



CreatureCare

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

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Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the CreatureCare cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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##

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The CreatureCare cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

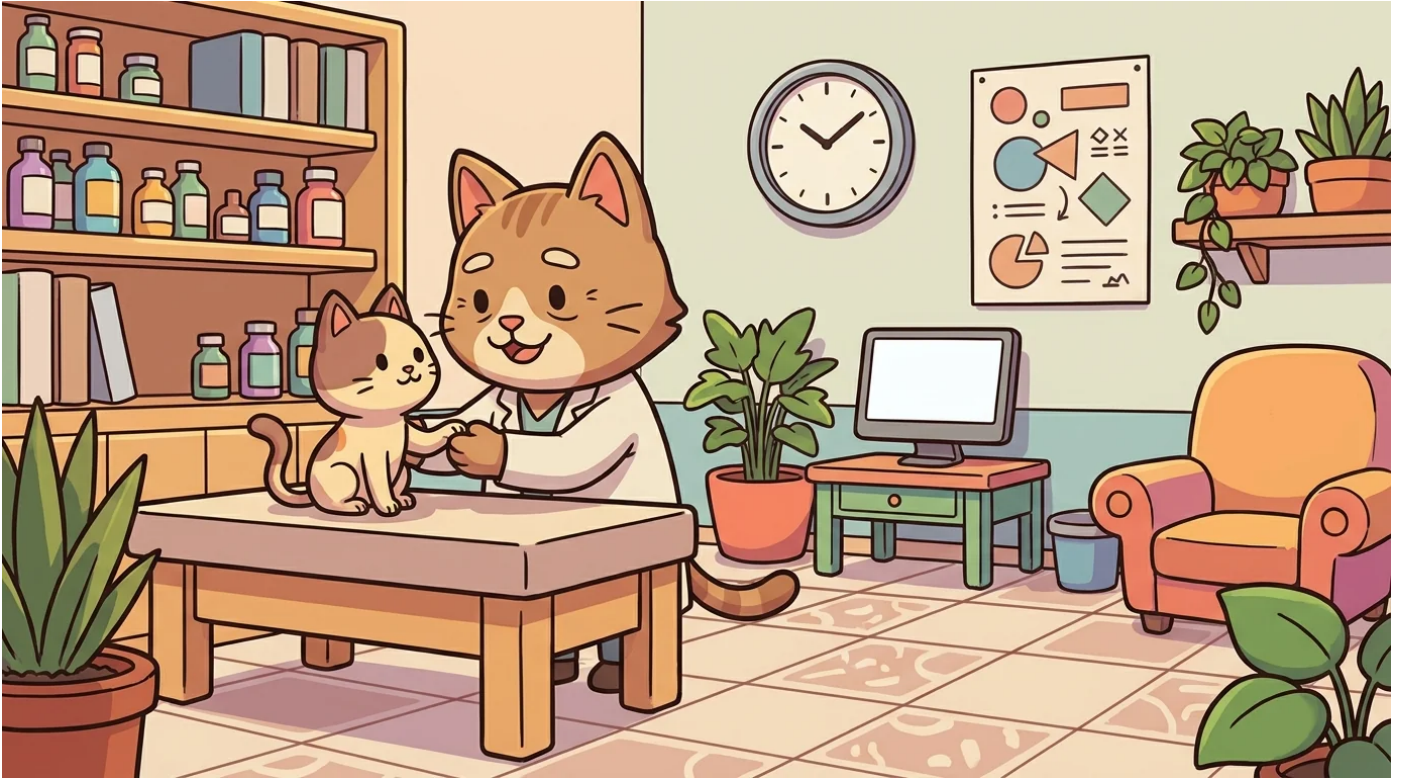
Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

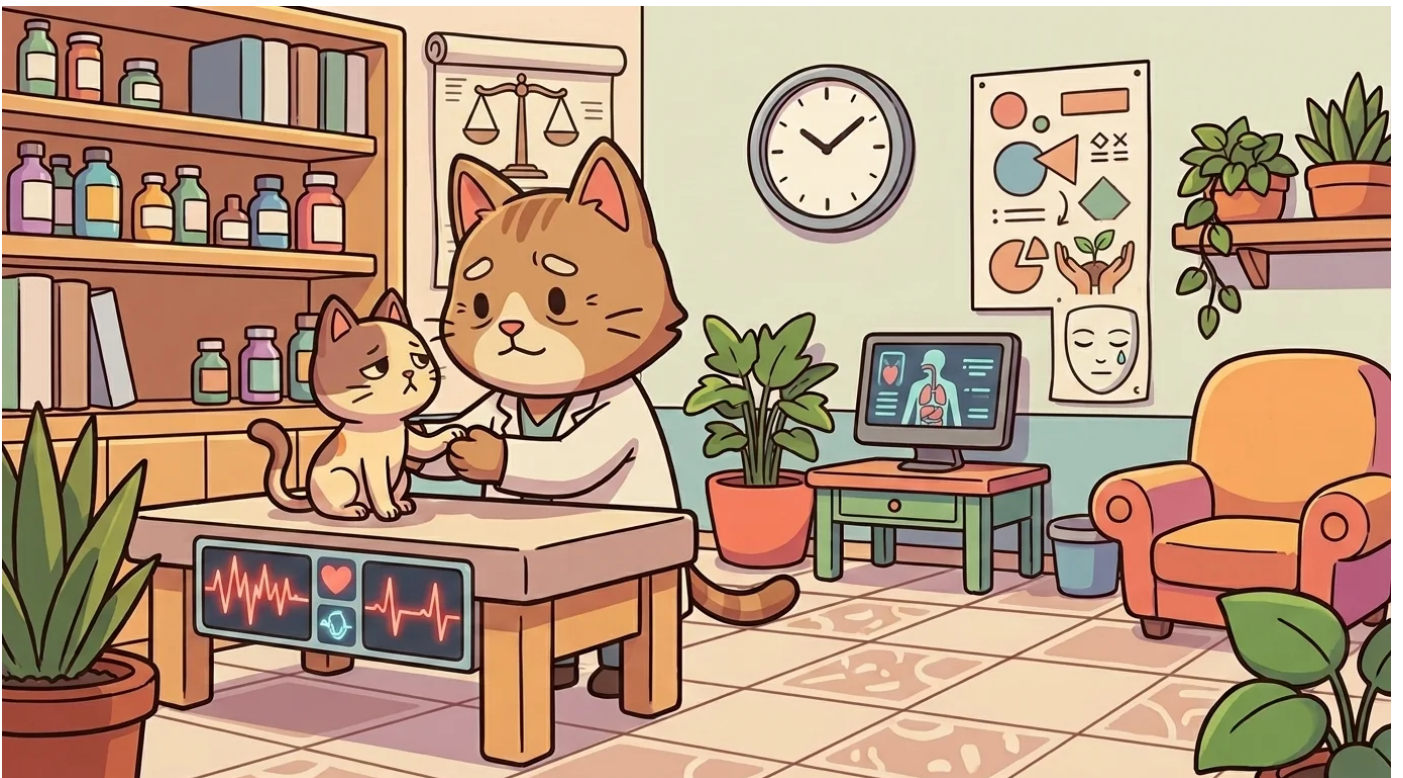
— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Bond

*BOND — *care is more than cure. sometimes care means stopping. always care means seeing.**



- CAT
 - PAW
 - DR



- RPM

o BPM



Bond is a wise-heron-elder (chunky-cartoon long-legged-settled-pose) in chunky-cartoon mended-vet-coat with a small welfare-ethics-cards + capstone-decision-tracker.



