

JOURNEY FOR TEAMS 3.0

THRIVE Transforming Workplace Dynamics

GUIDEBOOK Breaking Down Class Barriers

Building a healthy workplace culture that values and includes all roles and socioeconomic backgrounds, fostering belonging, growth, and effective collaboration

WELCOME

This workbook was created as both a mirror and a guide. It shines a light on subtle and often overlooked cultural disruptors, behaviors, attitudes, and assumptions that influence the culture of a veterinary workplace. By presenting real-world scenarios and challenges, it encourages readers to pause, recognize, and name forces that undermine belonging and trust.

Each scenario and activity pairs awareness with practical approaches, offering tools that leaders and teams can immediately apply. The purpose is not to provide perfect answers but to model a process: noticing disruptions, examining their impact, and responding with strategies that strengthen collaboration, wellbeing, and respect. Think of this workbook as a working companion. Use it in team discussions, leadership development, onboarding, or self-reflection. Engage with it honestly, ask the hard questions it surfaces, and adapt the tools to fit your environment. When used intentionally, it can help teams move from identifying problems to building a culture where every member feels valued, supported, and empowered to contribute.

Professional norms carry assumptions about who has resources, what “qualified” looks like, which clients will follow through, or which colleagues belong in the room. These assumptions often go unexamined, although the reason behind them is rarely bad intent. More often, the systems themselves were built around particular norms: certain educational pathways, communication styles, financial signals and cultural cues.

This module examines: how those patterns show up in veterinary medicine, in team dynamics, clinical decision-making, and client interactions; and what it takes to interrupt them.

Through real-world examples, participants will explore how workplace culture either reinforces these patterns or creates the conditions to change them. The goal isn't to assign fault. It's to sharpen professional judgement; to distinguish between evidence-based evaluation and assumption-driven shortcuts; and to build the practical skills that support consistent, patient-centered care.

By the end, participants will be better equipped to recognize where assumptions may be shaping decisions, to communicate clearly across difference, and to contribute to environments where colleagues and clients alike are met with respect, clarity, and genuine opportunity.

WELCOME

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Identify how institutional systems, professional norms, and workplace expectations create assumptions about credibility, competence and access within veterinary settings.
- Recognize common patterns where shortcuts such as educational prestige, communication style, or perceived financial resources influence organizational decision-making.
- Analyze how these patterns affect team dynamics, perceptions of expertise, and client interactions, independently of any individual's conscious intent.
- Distinguish between assumption-driven shortcuts and evidence-based reasoning when evaluating colleagues, candidates or client needs.
- Apply strategies that support consistent communication, including presenting care options based on the patient rather than assumptions about the client.

Disclaimers

- All examples and case study scenarios are based on real situations, but names (including hospitals) are pseudonyms.
- The inclusion of resources does not imply or constitute an endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

3Rs

In order to strengthen veterinary workplace culture, teams can: **recognize** both the strengths and the dynamics that shape their environment and experiences; **reconsider** approaches or assumptions that may no longer serve them, while identifying opportunities to build on what works; and **re-evaluate** everyday decisions in ways that reinforce systems of collaboration, wellbeing, and respect.

1 Recognize
Strengths and dynamics shaping culture

2 Reconsider
Patterns and assumptions to build on what works

3 Re-evaluate
Choices to reinforce collaboration and respect

RECOGNIZE

WHAT IS CLASSISM?

Classism is the institutional, cultural, and individual set of practices and beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socioeconomic class; and an economic system that creates excessive inequality and causes basic human needs to go unmet.

WHAT DOES CLASSISM LOOK & SOUND LIKE IN THE WORKPLACE?

