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*Southwest National  
Primate Research Center*

# **Impact of Human-Animal Interaction on the Career Evolution of Laboratory Animal Professionals**

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# Motivations for Entering an Animal-Based Occupation

- 150 participants from veterinary clinics (57.5%), shelters (25%), and laboratories (17.6%)
- Responded to three open-ended questions probing their reasons for entering their profession
- 4 themes:
  - Animal-focused reasons (love, respect, or empathy)
  - Job-focused reasons (variety/challenge or opportunity)
  - Self-focused reasons (satisfaction from interacting and helping)
  - Career-focused (income or other advantages)

Rohlf, 2005

Many professionals “originally felt a strong pull to help alleviate suffering and illness in animals...

...But many of these same people have become disillusioned.

They are disappointed by the difference between what their dream was and the reality of the work that confronts them daily.”

Ayl, 2013

# Four Phases of Career Evolution

- Phase 1 Honeymoon
- Phase 2 Depression
- Phase 3 Anger
- Phase 4 Resilience



Doug Fakkema (referenced in Smith, 2009)

# Phase 1 (Honeymoon)

- Red hot and raring to go, we are out to change the world. We are high on life. We know we can make a difference.
- Our enthusiasm overflows. Our capacity for challenges is limitless.
- We think we understand the problem and we know we can fix it if only people would get out of our way.



# Phase 2 (Depression)

- Our enthusiasm has turned sour.
- We've lost the boundless energy.
- We no longer wish to talk about work — don't even want to admit where we work.
- We seem powerless to affect change.
- Somehow we're to blame for our failure.
- Our wall of isolation gets thicker.
- Every now and then we get a spark of Phase 1 energy.



# Phase 3 (Anger)

- Our Phase 2 depression has turned outward and we're mad.
- Hopelessness turns to rage.
- Everyone is a target for our anger and derision.
- We have lost our perspective and our effectiveness.
- We're unable to connect with life.
- Even the animals we come in contact with seem somehow distant and unreal.



# Phase 4 (Resilience)

- It's big picture time.
- We realize that we have been effective — we have made a difference.
- We realize that work is not our whole world.
- We reconnect with the animals.
- We understand that sadness and pain are a part of our job.
- We are, little by little, changing the world.





# This is your life



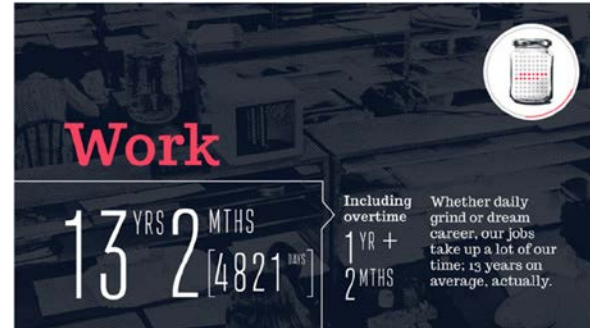
79 YEARS  
28,835 DAYS

The one activity you spend most of your life doing is sleep. But how does it compare to work, socialising and laughing? The average human spends roughly 79 years, or 28,835 days on Earth. Each bead in this jar represents one year.



<https://www.dreams.co.uk/sleep-matters-club/>

## Your jar unpacked



Putting our time, energy and talents into one place,  
changes that place. In turn, that place changes us.

Forming strong relationships with animals can contribute to  
both satisfaction and fatigue in the workplace.

Understanding the causes and consequences of stresses that  
can come from working with animals before entering the  
profession can be literally a lifesaver.

Smith 2009 and Polachek 2018

## References

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