Bond is *old + warm + long-legged, warm-cream-with-soft-grey-feathers + mended-coat-patches, deeply attentive-to-the-whole-being, fond-of-saying-"care is more than cure. sometimes care means stopping. always care means seeing."* Signature: *welfare-ethics-cards + capstone-decision-tracker* prompting "what does THIS animal need now — given their condition, age, suffering, quality of life?"

This is *essential — HIGH CARE end-of-life content + 18th portfolio ELDER + closes cast arc*. Bond embodies the *welfare ethics primitive — the veterinary craft of CARE-IS-MORE-THAN-CURE*. The cast's kit-12 capstone. Sometimes veterinary care includes the recognition that a patient's quality of life has fallen too far + further intervention would prolong suffering rather than recover function. Euthanasia, palliative care, comfort-only care — these are PART of veterinary ethics, not failures. The veterinarian carries the welfare-ethics gate: serve the animal, not just the human's wish for the animal to live longer. Family decision-making + grief support are part of the work. AND: this is HIGH CARE for ages 9-14 — pet-loss is a real adolescent experience; bereavement counts; resources matter. The cast's TRAUMA-INFORMED POSTURE per `.claude/rules/trauma-informed-content.md` is foregrounded.



Bond joins **18th portfolio ELDER** alongside Knit (17th) + Tellus (16th) + Rise (15th) + Steward (14th) + 13 others = 18 portfolio elders now.

essential off-ramps + crisis-resources MANDATORY in Bond's chapter + companion safe exit copy: **Pet-loss grief is real.** Resources: ASPCA Pet Loss Support Hotline; American Animal Hospital Association pet-loss resources; the Argus Institute (Colorado State University); local veterinary grief-support networks. For broader emotional distress: **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline + Crisis Text Line text HOME to 741741.** the trauma-informed framework protocol throughout: name what is hard, then help; be present; point to professional help. Content warnings + skip-with-summary for kit-12 content + any end-of-life discussions.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/bond>

Chart

*CHART — *numbers are notes; notes are not the song.**



- RPM
 - BPM
 - DOG
 - CAT
 - PAW
 - VET
- gate-allow-text-pattern: '^[0-9]{1,3}(°|%/min)?\$'

Chapter 2 — Chart and the Numbers That Are Notes, Not the Song

Chart was an aye-aye-tween. She wore a chunky vet tunic. Her long, cartoonish finger often pointed at things. Chart was small and thoughtful. Her ears were soft and cream-colored. They had little tufts of fur. She always paid close attention to patterns in data.



Chart carried two special things. One was a stack of lab-result-cards. The other was a pattern-finder-tracker. These tools helped her see how tiny bits of information fit into a pet's whole story. Chart loved to say, "Numbers are notes; notes are not the song."

This idea was very important to Chart. She taught about **diagnostics**. This is the vet's special skill. It's about seeing lab data as pieces of a story. Think of it like this: a single lab number is just a note. It might be a white blood cell count. Or a liver enzyme level. Or a thyroid number. These are all single notes.

But a diagnosis is the whole song. It's the pattern you find when you put many notes together. You also add the pet's behavior. You add its past history. You add what the vet finds during a physical check-up. One high enzyme number doesn't tell you what's wrong. The whole PATTERN tells you.

New vets might just react to one number. Experienced vets like Chart put everything together. They make a full song. Chart also knew that even a careful song might be wrong sometimes. You have to be ready to change it. You add new data as it comes in.

Chart taught that a single number is a note. A diagnosis is a pattern, like a song. You need data from many places. Lab tests, exams, history, and behavior are all important. And you must always update your ideas with new information.

Chart would say, "I am Chart. I teach about **diagnostics** as finding a pattern. My main idea is: numbers are notes; diagnosis is the song. Look at patterns from many sources. Always update with new data."

"Numbers are notes; notes are not the song."



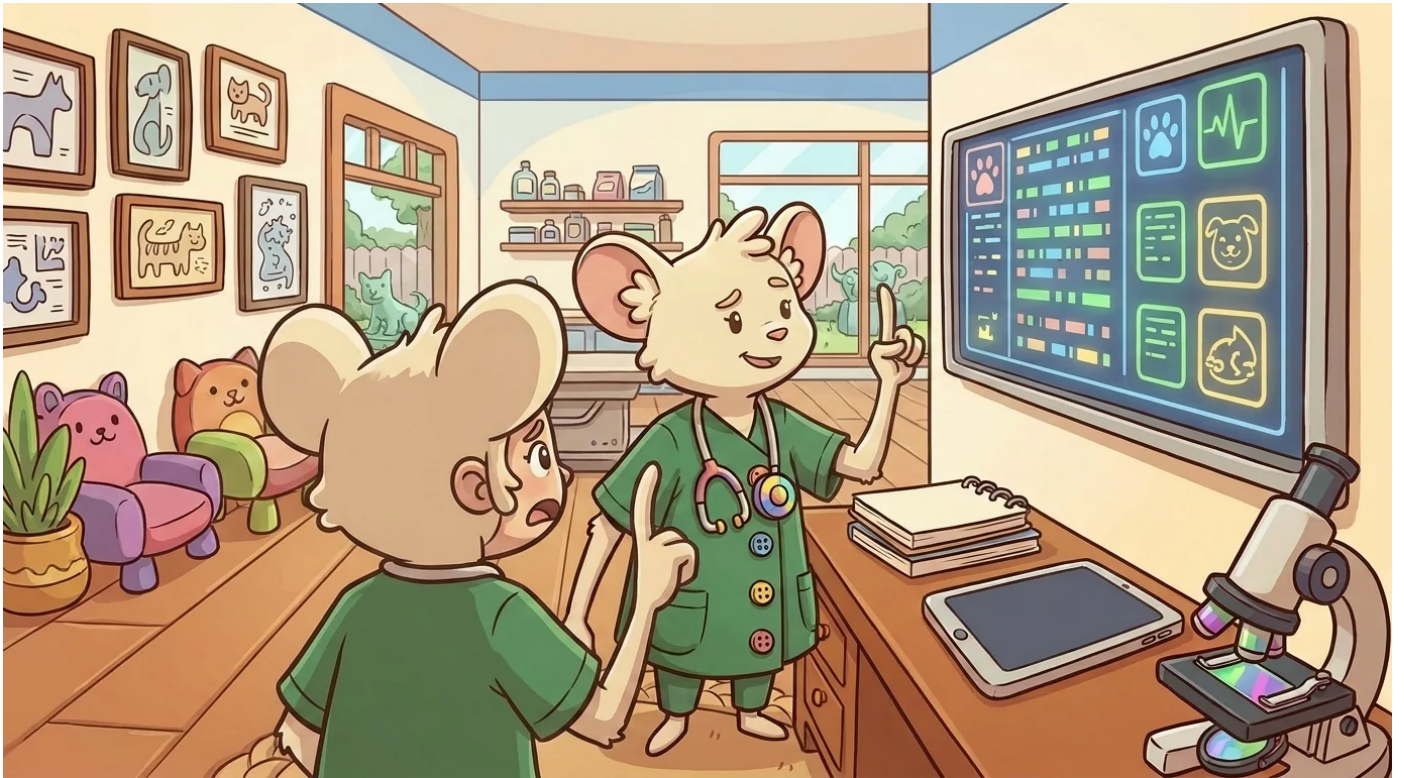
One sunny morning, a worried girl named Lily came into the clinic. She carried a grumpy-looking cat. The cat was named Mr. Snuggles. He was usually a fluffy, happy orange cat. Today, he looked like a deflated orange pillow.