Teams may make assumptions about a client's ability to pay for care, understand medical terminology or even administer treatments at home based on their perceived social class. These assumptions may lead to discrepancies in quality of care or client satisfaction. For example:

- *Assumptions about social class are often coupled with assumptions about intelligence or comprehension.* This can influence how information is explained, what options are offered, and the overall quality of care provided—ultimately impacting patient health and wellbeing.
- *Assumptions that a client can and will approve all recommended services without discussion.* When this assumption is incorrect, practices may need to credit services to preserve the client relationship—revealing how unexamined class-based expectations can affect both care delivery and business sustainability.
- *Assumptions about whether someone is “deserving” of pet ownership based on financial resources.* In reality, financial means do not determine the depth, legitimacy, or significance of the human–animal bond.

Between staff members, classism may show up in scheduling practices. When leaders consistently assign themselves preferred daytime shifts while others are regularly scheduled for closing or weekend hours, it can signal that some people's personal and family needs are viewed as more legitimate than others. Even when rationalized as “I need to pick up my kids from school,” this pattern can unintentionally diminish the importance of the caregiving, transportation, or financial realities faced by other team members—realities that are often shaped by role, income, and access to resources.

RECOGNIZE

HOW DOES CLASSISM IMPACT YOUR SENSE OF SELF?

Classism can shape your sense of self in ways that are often subtle at first, then more noticeable over time. Sometimes it shows up as second-guessing yourself in spaces where nothing has been explicitly said, but something feels off. You might start to question whether you belong, whether you sound “right,” or whether your background will be understood or valued—not because of your ability, but because of the signals about what is expected or recognized.

Other times, it can work in the opposite direction. When systems consistently affirm certain pathways, credentials, or ways of showing up, it can quietly reinforce confidence and a sense of ease. The system feels like it fits, so there is more space to focus on the work itself. Over time, those experiences add up.

If the system feels aligned with your background, you may move through it without having to think much about access or expectations. If it doesn't, you may spend additional energy learning unspoken rules while also doing your job. That extra effort is real, even when isn't always visible.

The important point is that this isn't about an individual's worth or capability. It's about how systems shape the conditions under which people experience themselves at work. When we begin to recognize that, it creates an opportunity to shift from asking, “What's wrong with me?” to asking, “What is the system signaling, and how can we make that signal clearer, more consistent, and more supportive for everyone?”

Although the language of class has evolved over centuries, class hierarchies have become deeply normalized in American culture, policy, and professional life. In the United States, one important nuance is that social class is not a federally protected category under civil rights law, meaning that discrimination based on class remains legal unless it intersects with another protected status such as gender, race, or disability (Hopkins, Shlasko, & Valdivia, 2021). This historical backdrop helps explain why classism often operates invisibly, even in professional fields like veterinary medicine.

Classism doesn't define your value, but it can influence how easily your value is recognized, both by others and, at times, by yourself.

RECONSIDER

PATHWAYS INTO THE VETERINARY PROFESSION

Not everyone who would make an excellent veterinarian, technician, or practice manager starts with the same runway. Some arrive with established networks, financial cushion, and people in their corner who already know how the system works. Others are navigating the same path with far fewer advantages, and for many, class is only one layer of what shapes that experience. Economic background rarely travels alone. It intersects with other parts of identity and lived experience in ways that can compound over time, making certain doors feel heavier, certain rooms feel less welcoming, and certain opportunities feel like they were designed for someone else.

There's a belief that runs through many professional cultures: that once you've earned the credential, the playing field levels out. You passed the same boards. You have the same degree. You're in.

It's an appealing idea, and it's not entirely wrong. Credentials do matter and earning them is genuinely significant. But the degree doesn't erase what came before it, and it doesn't neutralize what continues after. Someone who graduated with significant debt navigates their early career differently than someone who didn't. Someone who had to work twice as hard to be taken seriously in school often carries that vigilance into the workplace. Someone who never saw themselves reflected in leadership may still hesitate before stepping into it.

The starting line doesn't reset. It shifts. And the distance between where someone began and where they're trying to go doesn't disappear because of a diploma.

Recognizing that difference and actively working to close it is part of what it means to take professional culture seriously. Supporting clearer, more accessible pathways into veterinary medicine is how the profession can grow into its full potential.

