



HERE'S A SECRET ...

We Have Many Versions of Our “Best Self”

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I still practice clinical medicine on Monday mornings. By choice, the dreaded Monday mornings test my surgery skills, medical knowledge, and patience. What's even wilder is that I love it.

Monday mornings bear several burdens. First, they set the tone for the week ahead. Are you ahead of the game? Breezing through appointments with grateful clients, speeding through callbacks of lab results returned over the weekend, and catching up on your team's weekend activities. Or is it the “Manic Monday” of pop song fame? Hitting snooze 3 times to wake up to no hot water for your shower, encountering a traffic jam on the way to work, and being greeted by waiting emergencies. Basically, being behind before you even get started.

Second, but definitely related, Monday mornings test us personally. The Monday after a weekend chock-full of chores, family obligations, and adulting is not the same as the Monday after a weekend

of relaxing with a good book, gardening, or enjoying a favorite activity. What I bring with me every Monday morning is *not* the same. Some days I have the well-rested sage energy of a Zen master; other days I have my scrub top on inside out. The “Manic Mondays” always seem to occur after I failed to say “no” to what seem to be unlimited requests!

As I drive home on Mondays, I get a good chance to reflect on my day of medical mysteries, wacky client stories, and the week ahead. Gradually, I have realized that I always bring my very best to the clinic and love what I can give my clients, their pets, and my colleagues during that time. That said, my best on those “Zen master days” is not the same as the got-dressed-like-I-did-in-preschool days. One is more skilled, less flappable, and more logical, but the other is funnier, more relatable, and humbler. Both versions of myself are great veterinarians and both are the best version of me I can give on that day.

Too often, we focus only on the best version that fits the picture in our heads of what best is. It fits into the mold of success we pictured in veterinary school, or even earlier. The version of ourselves that are tired, burnt out, or have other concerns on our minds don't seem the best to us. Honestly, who can be the perfect best version of themselves every single day? We are imperfect with real lives full of change, confusion, and complications. You can't always be your most satisfying version of your best self, but you can always be the best just as you are. Even on a “Manic Monday.” **TVP**

Ben Kirchner

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This column is titled “The Secret Life Vets” so I can talk about the secrets that really should be considered well-known truths. These are the not-so-secret secrets that can help change our thinking and our profession for the better.

