes and worked together to fix it. And the other ones hid them, and because of that, the mistakes kept being made over and over and over again. And the people who suffered were the people who were at the hands of these people in really sick situations in the hospital.

0:35:20.6 Debbie Boone: So I think building a culture and having that hospitality culture, that makes people feel safe. And I know Josh talks about this a lot in his book Thrive, and that's just... I love that book. I'm so happy that he got it out there and that you guys published it. But you gotta make people feel like it's okay to be wrong, because we are all human, we all make mistakes, and we all screw up. And I laugh and I tell the story, I forgot to come to work one day. Now, I am the hospital administrator of this practice, [laughter] and I was filling in for somebody on vacation at the front desk, [laughter] and I just slept, forgot I had to work Saturday morning. [laughter] So at about 10 o'clock, it dawned on me. I was supposed to be there at 8:00. And I called the office and I went, "I am so sorry. I am so embarrassed." When I screwed up, I just forgot. And I said, "Why didn't you guys call me?" They went, "Well, you're the boss. We thought maybe you just didn't wanna go to work." Like, "No, I just screwed up."

[laughter]

0:36:26.0 Katie Berlin: I love that. We should have failure Fridays where all off...

0:36:28.4 Debbie Boone: Oh my God. That would be... Yeah.

0:36:29.5 Katie Berlin: All of our team talks about something we screwed up this week. [laughter]

0:36:32.1 Debbie Boone: Something we screwed up. God, it's the truth.

0:36:34.7 Katie Berlin: Yeah, that sounds good. I think I'm gonna pitch that. [laughter]

0:36:37.3 Debbie Boone: Yeah. But you know what, then that made my team realize that it was okay. Just confess, you got warts, [laughter] and there they are.

0:36:46.2 Katie Berlin: Totally.

0:36:46.5 Debbie Boone: Move on.

0:36:46.9 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Yep. And I'm sure they did not forget that.

0:36:50.7 Debbie Boone: No, no.

0:36:51.0 Katie Berlin: And just that one moment of authenticity was like worth 12 staff meetings.

0:36:53.9 Debbie Boone: They picked on me for a long... [laughter] They picked on me for a long time about it. [laughter] Yeah.

0:37:00.0 Katie Berlin: Yeah, I love that. Messing up is just part of life. So we succeed or we learn, right? [laughter]

0:37:05.6 Debbie Boone: Yeah. Exactly right. Yeah.

0:37:08.0 Katie Berlin: Well I really like that intersection that we were just talking about between treating clients this way, where we're not judging and we're giving them a chance to be who they are and to tell us what they need, and then we actually listen and then we're also doing the same thing for each other. It doesn't have to be that different, I guess is...

0:37:29.1 Debbie Boone: No.

0:37:29.1 Katie Berlin: Is what what I'm getting at. Yeah.

0:37:30.5 Debbie Boone: No, the skills translate and the other thing is remember that you're living at home with people too. And so those skills you can take home and so many times work might be the safe haven for people who are living in dysfunctionality in their home, but if we can... Sorry about the dog barking. If we can make it so that the skills we bring in, the listening skills, the giving grace, the positive intentions, we're bringing those to our homes too, then our family is going to improve, communication will improve within our family and life gets better inside the clinic and outside the clinic.

0:38:11.0 Katie Berlin: Definitely. Yep. Do you have the prime? Is the prime man outside or something? [laughter]

0:38:18.7 Debbie Boone: No, it is almost time to eat. And so he wants to make sure that I don't forget that. Yeah.

0:38:25.6 Katie Berlin: Yes. As for once, Frank is very quiet back there. He's just snoozing on his little bed.

0:38:30.9 Debbie Boone: Tucker loves... He lives for mealtime. He is one food driven dog.

0:38:35.2 Katie Berlin: Same. Same.

0:38:35.9 Debbie Boone: He is not gonna let me forget that it's almost time.

[laughter]

0:38:39.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:38:39.9 Debbie Boone: Well, okay, then I have a couple of more questions and we'll...

0:38:42.9 Katie Berlin: That's true.

0:38:43.4 Katie Berlin: And we'll let Tucker eat. He's so cute.

0:38:45.0 Katie Berlin: If I can go pick him up and he'll be quiet. Do you want me to go pick him up?

0:38:48.4 Debbie Boone: Sure.

0:38:48.6 Katie Berlin: Okay.

0:38:48.9 Katie Berlin: We have a fluffy guest with us.

0:38:50.8 Debbie Boone: Yes.

0:38:51.9 Katie Berlin: Tucker Boone, thank you for joining us. So I wanted to ask you about another book that is very popular among management circles. It's called *If Disney Ran Your Hospital*. And it's a little hard to get hold of these days, but it is still super popular, but it's not veterinary specific. And so I was wondering what makes your book different from that and other books that have to deal with hospitality in healthcare.