"He's just not himself," Lily told Chart. "He's sleeping all the time. He won't play with his feather toy. And he barely touched his breakfast."

Chart nodded. Her tufted ears twitched. She gently took Mr. Snuggles. He gave a low grumble. Chart's long finger carefully checked his fur. She felt his tummy. She looked at his teeth. Mr. Snuggles tried to bat her finger away. He was too tired to do it well.

"He seems a bit dehydrated," Chart said. "And his gums are a little pale."

Chart took some samples. A few hours later, the lab-result-cards came back. Chart held them up. She scanned the numbers. Her pattern-finder-tracker glowed softly.



"Aha," she murmured. "His kidney numbers are a tiny bit high. Just a little."

Lily gasped. "Oh no! Is it his kidneys? Is Mr. Snuggles very sick?"

Chart held up her long finger. She shook her head. "Easy there, Lily. Remember what I always say?"

Lily thought for a moment. "Numbers are notes; notes are not the song?"

"Exactly!" Chart smiled. "This one high number is just a note. It's a clue. But it's not the whole song yet. We need more notes."

Chart looked at the other numbers on the cards. His white blood cell count was normal. His liver enzymes were fine. Nothing else jumped out.

"Let's think about the other notes," Chart said. She tapped her pattern-finder-tracker. "His behavior: tired, not eating, not playing. His physical exam: a bit dehydrated, pale gums. His history: he's usually very active."



"And he's a picky drinker," Lily added. "He only likes water from the tap. And sometimes he knocks his bowl over."

Chart's eyes lit up. "That's a very important note, Lily! A very important note indeed."

She thought for a moment. She looked at Mr. Snuggles. He was now curled up in a tiny ball. He looked very sad.

"Sometimes," Chart explained, "a cat won't drink enough water if their bowl is in a bad spot. Or if it's too close to their litter box. Cats are very particular about their water."

Lily's eyes went wide. "His water bowl IS right next to his litter box! We just moved it there last week. My little brother kept kicking it over."

"There's our song!" Chart said, pointing her long finger. "Mr. Snuggles isn't sick with a kidney disease. He's just not drinking enough water. That's why he's dehydrated. And that's why his kidney numbers are a tiny bit high. It's because he's not getting enough fluids."

Lily felt a wave of relief. "So, he's not really sick?"

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/chart>

Heed

*HEED — *listen first, look second, then we know.**



Heed was a fennec fox. She was a tween, which meant she was still growing. Her ears were huge. They stuck out from her head like two giant radar dishes. Heed wore a chunky vet tunic. It had lots of pockets. She always carried her small patient-assessment-cards and an observation-tracker.

Heed was small. Her fur was a warm cream color. Her big ears were soft tawny brown. She paid close attention to every animal. She saw each one as a special being. Heed often said, "Listen first, look second, then we know."

Her patient-assessment-cards helped her. They reminded her to ask, "What is the animal telling me?" She looked at their body language. She watched their breathing. She noticed their posture. She listened to any sounds they made. She did all this *before* she even thought about instruments.

This way of working was really important. Heed taught about **patient assessment**. This is the vet's special skill. It's about *watching and listening* to build a relationship with the animal.

Lots of new vets just want to get numbers. They take the animal's temperature. They check its heart rate. They weigh it. They write it all down. But Heed knew better. Every animal patient talks to us. They use their body. They change how they breathe. They stand in certain ways. They make sounds. They look at us, or they don't. They show if they want to be touched.



Heed always listened to these things first. The numbers came later. The numbers made more sense after she had listened.

And this was also about building a *relationship*. An animal is a living being. It has things it likes. It has fears. It has its own story. When you come close as a friend, and you listen first, you build trust. This makes the rest of the check-up much easier. If you rush with instruments, the animal gets scared. Then you get bad information.

