

Seeking Out Holistic Veterinary Tools to Facilitate Better Healing for Animals

A Special Interview With Dr. Brad Roach

By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

Dr. Karen Becker:

I'm Dr. Karen Becker and Desiree has nominated Dr. Brad Roach for a Game Changer award. And I have Dr. Brad with me today so I can talk a little bit more about, I know quite well what he does, but for our listeners and readers that don't know, I'm excited that he's joining me today so we can learn more about the amazing work that he does with animals. So, Dr. Roach, thank you for joining me. Great to see you again, and congratulations on your Game Changer award.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Oh, cool. What a great forum you've got going. It gives us a chance to kind of showcase what we're doing. And we were just talking about this before a little bit. Can you imagine what it would be like to be a veterinarian that can't do all these things? I mean, with the acupuncture on the wall, and I never get to a point where I have to say it, "Well, that's all I can do." I'm not a surgeon that gets to a point where I can't do that surgery. I'm not an oncologist that says, "Well, we can't treat this anymore."

But when we're doing the holistic work, we've always got some place to go with it.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yes.

Dr. Brad Roach:

And that's one thing I love about what we're doing. It's really cool.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

And I've been doing it, and I think about 32 years. And 10 years of that was not holistic, and that was immensurable. And a dog actually ruptured its intestines from taking too much Rimadyl, not from my clinic, but another one. And that told me that I've got to find some better ways to treat these animals.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

So that kind of started me on my journey.

Dr. Karen Becker:

So, Dr. Brad, was that part of it? Would you say at that 10-year mark, would you say that you were in burnout at that time, or were you just so darn desperate to fix your patients?

Dr. Brad Roach:

Just desperate, needed more tools.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

And I can tell you, I would've been in burnout many times after that if I hadn't had the – because the things that you learned with this, you can always use for yourself. And I love it. And it's more scientific than one would ever believe. And the cool thing is you get to witness these little miracles. If you just show up and you apply the principles, you get to see these little miracles take place on a daily basis.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

It's so amazing. And sometimes you don't even expect it. And at this point, I should expect it after 22 years of doing it with a holistic way. But it's just really neat to witness it happen.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Well, and what's so beautiful is that we were talking right before we went live that one of the ways I think that integrative veterinarians are capable of avoiding burnout to a better extent than maybe our conventional colleagues, is the fact that we do witness those little miracles all the time enough that our souls get nourished, not by what we've done, but because we've been able to provide – we've opened the doors through some nontoxic and non-invasive tools for a healing response to occur in our patient. What we get to witness is just the magic of the body fixing itself because we're providing the opportunity for the body to do what it was meant to do. And seeing that over and over and over, first of all, it never gets old. And every time it happens, you're like, “oh,” because it's so awesome that the animal gets a second chance at feeling better in its body. But it also was accomplished in a way that was not disruptive. It was natural. It was done in a way that was not toxic to the Earth or to the animal's body. It's pretty awe-inspiring.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Yeah, it is. And how many times have you heard it said that, “If I'd just known this was available-

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

-I'd been doing this for my pet because I do it for myself." And that's the people that I want to connect to, and I don't think we've done a really good job of marketing ourselves over time. And I think part of that reason is because we learned so many different things that, we're not in burnout, but we're in overwhelm because now we got acupuncture, homeopathic injections, prolotherapy, ozone therapies, and these on and on and on. Sometimes it's we've tackled too much, I feel like. But it sure is neat to have all those tools.

Dr. Karen Becker:

It is. And I agree with you. The integrative toolbox is becoming [a] mammoth. But I also love that in that we don't have to know it all. I certainly don't. I just know a fraction of what's out there. But what's cool is we have this growing body of integrative colleagues and scientists who maybe [inaudible 00:04:21] their passion, and so we can refer our patients to other people who have other passions. But what I love is it's not just a handful of us anymore doing alternative things. It's this growing body of veterinarians that have their foundational medical training, that have decided for one reason or another to begin adding to that toolbox and grow it in a way that allows them to hopefully avoid burnout, provide a lot more options to their patients, but also then connect with each other in this professional community that has a lot more to offer than just what we learned at vet school. So, I love all those things about the fact that we're growing.