0:39:16.5 Debbie Boone: Well, I'm a huge fan of Disney and their attention to detail. And I do quote the book, not that one, but actually Disney actually has a book about how to serve, how to do hospitality and service Disney style. And it's free. You can get it on Amazon, it's free. But it is really about how do you take that mindset and bring it into veterinary medicine. 'Cause there's so many things that we have to talk about, finance with people, and thinking about anticipation of need. Well, you know \$250 to \$400 can often be so far out of reach for someone that the pet doesn't get care. So what can we put in place that says, here we have a system for this. And if we don't have a system and if you can't get the finance, then we have another system. And if we don't have that other system that works, then we have a third system in place that we have a charity in our hospital.

0:40:47.8 Debbie Boone: So it is really thinking about if I were in that situation, and there's been many times in my life when I could have been in that situation then what can I do for you? I feel like that's the mindset is what can I do for you? So we talk a little bit about putting those systems in place and having ideas. Many years ago, and this is still on my website, I created a charity list. So I went to the internet and I found all the animal charities and I put them on one piece of paper so that my clients could find help if I wasn't gonna do the work for them, but I was gonna give them the tools, the systems there that people could utilize. And the other thing were just ideas like crowdfunding and pawning things and going for title loans and asking your boss for an advance. Because when we were talking earlier, we were talking about the stressed people and the clients are the stressed people.

0:41:52.9 Debbie Boone: And when our brain is in stress, we can't think, yeah. It's the reason when we are trying to help a dog, it can't logically think, oh, these people are trying to pet me and calm me down. It just thinks you're trying to kill it. So we have to treat humans the same way and realize that the other thing when we're talking about hospitality and in our teams is when people are so, feel like they're under attack all the time or they're being judged a lot, they can't learn. That's the other thing that happens where our brain goes in lockdown. So we just need to have systems in place so that we can say, we might not have the ability to do in-house billing, but here's all these other things that we have, we put them in place because we understand that this can be expensive. And it's amazing to me, looking back over my career, how elaborate care is now comparatively.

0:42:32.7 Debbie Boone: Yeah. And those things are expensive. I've been in specialty hospitals and seen 12 and \$13,000 bills walk out the door. Pet insurance is a good, yes. Cushion for that. And I would certainly encourage people, that was the first thing that Tucker got was insured. Because I've been there and I've seen it. And I don't want to ever have to make a judgment that's based on financial euthanasia. But those are things that we can do to anticipate the needs of people ahead of time. And that is... That's service, that is making it personal, giving service. And the other thing is we don't talk about money in the middle of the lobby with people. We take them back to a private place and talk to them in private about financial matters instead of sharing it there in the line at the front desk is not the way that you should be doing those things.

0:43:08.8 Katie Berlin: Yeah. Those are really good points. And that really highlights the need for veterinary specific resource about this too because as wonderful as other hospitality and healthcare resources are they don't see the specific needs of a veterinary client and the veterinary team, which we sort of are, we wear a lot of hats and I'm really glad that you've put this together because I think that's something that there's been a hole and I can't think of a better person to write it.

0:43:42.1 Debbie Boone: Oh, thank you very much.

0:43:43.7 Katie Berlin: So I'm very excited to see the book in its whole self at AVMA. And you had mentioned, actually, I was gonna ask you what people in different roles in the hospital could do to improve the hospitality at their practice in any role. And you actually just named a couple that people could just take and run with right now.

0:44:02.5 Debbie Boone: Oh yeah.

0:44:03.3 Katie Berlin: Is there anything else off the bat that you can think of?

0:44:06.2 Debbie Boone: Sure.

0:44:08.1 Katie Berlin: Somebody who's really passionate about this could start doing right away?

0:44:08.9 Debbie Boone: Absolutely. I mean, the bonding ideas are endless and in the book there's a whole list of them.

0:44:15.8 Katie Berlin: I love that.

0:44:15.9 Debbie Boone: But just some... One of the cutest ideas I've run across and I taught the Patterson classes for 11 years and trained probably 10,000 people in those classes. But the students would always bring wonderful ideas. And one that I loved was the certificate of bravery. So when your animal came in and he got neutered, then he got a little certificate of bravery and it was signed by his doctor and it went home with the client. And those, just those little kind of touches Mary Gardner and Danny do a wonderful job about talking about the euthanasia experience, but what about new puppy and kittens and taking pictures of them for their... The pet parents and then putting in... Watch them grow in the internet.

0:44:42.8 Debbie Boone: Some things that we used to do in our practice, people would send us Christmas cards and this practice was long established and I kept a scrapbook of them. And you could see the children grow and the pets get old and their owner's age.

0:45:12.8 Katie Berlin: Aww.

