

# Putting Empathy into Practice

Lisa Hunter, LSW, and Jane R. Shaw, DVM, PhD

Try this intentional exercise. Challenge yourself and your team to begin a daily practice of expressing empathy. You may find yourselves experiencing empathy and feeling it internally. Encourage yourselves to verbally express empathy—use your outside voice.

To track your progress and that of your team, you may want to monitor your client appointments for a week. You can create a simple chart divided in half to analyze your progress. On 1 side, post the empathy statements shared and on the other side record the outcome (see the chart below for an example). How did empathy help you move the visit forward? What were you able to achieve through addressing the client's emotions? How did it make you feel? How did the client respond?

For example:

## Empathy Statement

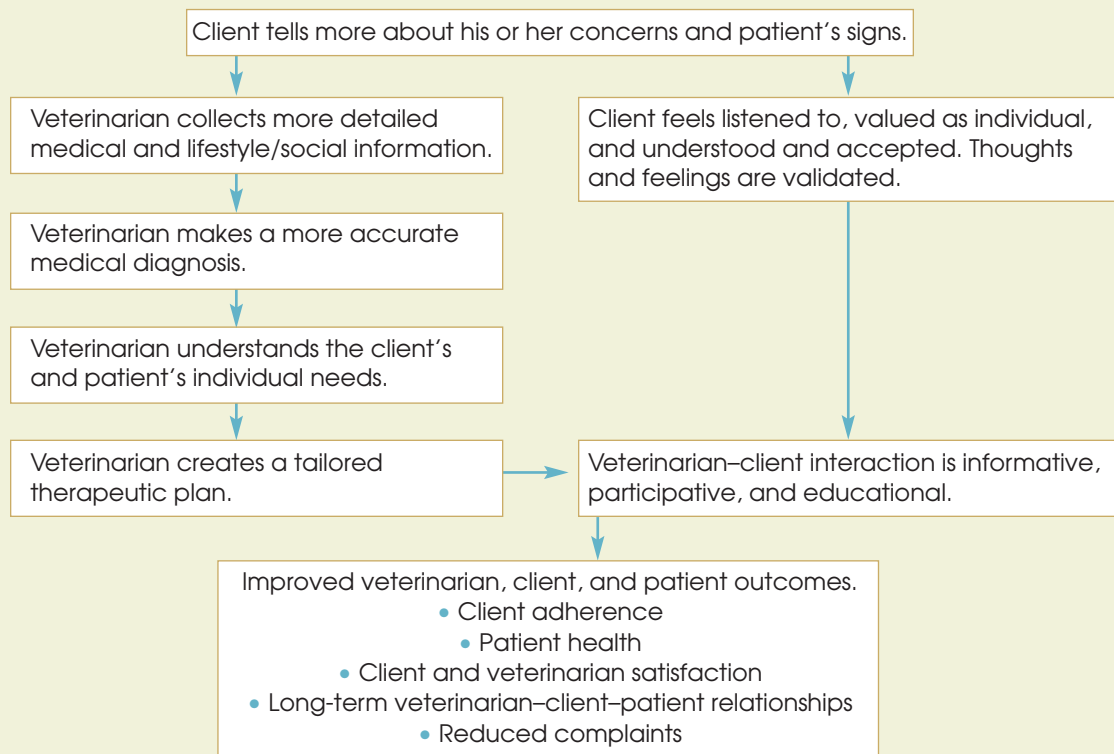
Vet Team: "You seem really concerned about him (empathy)."

Client: "I'm really worried. The last time he felt this way he had another bout of anemia."

## Client, Patient, or Veterinary Team Outcome

We learned that the patient has a history of immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and that the client is fearful that it might have relapsed, enabling us to educate the client on how we are going to investigate this problem.

### With Empathy



Adapted from: **Analyzing the "nature" and "specific effectiveness" of clinical empathy: A theoretical overview and contribution towards a theory-based research agenda.** Neumann M, Bensing J, Mercer S, et al. *Patient Educ Couns* 74:339-346, 2009.