Dr. Brad Roach:

It's funny too, because now you can't even have a conversation about whether to spay or neuter their pet without getting into really, "Why should you do that?"

Dr. Karen Becker:

That's true.

Dr. Brad Roach:

And how else can you spay and neuter? We do ovary-sparing spays and vasectomies now, and it's like this complicates it a little bit, but it's so neat to be able to offer that to animals.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah, amazing. So, I have to ask, you do a lot of things. You've been in this for decades. You're watching the profession expand and grow and flourish in terms of integrative medicine. When you wake up in the morning, what do you love most about the work that you're doing?

Dr. Brad Roach:

Oh, Dr. Becker, there's so many things. First of all, I like the freedom because nobody's going to tell me they're not going to pay for it, the insurance company won't cover it. At least at this point, they're not. And we just have the freedom, legally, to do what the market calls for and to do what our training calls for as long as we're in agreement with the owner. And we don't have any regulatory bodies that are preventing us from practicing the way we feel like we need to practice.

And I just love that about them. And there's some other things. I mean, there's so many things. Watching the miracles, and I don't have to say, "Well, that's really all I can do, I'm sorry." That phrase is not really in our vocabulary, I don't think, because there's always something we can do to make that animal feel better.

And so yeah, it's about the freedom. It's about the freedom of practicing the way you ethically feel that you should. And there's many times when I wish I had just gone to corporate medicine and just said, well, the heck with it, because this is too hard. I've got 15 different distributors I have to get all my medicines from. And if I'm not my own business person, I doubt if a boss would actually buy that inventory for me to work with. And so, I've kind of been forced into the self-employment thing, but the freedom also gives you the great responsibility, too. But I really do appreciate the freedom. If I'd gone into the human medical world or some other, I would never have had the freedom to express these medical arts and so, yeah.

Dr. Karen Becker:

So, just as a side note, if people feel like this resonates with me and this makes sense and I'd like to learn more, Dr. Roach, do you have a website? Or some of my colleagues say, "I don't have time for any of that." But do you have a website, or how would people get ahold of you if they wanted to learn more?

Dr. Brad Roach:

Yeah, we have two clinics, HolisticPetCareCenterOfOklahoma.vet. The HolisticPetCareCenterOfOklahoma.vet. And then I have another one called BestFriendsAnimalClinic.vet. And I just run back and forth. I'm just constantly running down the highway to one or the other. And it's been pretty challenging, as far as a business model, but it's allowed me to contact a much bigger population.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Nice. And do you feel that, because you've been doing this long enough, that you've watched this evolution both within the veterinary profession, but also evolution of humans moving from considering something different or new because of desperation to considering something different and new because it's proactive, it's common sense, and it would be easier to prevent something from occurring than having to treat it later. Have you watched where you're at and have you watched the shift occur? Because depending on geographic location, some people say, "Yes, it's occurring." Some people say, "Not yet." Where are you?

Dr. Brad Roach:

There's something that's so pervasive that's shifting quickly now, and you've already touched on it on your TED Talks and some other things that you've done in the past about nutrition. And I find that I thought it would be hard and difficult to discuss the raw food feeding with people, but I am so surprised at how many people already do it. Dr. Susan Wynn gave a talk recently, and she mentioned like 25% of people already feed raw food or at least a portion of it's raw. And I think that's the number one thing that this next 10 years is going to really focus on as the research starts coming out. The epigenetics are there, the availability of the products are there. And I think

it's just amazing to watch that happen, and watch some of the myths that we've been dealing with all these years in our medical field get debunked.

Dr. Karen Becker:

It's exciting, yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

It's fun watching a supplement become a normal thing that a drug company sells.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yes. Yeah, it is.

Dr. Brad Roach:

That's one of those things about raw food.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah, that is. Well, and it's also awesome that the fact that you recognize, "Okay, all I learned about school was traditional spay and neuter, pulling all of the endocrine hormone-secreting tissues out of every body that I see. The number one question I get is, "Okay, my clients are aware of this topic, but I don't know where to go to get training." I'm in the process of trying really hard to get some professional training courses set up for veterinarians. But in the interim, people like you, you have done that and now you're offering that. So, your medicine and the type of medicine that you're offering is also evolving as we're learning more. And that's also amazing. Do you have people driving in from distances?

