Behavior problems:
The emotional impact on pet owners
Karen Fazio, CDBC

“You will never be successful in any field if you don’t possess the ability or the desire to address the emotional needs of humans.”
Karen Fazio, CDBC

According to AVMA (2017-2018) pet ownership is on the rise.

- Nearly 51% of all U.S. households owned a pet at end of year 2016.
- Approximately 38% of U.S. households owned one or more dogs (the highest estimated rate of dog ownership since the AVMA began measuring in 1962).
- 25% of U.S. households owned cats.
- 13% of U.S. households owned a specialty or exotic pet.
- 1.1% of U.S. households own chickens (up 23% in five years).
- An average of nearly 27% of all U.S. households are struggling with a pet-related behavior problem of some sort.
- You are not alone!

*AVMA publishes the survey approximately every five years.
Approximately 7.6 Million pets are surrendered to shelters annually. Nearly 90% are due to behavioral issues.

- Housebreaking issues.
- Destructive chewing.
- Fears and aggression.
- Owners think they’ve tried everything (they know).
- Owners are just burned out with compassion fatigue.

“No bad dogs, just bad owners.”

It’s statements such as these that are most difficult to overcome.

- Owners report feelings of being judged.
- Feelings of shame and self-scrutiny.
- Feelings of guilt and disappointment.
- Owners feel they must protect their pet, but realize it’s not enough.
- Owners feel their pet’s issues are a reflection of their own, yet they cannot control their pet.
- It’s statements such as these that are most difficult to overcome.
- Embarrassment, chagrin.
- Shameful as their pet is acting out in a way they feel feels out of control, affecting their happiness.
- Embarrassment, chagrin.
- Ashamed to admit pet is causing tremendous stress, effecting their happiness.
- Significance of social isolation.
- Altering social life, opting out of vacations or having house guests, time away from home, especially with SA cases.
- Owners feel social isolation.
- Feels ashamed, isolated leads to poor decision making and temperament.

Compasstion fatigue (burn-out) is a set of physical, behavioral, and social symptoms

- Also known as burnout, compassion fatigue stems from interactions and experiences in the work environment.
- Owners of issue pets suffer in silence.
- Owners feel they should do more to help their pet suffering (spouses, children over 12-years of age).
- Occupations at risk expect it to happen. No one is immune.
- A predictable and natural consequence of being responsible for the care of another.
- It’s just a degree of mental anguish, but the World Health Organization recently classified it as a medical condition.
- Can lead to illness or psychological issues if symptoms go unaddressed.
Take care of yourself!

• Go out with partner, friends, maintain social life (even if you don’t want to).
• Be sure to provide couple with pet-free time to enjoy, if necessary.
• Expect it to happen if you are coping with pet-related anxiety or interacting with those who are. No one is immune.
• A predictable and natural consequence of being responsible for the care of another.
• It’s not a disease or mental disorder, but the World Health Organization recently classified it.
• Can lead to illness or psychological issues if symptoms go unaddressed.
• If your family and friends report that you have changed, believe them!

A talented professional can help prevent owners from jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire.

• Most owners are embarrassed to seek help or be truthful about pet’s issues for fear of being judged.
  For example, you’re weak, not dominant enough, not a pack leader. Add this to the request to buy and non-professional on “what you should do…”
• Owners search for and get poor advice on the Internet. (Dr. Google is more worrying when it comes to pet’s behavior.
  Internet advice is more likely to make your dog’s behavior worse. You don’t need to have a specific pet behavior problem, leading these steps.
• Great vets empathize and refer.
  Many of our clients have some issues, I have just the person to talk with.

Many in science-based fields tend to be filled with introverts.

• If a trainer/vet is not willing to have a conversation with you, continue searching.
  Choosing certified individuals is recommended (CDBC, CCBC, CPDT, DACVB).
• You should feel at ease with them.
  A relationship with your trainer might be as intimate as the one you’ll have with a therapist.
• It’s important to be honest.
  Just because your pet has behavioral issues does not mean you are a failure. Be honest about everything, it helps develop a plan.

9/24/2019
Veterinary Social Work is becoming more popular every year.

- Know where to turn for emotional support.
- Certified animal behavior consultant, veterinary social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, CDBC, CGBC, CAN, DACVB
- Veterinary Social Worker (Monmouth County).
  Christine Costello, MSW, LCSW, LCADC, VSW
  703 Bridge Avenue, Suite A
  Point Pleasant Borough, NJ 08742
  732-892-0082