RECONSIDER

HIRING FOR “FIT”

It is a natural tendency for people to feel more comfortable with others who share common interests, backgrounds, and experiences. Most teams want people who will collaborate well, communicate effectively, and contribute positively to the workplace. Those are real and important goals.

In an interview setting, this may be referred to as “culture fit”—seeking someone who will blend in with the team. A candidate’s answers about hobbies, recreational activities, their childhood/home life, or travel experiences can influence whether the interviewer(s) perceive them as a good fit for the organization. Hiring for fit can feel efficient, but over time “fit” can shift from something intentional to something informal and undefined. When that happens, it can start to rely on familiarity rather than clarity. Instead of asking:

- Can this person do the work?
- Will they contribute to the team’s success?

The unconscious question that is often being answered is: “Is this candidate the same social class as me?” Candidates who do not have familiar life experiences may be unintentionally deemed “not a good fit.”

Instead of hiring for “fit” teams can shift toward hiring for contribution and alignment. That means asking:

- What skills and strengths does this role actually require?
- How will this person add to the team, not just match it?
- Are we evaluating based on evidence or on comfort and familiarity?

This doesn’t lower standards; it clarifies them. When we focus on contribution and evidence, we make stronger decisions for both the veterinary team and the profession.

RECONSIDER

THE WORKPLACE STATUS QUO

Become a driver for a respectful, collaborative culture: Veterinary medicine, like most healthcare fields, has developed its own hierarchy, and much of it operates in the background, shaping everyday interactions in ways that are easy to miss. It shows up in whose clinical observations get followed up on, which team member's concern prompts a second look, and which client receives a thorough explanation versus a hurried one. These moments aren't usually the result of anyone's bad intentions. They're the result of working in fast-paced environments where quick judgment is necessary and where systems naturally begin to rely on familiar signals: role, credential, communication style, confidence, and presentation.

Over time, those signals can become stand-ins for competence, even when the actual evidence points elsewhere. The careful technician, the quieter colleague, the client who asks questions differently—their contributions and concerns can get filtered out, not because anyone decided to discount them, but because the system wasn't designed to catch them.

Academic settings carry their own version of this. Which voices anchor departmental conversations, whose work gets visibility, which students find doors opening with ease—these patterns tend to reflect the culture that already exists more than the merit that's actually present.

What makes the difference, more than anything, is what gets modeled at the top. When leadership demonstrates genuine curiosity, shares credit, and listens without hierarchy, it drives an exchange of ideas and resets what the whole team comes to expect. The aim here isn't to critique individual choices. It's to look honestly at the systems and habits that shape how teams function, and to find the places where small shifts in practice can open up better outcomes for colleagues, clients, and patients alike.

RE-EVALUATE

10-MINUTE CASE STUDY



Read through the case study independently or in pairs, and reflect on the discussion questions. Once all groups complete their review, discuss your thoughts and answers with the whole team.

A state veterinary medical association (VMA) is holding a strategic planning meeting with an external consultant. Along with the Board of Directors, a group of younger veterinarians serving on a newly-formed advisory board has been invited to participate. The consultant recommends that the VMA host a booth at an upcoming alumni weekend, staffed by members representing different decades of graduates. The consultant emphasizes that visible representation—across age, career stage, and background—could strengthen connections with alumni and encourage new memberships.

BREAKING POINT

The following day, the VMA President proposes a different approach: the President, Vice President, and Treasurer will be funded to attend the alumni event, with their travel, lodging, and meals covered. Other board and advisory board members are encouraged to attend at their own expense and may volunteer at the booth. The President explains that the officers were chosen because they know the strategic plan best.

The advisory board members feel frustrated that this decision has reduced their voice within the VMA—that they are advisory board members in name only with no real ability to affect change. Members collaborate on a letter to express their disagreement with the new direction and their dissatisfaction with the unilateral decision. The letter also cites the consultant’s report, refuting the justification for the change in direction. It is sent by email to the Board of Directors.