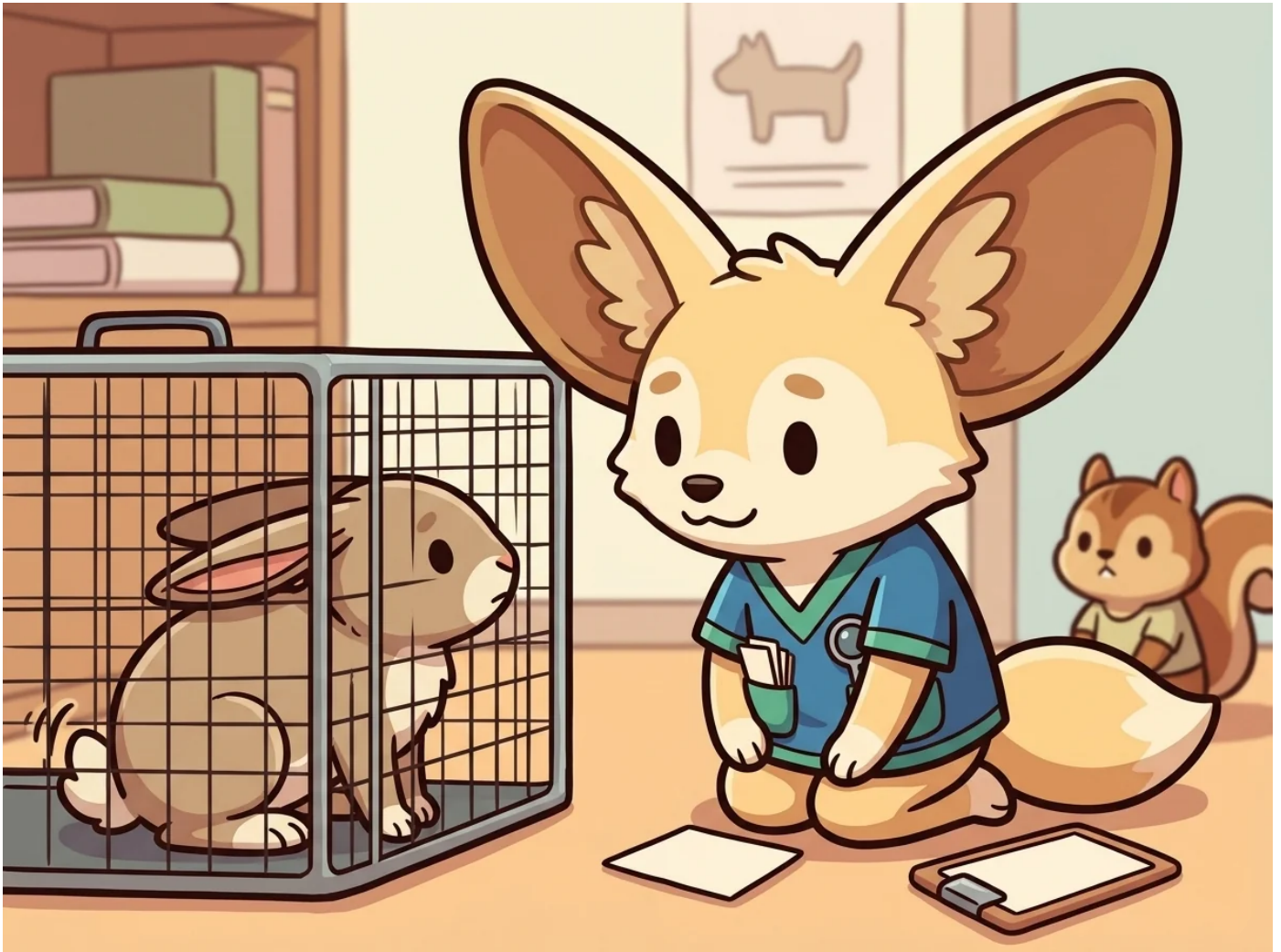
Heed taught:

- Listen first (body language, breathing, posture, sound).
- Look second (a visual check).
- Instruments third.
- It's about a relationship, not just getting numbers.

Heed would say, "I am Heed. The special skill I teach is **patient-assessment-as-relationship**. My main steps are: *listen first; look second; instruments third; remember the animal is a being.*"

"Listen first, look second, then we know."

One sunny morning, a small, fluffy rabbit named Barnaby came into the clinic. Barnaby was very nervous. His nose twitched fast. His big eyes darted around the room. He was huddled in the corner of his carrier. His little body shook a tiny bit.



"Hello, Barnaby," Heed said softly. She knelt down. She didn't open the carrier right away. She just watched him.

Barnaby flattened his ears. He pressed himself further into the corner. He made a soft thumping sound with his back foot. *Thump. Thump.*

Heed pulled out her patient-assessment-cards. She looked at the first one. "Body language," it read. She wrote a note on her observation-tracker. "Barnaby is tense. Ears flat. Thumping foot. Hiding."

"See, Barnaby is telling us something," Heed whispered to her assistant, Pip. Pip was a young squirrel. He was still learning. "He's scared. He doesn't trust us yet."

Pip nodded. He usually just opened the carrier. He would try to grab the animal. That often made things worse.

Heed sat quietly for a few minutes. She just watched Barnaby. She took slow, deep breaths. Barnaby watched her back. His thumping stopped. His ears stayed flat. But he didn't press quite so hard into the corner.



"Now, breathing," Heed said. She looked closely at Barnaby's sides. "His breathing is still quick. But it's not frantic anymore." She wrote that down.

Then she looked at his posture. "He's still huddled," she noted. "But he's not shaking as much. He's starting to relax just a little."

Heed spoke in a gentle voice. "It's important to listen to what Barnaby is telling us," she explained to Pip. "He's not using words. But his body is talking. If we rush, he'll get even more scared. Then we won't be able to help him properly."

She slowly reached a hand towards the carrier. She didn't try to touch Barnaby. She just rested her hand on the wire. Barnaby sniffed the air. He wiggled his nose. He still looked worried. But he didn't thump again.

"Okay, Barnaby," Heed said. "I think you're ready for the next step." She slowly unlatched the carrier door. She opened it just a crack. She didn't force him out. She let him decide.

Barnaby peeked out. He looked at Heed. He looked at Pip. He looked at the room. Then, very slowly, he hopped out. He stayed close to the carrier. He didn't run away.

"Good boy," Heed praised him softly. "Now we can look." This was the "look second" part. Heed gently checked Barnaby's fur. She looked at his eyes. She checked his teeth. She was very careful. She moved slowly.



Barnaby still seemed a bit nervous. But he let Heed touch him. He didn't try to bite or scratch. He just stayed still.

"He's much calmer now," Pip observed. "He trusts you."

"That's because we listened first," Heed said. "We built a relationship. We showed him we understood he was scared."

Finally, Heed got out her small stethoscope. This was for "instruments third." She listened to Barnaby's heart. She listened to his lungs. She took his temperature quickly. Barnaby barely flinched.

"Everything looks good, Barnaby," Heed told him. "Just a bit of a tummy ache, I think. We'll give you some special food."

Barnaby twitched his nose. He seemed to understand. He even nudged Heed's hand gently.

"See?" Heed smiled at Pip. "Listen first, look second, then we know. It's all about seeing the animal as a being. Not just a set of problems."

