Applying Animal Care Principles to Zookeeper Well-Being

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Animal care professionals are experts in promoting animal wellbeing through husbandry, enrichment, and training. We understand that an animal cannot successfully participate in training without first having its basic needs met, nor can it truly thrive without opportunities for enrichment.

Yet many animal care professionals struggle to apply these same principles to themselves.

This poster introduces the Self-Care Triangle, a framework that adapts familiar animal care concepts to human wellbeing. Using husbandry as the foundation, enrichment as the opportunity to thrive, and training as the development of sustainable habits, the model provides a practical and relatable approach to self-care for professionals working in zoos, aquariums, veterinary medicine, wildlife rehabilitation, equine care, and other animal-focused fields.

The poster also explores how animal training principles such as shaping, positive reinforcement, goal setting, and consistency can be applied to create realistic and sustainable self-care routines. Attendees will leave with a framework they can immediately use to evaluate their own wellbeing and begin building healthier habits.

By speaking the language animal care professionals already understand, the Self-Care Triangle offers a fresh perspective on self care, burnout prevention, compassion fatigue, and creating sustainable careers in animal care.