SENSE MAKING

In this example, class-like distinctions emerge within organizational roles (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2012). The decision has fallen to the purview of one individual who has chosen those in their peer class to travel with them on a paid trip. The cultural disruptors include:

- Higher-ranking positions are prioritized, unintentionally diminishing the visibility and voice of advisory board members and other officers
- Participation and resources are unequally distributed
- Non-executive members are invited “to the table,” but also excluded which can create learned helplessness or organizational dissatisfaction (Gray & Kish-Gephart, 2012)

RE-EVALUATE

10-MINUTE CASE STUDY



Read through the case study independently or in pairs, and reflect on the discussion questions. Once all groups complete their review, discuss your thoughts and answers with the whole team.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(5 minutes)

- What might other members of the board think about this decision?
- What feedback might the consultant give about how the decision aligns—or doesn't align—with the original recommendation?
- How could this decision shape the long-term engagement of newer members? What strategies might the VMA use to ensure that future decision-making reflects input from all levels of the organization?

SOLUTION & APPROACH

An additional meeting was called to vote on the selection of representatives to attend the meeting, with the consensus being to stick with the consultant's recommendations. The Secretary created an online form for members to express their interest in attending the alumni meeting. One representative from each of the past four decades of graduates was selected at random. Travel expenses were covered for the four representatives.

RESULTS

Organizational culture and member satisfaction were strengthened by equitably supporting travel, rotating representation, and creating structures that amplify advisory board voices. This approach helped to expand the reach of the state VMA.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Decision-making power and access to resources can reflect class-like hierarchies in professional organizations. By recognizing these dynamics, leaders have an opportunity to foster more inclusive participation.

RE-EVALUATE**20-MINUTE
TEAM EXERCISE**

This exercise will help you practice interrupting biases and creating systemic change. It can be done individually, in pairs, or small groups. Be sure to share your findings with the whole team.

Uncovering Unintentional Bias: Invisible Rules at Work

Every person brings a set of unspoken rules into the workplace each day—rules that were shaped by their class background, family norms, education, and life experience. These create invisible and often unintentional expectations about how team members should communicate, ask for help, and respond to authority. They also shape each person’s idea of professionalism and their interpretation of the workplace.

By bringing our unique perspectives into the open, teams can recognize how many different assumptions exist in the same workplace and how those previously invisible rules affect collaboration, inclusion, and quality of care.

1. Individual Reflection (5 minutes, written answers not required)

Take a moment to quietly reflect on your experience growing up. What was one “unspoken rule” you learned about each of the following:

- Money
- Work
- Asking for help
- How to talk to authority figures

How have these unspoken rules shaped the way you show up at work today (e.g., willingness to seek mentorship, asking for raises, discussing finances, questioning leaders, ability to say “I don’t know”)?

RE-EVALUATE

20-MINUTE TEAM EXERCISE



This exercise will help you practice interrupting biases and creating systemic change. It can be done individually, in pairs, or small groups. Be sure to share your findings with the whole team.

2. Small Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Purpose: Listening to understand and become aware of your colleagues' unspoken rules, not to debate or judge their meaning, rationale, or merit.

Invite each member of the group to answer the three questions below, sharing only what each person is comfortable sharing.

- Share one unspoken rule from your individual reflection. How does this affect your work today?
- Where did you develop your understanding of “professionalism,” and what invisible expectations did that set for you? These expectations might include:
 - Speaking a certain way in the workplace, or switching ways depending on the situation
 - Wearing certain clothing, accessories, and/or footwear, and the condition of those items
 - Having reliable personal transportation
 - Being able to stay late at work with no notice
 - Being reachable outside of office hours or while on vacation
 - Remaining calm and collected during moments of tension, stress, or aggression
 - Deferring to leadership, even when something feels wrong
- Which of these are truly essential for quality care, and which might be class-coded expectations?