Dr. Brad Roach:

Oh yeah.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah, I bet you do. I bet you do, yeah.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Sometimes from the border of Texas and all the way up to middle of Oklahoma, we have people that drive two or three hours sometimes to get to us. And it's sad. I really feel like there needs to be somebody that knows something about holistic medicine in every practice. It would be nice.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah, it would.

Dr. Brad Roach:

And so that's just a-

Dr. Karen Becker:

And how's the barometer? One other question about location. How's the barometer of your conventional colleagues, I don't want to say understanding what you do, respecting what you do? And is there any referral relationship happening or not yet?

Dr. Brad Roach:

Well, that's a good question. I've been able to speak at the Oklahoma Vet Groups meetings for the past several years. They usually get me to talk on something. And so, I've earned my place, my position. I've got to where people will send me things. And I've got some veterinarians that are coming to me with their own pets because I treat, any veterinarian that can come to me, I will treat their pet for free or for [inaudible 00:11:46].

Dr. Karen Becker:

Oh, so good.

Dr. Brad Roach:

And so that's just one of those things I started doing many years ago. And actually a physician taught me that. She said, I'm not charging you anything. We're colleagues. And I said, "Well, I can afford it." I wasn't in a position where I couldn't afford it, but it just meant so much to me. So, I started that project as well. And we've got several of them that are taking us up on it. And then we've gotten referrals from those people too, because they know it works.

Dr. Karen Becker:

That's really beautiful. And what a great way to open a door. Just a great way to open the door and say, we're just going to start a discussion for free, and come on over and see if it works. That's a really great way to build a bunch of bridges. Good for you. That's awesome. So, you look back on your beautiful career, your dynamically shifting practice, your evolution as a wellness veterinarian. When you look back on where you've been and then the bright, exciting future of where you're going, Dr. Roach, if you could tell the world or share with the world one thing, what would it be?

Dr. Brad Roach:

I think mainly it's about the feeding, about cancer and all the epidemics that we're facing right now could be stopped if we'd just use our brains when we go and feed our animals and feed them something that's species-appropriate. I think that's the main thing. And then if I'm just talking just to veterinarians about comfort, I'm going to say wear HOKA shoes.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Excellent. Good. That's a very good tip. This is excellent. Yeah, I respect that.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Yeah. So that's food and HOKAs.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Pretty much that'll fix everything. Yes.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Yeah. If your feet feel good, you can glide through the whole day. If your-

Dr. Karen Becker:

There you go.

Dr. Brad Roach:

-feet don't feel good, you just don't feel good.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I like that. That is a good, wise advice, common sense advice all the way around. Dr. Roach, I'm so happy that Desiree took the time to nominate you. I'm also so happy-

Dr. Brad Roach:

Thank you.

Dr. Karen Becker:

-that you are a happy human in a career that lights your soul on fire, and you're still happy doing it decades later. You are a light and a role model to veterinarians that think, "Oh my gosh, I don't know if I can do this," or "This is not what I thought my profession was." You are role-modeling how to have joy decades into a profession that you have been able to cultivate and kind of shape to fit what you need to be doing to be the best version of yourself. And in turn, helping all the animals around you. It's a really good thing. So, I appreciate the light that you are to your community and the people watching you.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Well, thank you. And I appreciate what you're doing and the TED Talks and the forums and all the formulating and the brain work that you're doing. I've followed what you've done for years and just really appreciate everything.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Well, I'm so thankful together as our integrative community grows, we're able to support each other. But we are building this worldwide network of informed, bigger thinking, broader thinking veterinarians willing to have conversations and be on the leading edge of helping healing to occur in the least toxic way possible. And I think that as we have more and more conversations about what it takes to assist with a functional healing response in terms of our jobs, not just as doctors, but as facilitators of healing, then the conversation shifts to include a bigger scope of people, but also a broader conversation. And I appreciate that you are among my friends and colleagues participating in that conversation, helping to get the rest of our colleagues on board. So, thank you for everything you're doing. And congratulations on your Game Changer award.

Dr. Brad Roach:

Thank you for making it safe for us to talk about these things too.