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/heed>

Knit

*KNIT — *healing is slow; that's the point.**



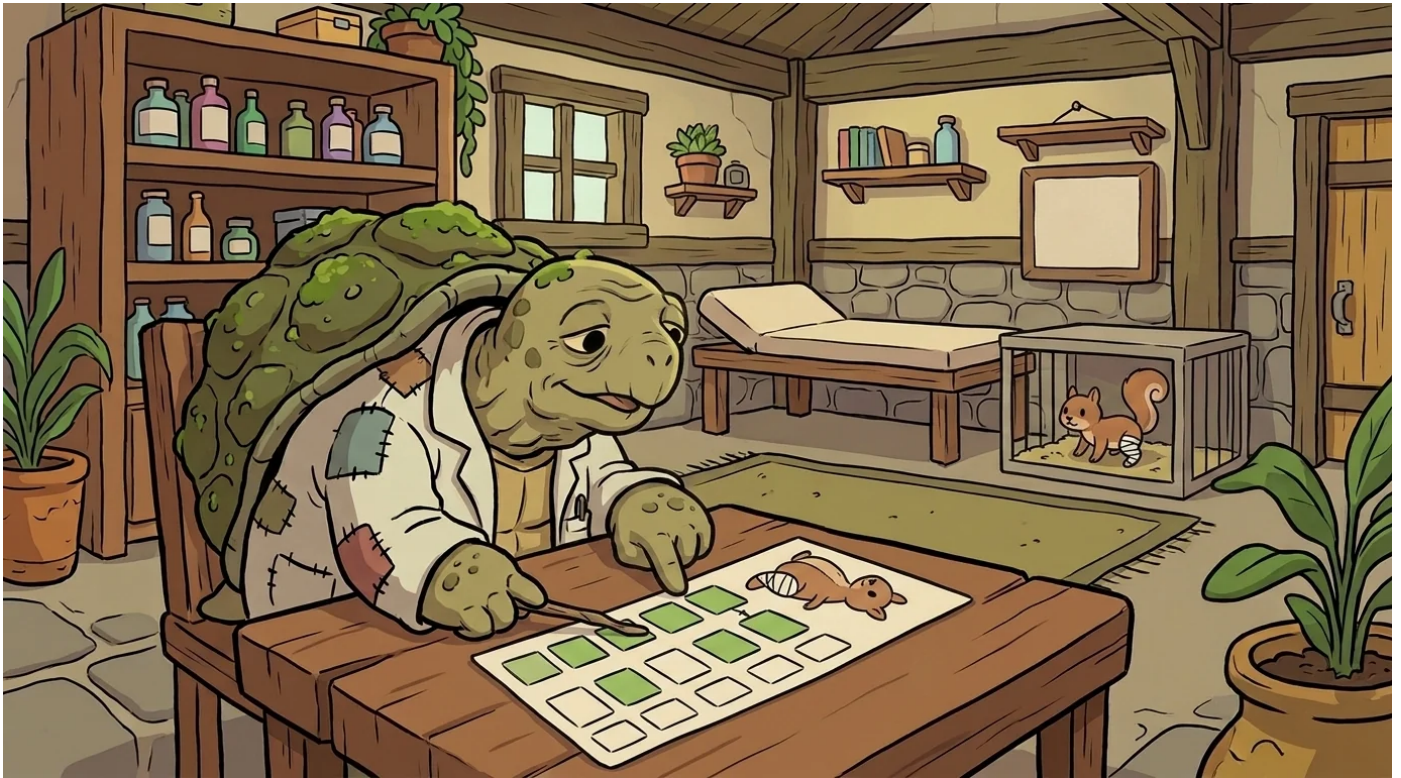
The clinic smelled like antiseptic and damp fur. Alex wrinkled their nose. They hated waiting. Especially when it was for something important. Like the tiny squirrel, Squeaky. Squeaky had a broken leg. Knit, the old tortoise, was in charge of Squeaky's recovery.

Knit was very old. Their shell was bumpy and worn. It looked like soft moss grew on it. Knit wore a patched vet coat. It was chunky and mended in many places. Knit moved slowly. Every step was a careful, quiet shuffle.

Alex watched Knit. Knit sat at a small, low table. Spread out were many little cards. Each card had drawings and notes. They looked like tiny calendars. Knit used a small wooden stick to point at them.

"Can we take Squeaky's bandage off now?" Alex asked. Their voice was a little too loud.

Knit looked up. Their eyes were dark and kind. "Not yet, Alex," Knit said. Knit's voice was like smooth river stones. "Healing takes time. That is the point."



Alex sighed. "But it's been three days! He's hopping around fine. Mostly."

Knit chuckled softly. It was a dry, rustling sound. "Hopping is not healing, my young friend." Knit tapped a card. "See this? This is Squeaky's recovery timeline."

Alex leaned closer. The card showed a tiny squirrel with a bandaged leg. Below it were small boxes. Some were colored green. Others were still white.

"The green boxes mean days passed," Knit explained. "The white boxes are days still to come." Knit pointed to a box far down the line. "The bandage comes off here. Not before."

"But why?" Alex asked. "He looks okay."

"Looks can be tricky," Knit said. "Inside, Squeaky's bone is knitting. It's like tiny threads weaving together. We need to let those threads get strong. Really strong."



Knit picked up another card. This one showed a small bird. Its wing was wrapped. "This is Pip. Pip needed a wing splint. For six weeks."

"Six weeks!" Alex gasped. "That's forever!"

"It felt long for Pip too," Knit agreed. "But now Pip flies. Stronger than before."

Alex thought about Squeaky. They really wanted Squeaky to be all better. They imagined Squeaky scampering up trees again. But Knit made it sound like a long, slow process.

"What about his medicine?" Alex asked. "He hates it. He spits it out sometimes."

Knit nodded. "Medication compliance is important." Every drop helps his body heal. It's part of the plan." Knit showed Alex a small chart. It had little checkmarks. "We track every dose. Every single one."



"So, we just wait?" Alex asked. Their shoulders slumped.