3. Full Group Discussion (5 minutes total)

Invite the team as a whole to share their collective understanding of workplace expectations, professionalism, and care.

- What did you notice about the unspoken rules discussed in your group?
- Where might unspoken rules clash in veterinary settings (e.g., team meetings, scheduling, client communication, etc.)?
- What is one small behavior we can all agree to change that might help us bridge the differences in our invisible rules?

RE-EVALUATE

6-MINUTE SELF-REFLECTION



The following questions will help illuminate your own thoughts and feelings, as well as the norms at your place of work. Sharing your answers as a team is welcome and entirely optional.

- 1 In what ways do you notice class and/or classism-related dynamics influencing experiences in your workplace—for staff, clients, or both?
- 2 In what ways do you notice class and/or classism shaping people’s experiences of animal ownership and access to veterinary care?
- 3 In what ways do you notice class and/or classism showing up in society? What insights might you make about how that may influence your own assumptions or behaviors?
- 4 Think of your favorite movie. In what ways, if any, do issues of class or classism show up?

We all want to feel a sense of belonging with those who are important to us. In some environments, people may feel pressure to “fit in” as a way of being accepted. This can involve code-switching—changing one’s communication style or approach to align with the perceived or actual expectations of a social group. For example, in rural settings, individuals from urban or suburban areas may be objectified as “city slickers” and treated as “less than.” In response, they may modify speech patterns, styles of dress, or preferred leisure activities in an effort to be seen as acceptable within that environment. While code-switching can be a genuine way to connect with others, it can also be mentally, emotionally, and physically draining.

CPR

Building a healthy veterinary workplace culture takes intention, effort, and practice. This section will help you identify actionable ways you can strengthen collaboration and inclusion individually or as a team using these three steps:

1 Cultivate Connection

Practical ways to deepen trust, respect, and teamwork

2 Practice Care-Filled Responses

Proactive language and actions that encourage growth and mutual understanding

3 Reinforce What Matters

Tools and resources that sustain values, celebrate strengths, and support ongoing learning

CULTIVATE CONNECTION

FORGING AHEAD AS A TEAM

These actionable steps can help shift veterinary workplaces from a culture of tolerance to one of engagement and care. By doing so, we move closer to an environment that supports and strengthens the sense of value and connection across all members of the team.

1 Reflect on quick assumptions, then begin a dialogue

It is human nature to make quick, unconscious judgments about other people. Sometimes, our quick judgments are based on what we learned growing up from people who cared for us and wanted the best for us. At the same time, some of those lessons may be incomplete or shaped by norms that no longer serve us well in today's workplaces. Honoring our upbringing and heritage can go hand in hand with the courage to examine our assumptions and ask how they were formed. This reflective practice opens the door to more effective engagement with others so that rather than quickly classifying ourselves and others, we invite curiosity and dialogue.

2 Grow together as a team

Many individuals have the same professional colleagues, work routine, leisure routine and spend time with the same friends. Meeting new people and learning about their lived experience allows us to appreciate our views and those of others. This can also be achieved in the workplace by flattening hierarchies in communication (e.g., rotating who leads rounds or case discussions or working with a peer-to-peer feedback loop) to help reduce prestige bias. In our personal lives, reading and listening to diverse resources is one way to strengthen self-awareness and expand our perspective.

If classism shows up in conversations, pause and ask, "What do we know?" and "What are we assuming?" In information-gathering settings, such as interviews, veterinary professionals can shift away from questions or statements that imply judgment. For example, saying "Most veterinarians I know had very different paths than yours" can unintentionally suggest that someone's path is abnormal. Instead, try open, curious questions like "How do you see your experience enriching your work as a veterinarian?" This approach recognizes that all training pathways contribute meaningfully to the profession.

CULTIVATE CONNECTION

FORGING AHEAD AS A TEAM

These actionable steps can help shift veterinary workplaces from a culture of tolerance to one of engagement and care. By doing so, we move closer to an environment that supports and strengthens the sense of value and connection across all members of the team.