0:45:13.6 Debbie Boone: But they loved it because they would, I mean, this really shows that this is a relationship. This is not something that goes in the trash after you got it off the wall at Christmas. It was important to us. And we kept those things and had them in a notebook. It was a photo album and people would flip through it and go, oh look, they're so and so, and the dog had been dead five years. Right. But it was in our book. But these are just thinking, what would I like? What would make me feel important when I came into this practice? How could I make it so, as Cody Kileman calls it, seven star service.

0:45:48.6 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:45:48.6 Debbie Boone: What can we do that goes so beyond the norm? He serves nitro brew at Finn vet. But that's maybe we don't have that.

0:45:56.2 Katie Berlin: I want that vet.

0:45:57.9 Debbie Boone: Yeah, no kidding. But there's so many things that we can do that are not that costly, but matter. Because it's as simple as remembering someone's name. Pronouncing it correctly, remembering the pet's name. And there's a whole section in there about how to do that. There's memory cues. And how do you do that? And those are the kind kind of things that make people easier to work with because when they feel respected and important and listened to, then they're good. They're wonderful. And our clients, oh my gosh, I used to tell people the first thing that will happen when you come to work here, is you will gain 10 pounds. Because our clients are continuously bringing fattening stuff for us to eat. And so that's a good thing. That's a problem you

want to have. But that's the kind of relationship that you want to build with your clients. And I know a lot of times we think, oh, I got into the animal health business 'cause I like animals and not people. And I can't even tell you how many times I've heard that. But it's a people business.

0:47:00.5 Katie Berlin: Yeah.

0:47:00.5 Debbie Boone: It's a service business. And when we learn to serve people well, they mirror that back to us.

0:47:06.5 Katie Berlin: Yes.

0:47:08.1 Debbie Boone: And we get to have a great work life. And that matters for us. It's a self-serving book [laughter]

0:47:18.9 Katie Berlin: You can serve others and serve yourself at the same time.

0:47:21.8 Debbie Boone: Exactly.

0:47:23.1 Katie Berlin: And that is fantastic and a great place I think to wrap up. Debbie, will you tell us where we're gonna be able to get your book, Hospitality in Healthcare and...

0:47:33.3 Debbie Boone: Sure.

0:47:33.6 Katie Berlin: When we'll be able to get our hands on it?

0:47:36.2 Debbie Boone: Absolutely. Well, you can pre-order it now. There's a page on my website, debbieboonecvpm.com. And you will be able to buy it on Barnes & Nobles. And all the major book sellers. Amazon there, we are going to have two book signings at the AVMA Convention at the CareCredit booth. So there'll be one Saturday at 1:00 and one Sunday at 4:00. And they're gonna give away 200 copies of the book.

0:48:03.5 Katie Berlin: Awesome.

0:48:04.1 Debbie Boone: So I'm very, very grateful to CareCredit for providing that. And I will be also doing a talk about it at AVMA prior to the book signing. So yeah, there's plenty of places to find it and buy it. And you can follow me on social media. Go to LinkedIn. And there's a link on my page to get the pre-order book.

0:48:23.1 Katie Berlin: Awesome. Well, I will...

0:48:24.4 Debbie Boone: It'll be out there July the third.

0:48:27.3 Katie Berlin: July 3rd is around the corner. So...

0:48:29.2 Debbie Boone: It's quite.

0:48:30.1 Katie Berlin: Yep. So we'll get this podcast out before then so everybody can get ready. But hopefully a lot of people listening will be able to join you at AVMA. Get a copy and see you

speak. But if not, then the book will be... I'm sure you'll be seeing it all over social media too. As people start to discover it. And I'm really excited to see what kind of splash it makes. There's so much good stuff coming out in vet med right now. And I just can't thank you enough, Debbie, for your time. And your wisdom as always. And for creating this in an astoundingly short amount of time.

0:49:06.9 Debbie Boone: Well, it only took three months to write, but it took a lifetime to know what to put in the book.

0:49:11.8 Katie Berlin: Right, exactly. Yeah. I feel like if somebody just stopped you on the street and asked you about any of these topics. You could probably talk to them for as long as you needed to about it with no preparation whatsoever. But that preparation has been your entire career [laughter]

0:49:28.5 Debbie Boone: It's true. Very true. Well, thanks for having me, Katie. And for letting me pick Tucker up so he'll quit barking [laughter]

0:49:37.4 Katie Berlin: All right Tucker, we'll let you go eat now, buddy.

0:49:39.4 Debbie Boone: Yes, Tucker says it's time to serve. [laughter]

0:49:42.4 Katie Berlin: I love him [laughter] Well, Debbie Boone thanks so much for joining us on Central Line. We'll see you in July at AVMA here in Denver.

0:49:50.2 Debbie Boone: Thank you so much.

0:49:52.4 Katie Berlin: And thanks everyone for listening. We'll catch you next time.