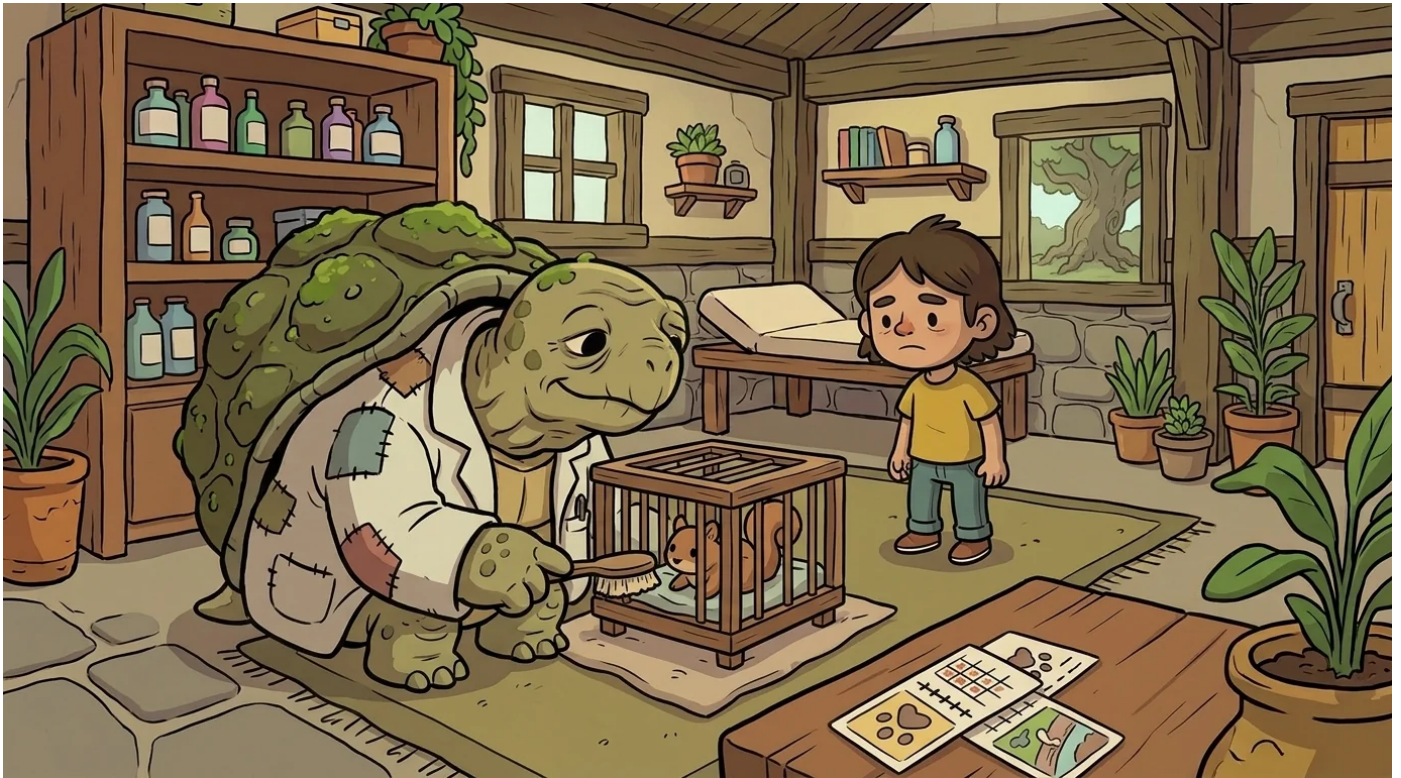
"We wait, and we watch," Knit corrected. "We make sure Squeaky is comfortable. We give his medicine. We check his progress." Knit gently touched Squeaky's card. "And we have follow-up appointments. To see how those tiny threads are doing."

Knit looked at Alex. "Many young vets want the treatment to be the end. Give the shot, fix the break, and done. But that's just the beginning, Alex."

"The beginning of what?" Alex asked.

"The beginning of healing," Knit said. "The body does amazing work. But it needs time. And our help, patiently given."

Alex looked at the white boxes on Squeaky's card. There were so many. It felt like a mountain of waiting. But Knit made it sound important. Like a secret job.



"So, the cast comes off when the bone has really knit?" Alex asked.

"Exactly," Knit said. A small smile crinkled the corners of Knit's eyes. "That's why they call me Knit."

Alex finally understood a little better. It wasn't just about fixing things fast. It was about fixing them right. And that took a long, long time.

Knit picked up a small, soft brush. Knit began to gently clean Squeaky's cage. Every movement was slow. Every stroke was careful. It was like Knit was teaching by just being Knit.

"Healing is slow," Knit murmured. "That's the point."

Alex watched. Maybe waiting wasn't so bad. Not if it meant Squeaky would truly be strong again.

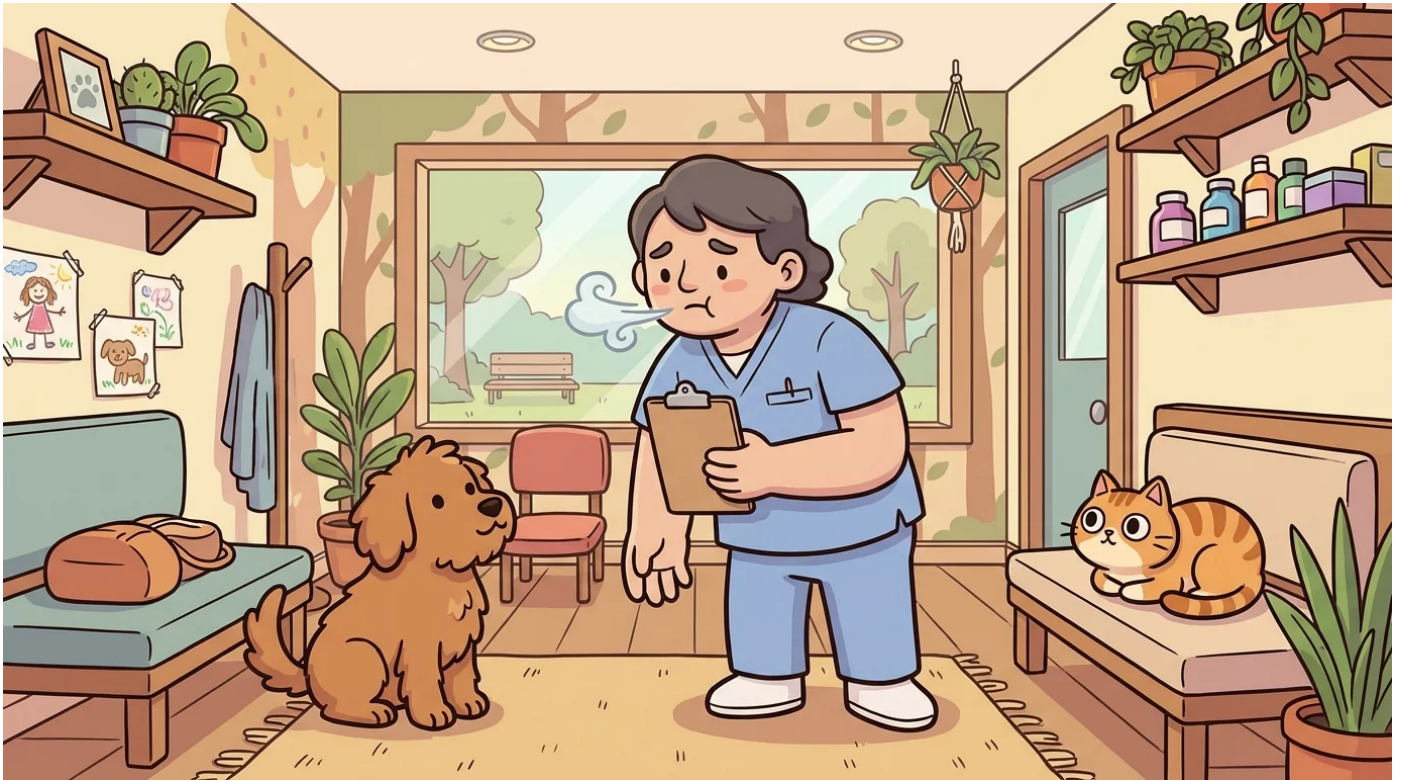
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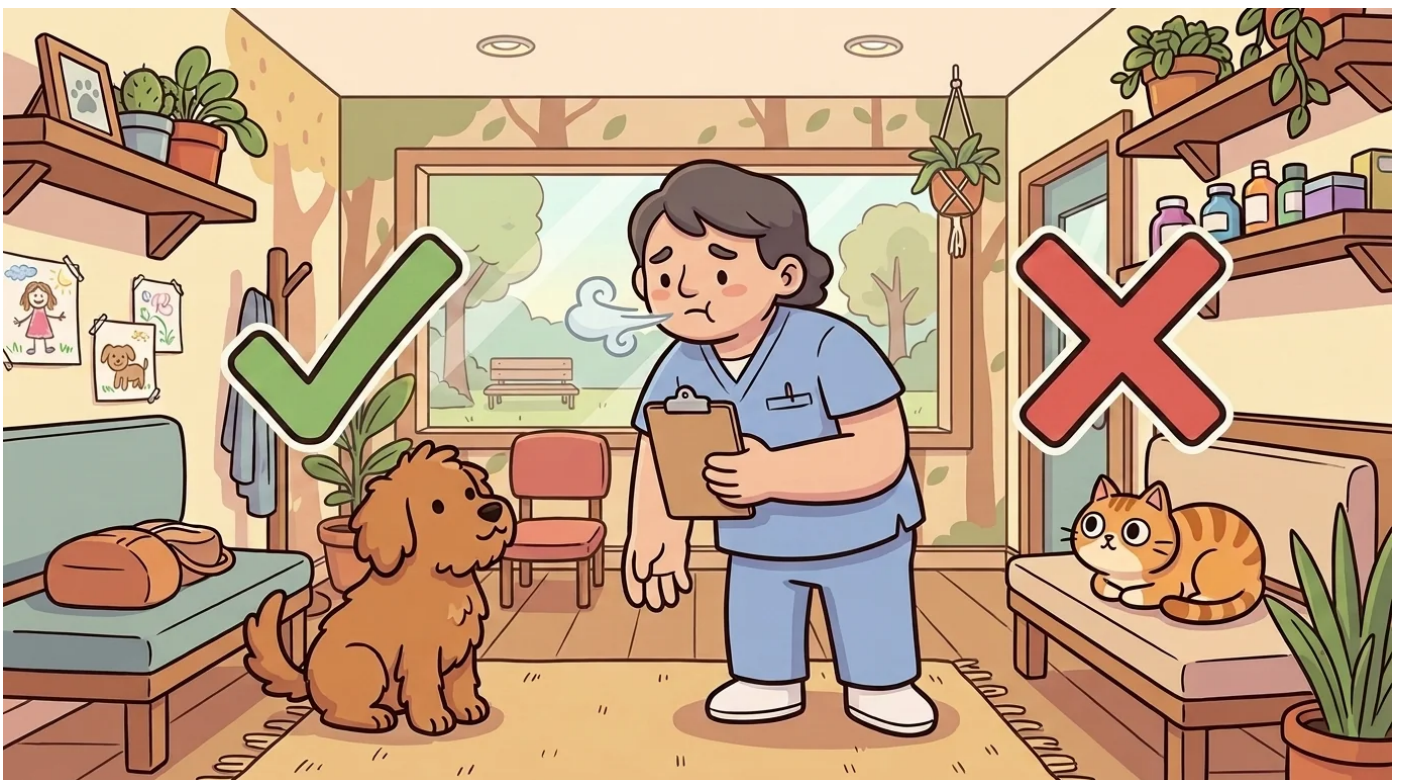
<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/knit>