- 3 Take collective action**

Identify practical ways to reduce classism in daily work. Veterinary leaders and practice managers can play an active role in ensuring compensation structures are equitable across the team and team members are being paid the appropriate market value. Beyond wages, workplaces can also create opportunities for professional growth—expanding skills that strengthen both the individual’s career path and the success of the workplace. These actions highlight the value of every role in the workplace.
- 4 Credit out loud**

When someone’s observation or idea moves care forward, name it in the moment: “That was a good catch.” It costs nothing and signals whose contributions count. Crediting out loud is a simple practice with an outsized effect. When a technician flags something that changes the course of treatment, say so, in the moment, in front of the team. When a colleague’s suggestion leads to a better outcome, name it. Not as a performance of inclusivity, but as an accurate account of how good care actually happens.

CULTIVATE CONNECTION

MINDING YOUR LANGUAGE

Be conscious of how your words impact others in the workplace. Many words and phrases commonly used in casual and business communication can be hurtful or reveal ignorance of other meanings, biased stereotypes, and lived human experiences. Using non-inclusive words can lead to “othering” or an “us vs. them” mentality.

Some suggested words to watch are outlined below. Practice substituting words that “other” with words that connect. Be kind to yourself in the process. If in your quest for change you misspeak, apologize and move on. Don’t dwell on your mistake or expect absolution, accommodation, or forgiveness from others. This practical action can make a big difference in improving personal connections in the workplace.

WORDS THAT “OTHER” & WORDS THAT CONNECT

Consider replacing these common terms with the alternate *in italics*:

Blue collar	<i>Skilled labor</i>
Difficult client	<i>This client needs a different approach</i>
Handout	<i>Support</i>
Homeless	<i>Unhoused or person experiencing homelessness</i>
Low-income client	<i>A client with financial considerations or just the client</i>
Non-compliant	<i>We haven’t found the right plan yet. There may be barriers we haven’t addressed.</i>
They don’t care	<i>We may not have the full picture yet.</i>
Third world	<i>Developing</i>

CULTIVATE CONNECTION

INTERRUPTING ASSUMPTIONS DURING WORKPLACE EVALUATIONS

Interviews, clinical placements, and performance reviews are all times when we might be responsible for evaluating others in the workplace. During these evaluations, we may rely on common euphemisms or subjective summaries without pausing to question our own assumptions with curiosity or probing further to provide constructive feedback.

Below are phrases that might be heard during workplace evaluations. Instead of relying on a common yet vague statement, try interrupting it with curiosity or specificity.

Instead of...	Try...	What that might sound like...
They seem unprofessional.	Naming the specific behavior—vague labels carry a lot of hidden bias	<i>They are frequently late for opening shifts. What might they need to meet our expectations?</i>
They don't have the right background.	Approaching with curiosity	<i>Their path looks different, let's look at what they can actually do.</i>
They are overqualified.	Stating what the real concern is	<i>I worry that they will move on to the first bigger opportunity they find.</i> <i>What might appeal to them about this role/workplace?</i>
They don't fit our culture.	Being specific about what the actual concern is, and about skills and readiness, not impression	<i>We haven't explored what they bring to the team.</i>
They have a chip on their shoulder.	Considering their context	<i>They may have navigated environments where they had to advocate hard for themselves.</i>
They don't belong here.	Examining what's underneath that—full stop	
They need a lot of hand-holding.	Examining the resources, instructions, and autonomy provided in the workplace	<i>They may need more structured support or clearer expectations.</i>
They don't communicate well.	Acknowledging unspoken preferences	<i>We may have different communication styles.</i>
They look very polished.	Separating job requirements from preferences	<i>Which skills did they demonstrate?</i>
That's someone I'd like to grab a beer with.	Considering what they add to the workplace	<i>What new strengths might they bring to the team?</i>
They're not what I expected—in a good way!	Stating the workplace-related behavior that appeals to you	<i>They are very collaborative.</i>

PRACTICE CARE-FILLED RESPONSES

REALIGNING RESISTANCE

During the Thrive course you may feel resistance internally, encounter it from fellow team members, or both.

