**Strength in Vulnerability**  
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Today, while gathering with other veterinary professionals for our weekday morning Mindfulness & Gratitude session, I explained I intended to write the NAVTA Blog on Strength in Vulnerability.

One of the attendees, Jen, was eager to share her recent story in being present for another person and how it had touched both of their lives.

Jen simply asked a co-worker as they were on the way to their cars after their shift, “How are you doing?” Jen sensed she was having a tough day, and even though they were new work colleagues, she felt it was time to reach out.

For some time, they stood in the parking lot, Jen listening as her colleague explained how life was a bit topsy-turvy, sharing a quick story of discomfort and disruption. That’s all Jen did, stood listening and acknowledging. Happy, she stepped out of her comfort zone a little to engage in a heartfelt conversation with a co-worker.

The next time their shifts matched, Jen felt grateful and glad when her colleague thanked her for her kind inquiry, thoughtfully listening. Both of their lives uplifted because Jen was compelled to ask a simple question with sincerity, opening a moment of exchange, creating support in the wonderful act of being present, listening.

As I write this, I imagine both felt a little vulnerable in sharing, yet both received a gift in personal and professional growth.

That's the beauty, discovering the strength in vulnerability.

Who isn’t feeling discomfort and disruption at this time?

We can all benefit from expressing the turmoil felt and finding a sounding board to feel heard and supported. Some of us have the candor to reach out to trusted family and friends. Others may find solace in stretching beyond that sphere to seek professional counseling or therapy.

Once again, we find strength in vulnerability for those courageous individuals who understand their coping skills will not support them during the current stress and turmoil.

I applaud the many people within the veterinary community who have taken valuable advice (from listening to their intuition or through advice from family or friends) to seek professional help in managing and maintaining their stress, mental health challenges and persevered!

Since this is National Suicide Prevention Month (although I believe there is a need for daily recognition and open exchange in #BreakTheStigma), please be as courageous as Jen was when she felt a colleague needed support and reached out. A simple, caring statement, “I see you are going through a tough time. How are you doing?” can be just the care someone needs.
You may be at a place in your career where embracing training may elevate you and those around you. There is more available to you than you may be aware of as a veterinary professional. Listed below are a few I have found beneficial for individuals and teams, although there may be more when you start to do your own research!

- **QPR Training (Question, Persuade, Refer),** “To save lives and reduce suicidal behaviors by providing innovative, practical, and proven suicide prevention training. We believe that quality education empowers all people, regardless of their background, to make a positive difference in the life of someone they know.” QPR Institute: [https://qprinstitute.com/](https://qprinstitute.com/)

- **The Role of Co-Workers in Preventing Suicide,** this brief sheet provides basic information to help employees recognize and respond to their co-workers who may be suicidal or at high risk. It also contains a list of relevant resource materials and organizations. [https://theactionalliance.org/resource/role-co-workers-preventing-suicide](https://theactionalliance.org/resource/role-co-workers-preventing-suicide)

- **AVMA Workplace Wellbeing Certificate Program.** Wellbeing within the workplace is key to individual and organizational productivity, engagement, satisfaction, and overall health. Helping employees achieve and maintain wellbeing takes more than monthly challenges, yearly health screenings, or attendance at wellbeing conferences. Making a difference in employees’ wellbeing and sustaining those results over time requires a culture shift—one that supports consistent, intentional healthy habits in the workplace. The AVMA Workplace Wellbeing Certificate Program assists these efforts by empowering veterinarians and team members with the knowledge and skills to create a culture of wellbeing in their veterinary workplace. [https://axon.avma.org/local/catalog/view/product.php?productid=22](https://axon.avma.org/local/catalog/view/product.php?productid=22)

You may be able to support or lend an empathetic ear. Or you may be at a point where knowing You are Not Alone is comforting. Either way, take action in discovering the strength in vulnerability.