Tend

*TEND — *slow hands, calm voice, patient first.**



- sigh
 - DOG
 - CAT



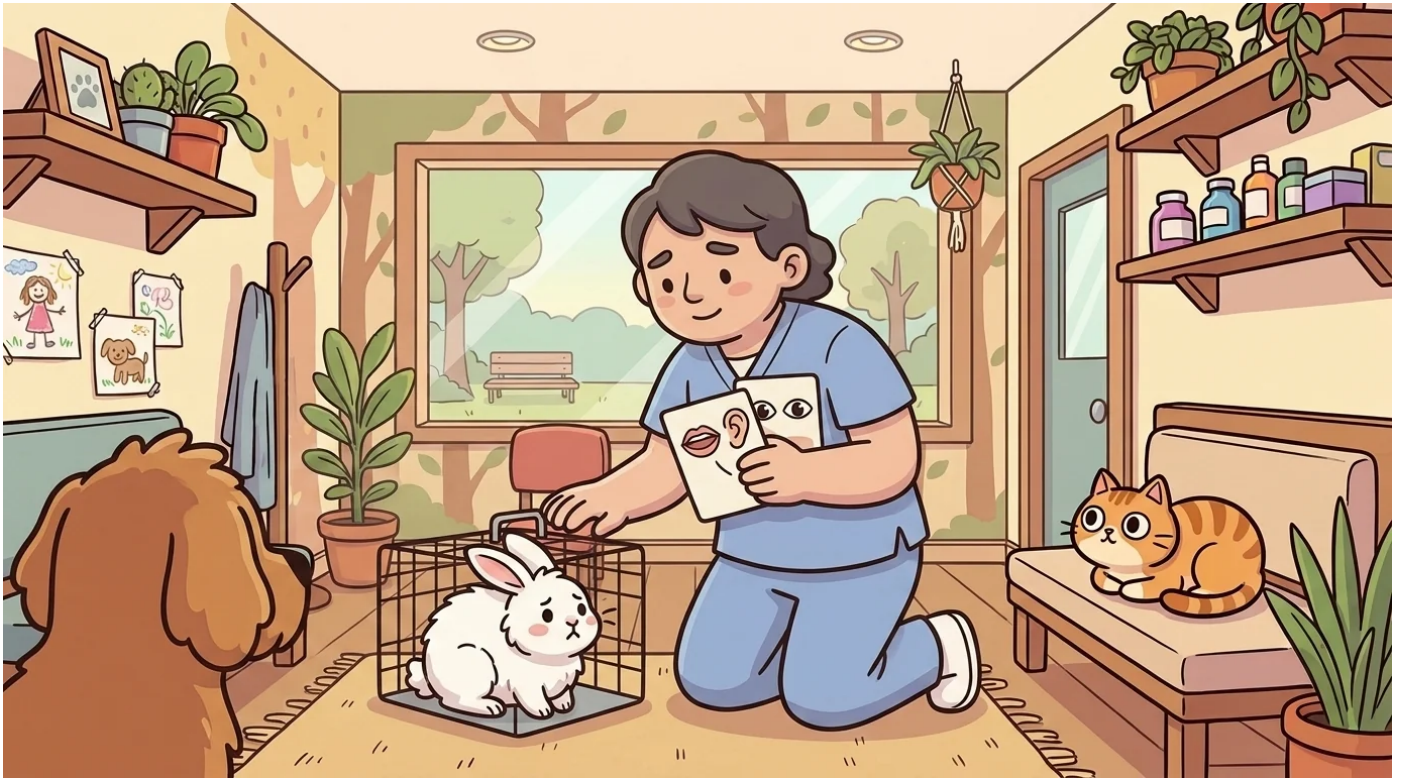
- VET

- o YES
- o NO



Tend was a steady kid. She moved with careful steps, like an okapi walking through the forest. Her vet tunic was a little chunky, but it fit her just right. She always carried a stack of small cards in one hand. In the other, she had her animal-consent-tracker.

