



## The Unspoken Life WORKBOOK Introduction: Reclaim Your Unspoken Life

As veterinarians and caregivers, we sometimes get dark and lonely. We don't feel as if anybody can understand us. We feel trapped. There are all these obligations that have been pushed on us or that we have chosen, but that aren't, we now feel, what we wanted. We have made so many sacrifices so we could get where we are, and at the times when we feel that we don't even want to continue in this career, we judge ourselves harshly.

"What's wrong with me?" we wonder. "Why can't I feel happiness? There must be something I'm not doing, and that makes me bad. Why am I such a bad person?" In these moments, we can feel complete despair and disconnection from the world.

We care for so many lives. Yet our own lives can feel unspoken for.

In *The Unspoken Life*, I share the journey of my own path back from this darkness, to reclaiming my unspoken life. I offer the stepping stones that helped me cross the bridge back to connection, from "filling balloons" to a core set of principles to fall back on when times get hard —including self-worth, conviction, acceptance, courage, empathy, resilience, and vision.

These stepping stones have made all the difference in my life, and in the lives of many other veterinarians and caregivers across the country. But understanding the theory of reclaiming your unspoken life is one thing. Taking the action to actually reclaim it is another.

Crossing the bridge back to connection isn't easy. It takes a lot of work—not just once in a while, but every single day. And when it comes to learning to care about our own lives as much as we care about those of the patients and clients we help, the task can feel overwhelming. A lot of times, we don't even know where to start.

I designed this workbook to be your partner and your guide as you work toward reclaiming balance and connection in your life. Use it to support you however you see best. If you're unsure where to begin, I recommend starting with the first exercise and working your way through all the concepts and principles to the end, at your own pace. Then, when your balloons need refilling in the days and years ahead, come back to the worksheet you need at any given moment, and use it to help you rebalance yourself on the bridge of connection.

As you work through these exercises, remember that you are normal. There is nothing wrong with you. You are needed, you are loved, and you are wanted.

You already have a lot of the tools you need to reconnect inside you. When you take action to discover them, you will realize that you *are* spoken for. You are worthy. You are not alone. You deserve to find that balance between positivity and negativity in your own way.

You are connected to this world. And you can cross that bridge back to connection. It all begins with just one step.