We’re keeping up team morale by blasting our favorite tunes five minutes before team huddles are called twice a day. We’re constantly checking in on each other, sharing funny stories, pictures, and memes. Mostly, I’m genuinely thanking each of them for sticking together and running this marathon together with pride,” explains Lisa Milan, Practice Manager at Dundas West Animal Hospital in Toronto from her quotes in the article Flattening the Curve.1

I am glad to see such positivity and intention. It does my heart good to know there are teams taking team huddles, connecting and debriefing seriously. Keep in mind, weathering the current storm is a marathon, not a sprint.

Checking In—How are you doing?

Now may be a good time to ask your team members, colleagues, family and friends a sincere, heartfelt “How are you doing?” Not a simple, disconnected question, but allowing for the time in building an understanding for what’s really going on. Time to get a true pulse of mood and feelings.

In this moment, what is your mood? Describing a mood may be easier than a feeling. Take a few moments to “check-in” on your mood by answering a few questions at the end of the article. The one caveat; don’t overthink your answers. Be true to yourself and what you are feeling.

Take a few moments to “check-in” on your mood by answering a few questions at the end of the article.

Debriefing

Dr. Carrie McCrudden, a Psychologist and owner of Colorado Therapy, is aware of veterinary team dynamics and offers the following four-step plan as support.

Step One

The first step here is to normalize your reactions. It is perfectly normal to feel out of sorts, right now. All feelings are normal in the turbulence we are experiencing amidst COVID-19 and delivering essential care.

Step 2

Second, it is important to let yourself feel the reaction you are actually having. Label the feeling or even the mood if that is easier.

Step 3

Third, make a plan for what you need. If you are going to debrief with co-workers, make sure to do it in ways that helps the whole team, and isn’t just a way to increase everyone’s stress. This looks like giving time for venting, but also making sure to finish with either learning lessons, solutions, or a way to put the incident to rest.

Step 4

Finally, give yourself time to heal. Be gentler with yourself and your co-workers if a day has been particularly stressful.

Read her entire Debriefing Stressful Situations Blog2 for more debriefing tips.

Teams that design structured retrospectives or debriefs are typically 25% more effective. According to the Nil Davis Podcast All the Responsibility, None of the Authority, the basic structure of a retrospective or debrief is to surface the following in a brief meeting of the whole team3:

• What went well (you’ll want to keep doing these things)
• What could be improved (went OK, but could be better)
• What went badly (you want to stop doing these things, if possible, or concentrate on doing them better)
• A focus for the next period/sprint/month/quarter (One or two things to focus on)

Regardless of the world circumstances, connecting, debriefing and self-care are good habits to embrace for the long-haul. Veterinary medicine is a rewarding, satisfying career and will be even better when your support system is strong; the team gathers after difficult cases or tough days and celebrates wellbeing.

If you, or someone you know, is in need...
Regardless of the world circumstances, connecting, debriefing and self-care are good habits to embrace for the long-haul.

of help, you are encouraged to reach out to a professional who can help you. Becky Murray’s Blog How to Find or Choose a Therapist is a wonderful resource. Becky is a CVT and a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor.

Lastly, review at and share all of the resources on NAVTA’s Wellbeing Resources Page.5

REFERENCES
5. NAVTA’s Wellbeing Resources Page. https://www.navta.net/page/WellbeingResources

QUICK QUESTIONNAIRE
PERSONAL CHECK-IN

Write out a few words describing your current mood. Don’t over think this. What are you feeling? Name it to Tame It (but you don’t have to fix it!).

- What is working well for you right now?
- How can you make your career and life even better yet?
- If you could gift yourself one thing, what would it be?
- How would that gift support you in this moment?
- What are you struggling with the most right now?
- What tools are at your fingertips to alleviate some of the challenge?
- What else do you wish to Name it to Tame It?

Take care of yourself!