What kinds of objections or rejections, internal or external, might you anticipate? How might you respond? First, pause to listen with curiosity, then consider if a care-filled response is needed. The following information may help.

DEFENSIVE STATEMENT	CARE-FILLED RESPONSE
<p>I earned my success and if others worked hard, they too could earn their success.</p>	<p>You did earn it, and that real. This isn't about taking that away. It's about honestly asking whether the path was accessible to everyone who worked just as hard. For every person who worked hard and made it, there are others who worked just as hard and hit walls that had nothing to do with their effort or ability. Acknowledging that doesn't diminish what you build, it just means making sure you're not unknowingly holding a door closed that someone else helped open for you.</p>
<p>People who cannot afford to take care of an animal should not have an animal.</p>	<p>That's a feeling a lot of people in this field share, and I know that it comes from genuinely caring about animals. But think about it this way: how many of us could say with certainty that we'd never hit a season of life where money got tight.</p> <p>Our job isn't to decide who deserves a pet. It's to figure out what's possible for the patient in front of us and the person who loves them. Sometimes it means resources we can connect them to. But the moment we decide someone doesn't belong in our exam room, we've already stopped doing our job.</p>

PRACTICE CARE-FILLED RESPONSES

DEFENSIVE STATEMENT	CARE-FILLED RESPONSE
<p>Look, not all veterinary schools are equal. If I'm building a team, I want the best, and the best come from the best programs. That's not bias, that's just good hiring.</p>	<p>Training matters, and so does recognizing that excellent clinicians come from many different paths and programs. Some of the most skilled and dedicated professional in this field took roads that look different on paper. The best hire you ever make might come from a place you hadn't thought to look.</p>
<p>I value my staff but at the end of the day I'm the one with the degree, the license and the liability. That has to count for something in how decisions get made.</p>	<p>It absolutely counts and nobody is minimizing what it took to get that degree or what it means to carry that license and liability every single day. And because you carry it, you deserve a team that makes you better. The best clinical decisions aren't always made by the most credentialed person in the room; they are made by the person with the most complete picture. And the most complete picture comes from a team that feels trusted enough and encouraged to share their perspective.</p>

REINFORCE WHAT MATTERS

CONTINUED LEARNING

These recommended resources are excellent tools for learning more.

ONLINE ARTICLES

[Why Companies Should Add Class to their Diversity Discussions](#)

by Harvard Business Review (hbr.org)

[Class Differences](#) by the American Psychological Association (apa.org)

BOOKS

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Veterinary Medicine](#) by Kemba Marshall (ed)

[Caste](#) by Isabel Wilkerson

[The Intersections of Working-Class Academic Identity: A Class Apart](#) by Teresa Crew

RESEARCH & JOURNAL ARTICLES

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NATIONAL RESOURCES & ORGANIZATIONS

[Learning for Justice](#) by the Southern Poverty Law Center

Breaking Down Class Barriers

INSIGHTS & ACTIONS TO BUILD A CULTURE OF CARE

SLOW THE SHORTCUT

Fast-paced environments rely on quick signals. Pause before using cues like school, role or presentation to guide decisions. Look for evidence of skill, experience, and performance.



DEFINE WHAT MATTERS

“Fit” can become a stand-in for familiarity. Be clear about what success in the role actually requires. Evaluate people based on contributions, not comfort or similarity.



OFFER OPTIONS, NOT ASSUMPTIONS

Present care options based on the needs of the patient, rather than assumptions about what clients can afford. Give every client the same information and space to decide. Support decisions without judgement.



MAKE THE UNWRITTEN CLEAR

Workplace norms are not always obvious to everyone. Name expectations around communication, collaboration, and growth. Clarity reduces guesswork and strengthens team confidence.



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