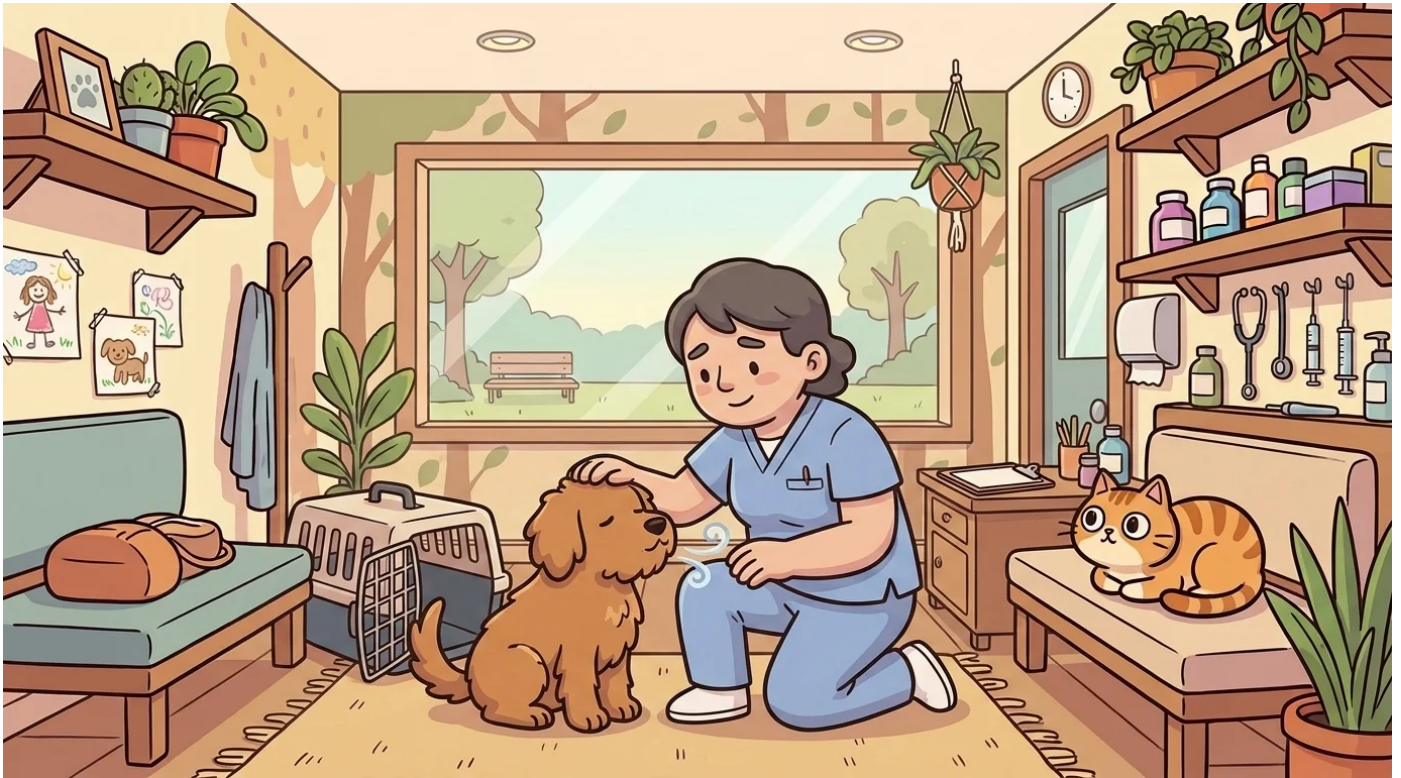
Tend was small, but very steady. She moved with great care. Her skin was a warm cream color. She wore soft striped leggings, like a baby zebra. Tend watched her animal patients very closely. She always knew what they were feeling. Her favorite saying was, "Slow hands, calm voice, patient first." She used her cards to remember each step. Her tracker helped her make sure the animals were okay with everything. It reminded her to explain things first. She had to watch for signals. If an animal said "no" with a twitch or a growl, she would pause.



The clinic was usually busy. But today, a quiet little rabbit named Barnaby arrived. Barnaby was a puffball of white fur. He sat huddled in his carrier, twitching his nose. His big pink eyes looked around nervously. Tend knew right away Barnaby was scared. She pulled out her treatment cards. The first one said: *Explain first.*

Tend knelt down slowly. She spoke in a soft, calm voice. "Hello, Barnaby," she whispered. "My name is Tend. We just want to check your paw. It won't hurt." Barnaby flattened his ears a little. He didn't understand the words. But he understood her gentle tone. He understood her slow movements. Tend moved her hand towards the carrier. She stopped before touching him. She watched his nose twitch. She watched his ears.

Barnaby's nose twitched faster. His body tensed up. That was a "no" signal. Tend knew it. She pulled her hand back. "Okay, Barnaby," she said, still soft. "We can wait." She sat quietly for a moment. She let Barnaby get used to her. She pulled out another card. It said: *Watch for signals.*



After a minute, Barnaby's ears perked up a tiny bit. His nose slowed its twitch. He was still nervous, but less so. Tend tried again. This time, she moved even slower. She put her hand on the carrier door. She didn't open it yet. Barnaby watched her. He didn't tense up this time. He just blinked. That was a "maybe okay" signal. Tend opened the door just a crack. She didn't try to pull him out.

She waited. Barnaby sniffed the air. He slowly poked his head out. Tend smiled a little. "Good boy," she murmured. She offered a tiny piece of carrot. Barnaby sniffed it. He took a small bite. He was starting to trust her. Tend pulled out her next card: *Slow hands*.

Tend gently reached into the carrier. She didn't grab Barnaby. She just rested her hand near him. Barnaby flinched a little. Tend froze. She didn't move her hand. She waited. Barnaby relaxed again. He seemed to realize she wasn't going to hurt him. Tend slowly, slowly, put her hand on his back. She stroked his fur. Barnaby leaned into her touch. He even let out a soft sigh.

Listen along + meet more of the cast at:



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/creaturecare/tend>

About Spark & Anvil

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. CreatureCare is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Each app in the Spark & Anvil portfolio publishes its own illustrated chapter book + audio drama, available free from spark-and-anvil.com/books. Highlights include:

- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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