



PLAY: Finding & Sharing Your Inner Joy

GUEST: Risë VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S, CDBC

[00:00:00] **Colleen Pelar:** Welcome back to UNLEASHED (at work & home). I'm Colleen Pelar, and my guest today is Dr. Risë VanFleet, a psychologist and the president of the International Institute for Animal-Assisted Play Therapy. I've invited Risë to join us today to talk about play and why it matters for good mental health. Risë, as you well know, veterinarians, vet techs, and other animal-care professionals face a lot of stress and compassion fatigue in their jobs. It's really serious training work. So how can something as light-hearted as play make a difference?

Risë VanFleet, PhD: Um, that's a really good, good question. Most of us have been socialized ourselves to think about, you know, grow up and get serious. Have a job. Play is something that's trivial, that kids do, and what we know is that that's not really the case. That play serves a very important function both in our development and our [00:01:00] development throughout our lives, but also has a reparative function.

So I spent a lot of my career doing play therapy with children, but I also do a lot of light-hearted, playful kind of things where the families that I work with and with adults because it provides a balanced against all that stress. When play is incorporated into our lives a little bit more, it has this effect of um, basically freeing us up and it runs counter to all the stresses in our lives. The difficulty and all that is that sometimes we need to feel safe and comfortable in order to play and to play freely. But if we're all crunched up and stressed and, you know obsessing about things that have gone on in our lives, it's really hard to then shift gears and play.

But the more we build it into our lives, I think, the better because it can loosen us up, adds to our flexibility, and actually helps us function in our work better, but [00:02:00] also helps drain away or release some of that stress that we're feeling.

Colleen Pelar: So it's awesome. We should all be playing more.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: We should, more and more.

Colleen Pelar: And yet ...

Risë VanFleet, PhD: And yet, we don't. That's one a good thing about having animals is we could play with our animals if we forget to play around with other humans or even on our own. Most of us that are adults now have probably been raised with this idea that play is

something you do when everything else is taken care of. And you know, the neuroscience, a lot of other science of just how do people cope with stress, how do people manage their lives, they're finding the people that play a lot are much healthier and people who don't play very much, throughout their lives, but also as adults, don't always adjust quite so well because again, we're losing something really important. Humans play throughout their lifespan. A lot of animals do too, other non-human animals do too, but not as much as we do. [00:03:00] I mean, we are playing our whole lives. We have that capacity and it's not there by accident. It's there because it actually helps us survive and thrive in pretty bad environment sometimes.

Colleen Pelar: Yeah, it's an interesting thought of the benefits play brings to us because we do tend to trivialize it and say, you know, it's only for when other things, you know, everything else has been taken care of, then we can focus on play. But what you were saying about the developmental aspects of it, but also the reparative function, I think that's really interesting because since we do, as a culture, talk about it as a developmental skill, like children play to learn their adult skills, and then when you're an adult, you no longer need to play. Yet we have entire sections of newspaper dedicated to sporting events and we have video games or you know in all time high for sales and all these activities that are play, but we [00:04:00] don't think about them as a deliberate choice in this way in terms of what can I do to help myself feel better?

Risë VanFleet, PhD: Yeah. Absolutely. And I think you've mentioned things that really are play. I mean we talked about playing ball or playing music even for that matter, but I think there are different types of play and different types of play might serve different purposes. I think any kind of play as long as it's not unhealthy, putting somebody down, becoming so competitive that we can't see straight. Those are not necessarily going to be helpful. But almost any kind of play can be helpful. Just to adding lightness to your thought process can be helpful. If you talk about people that are immensely creative individuals in science and in music and other kinds of art. Einstein is a perfect example. He was a brilliant scientist, but he's written all kinds of things about imagination and play and he talked about his best ideas came to him when he was playing. So it's not really as [00:05:00] divorced as we've made it through the years through our daily lives but part the play that is believed to be perhaps the most useful--and this goes to some of the affective neuroscience studies of Jaak Panskepp and others, but also what I've known my whole career doing play therapy with kids and families--is that free play where there aren't a lot of rules, where there aren't a lot of you should do this and you shouldn't do that, is really the healthiest for us. It's also one of the things that allows us to bond better with each other. And you know, when we're playing, it's a social event. Not always and certainly that's maybe one of the difficulties with some of the screen time kinds of things that we do these days. We might be playing with other people but it's not the same as interacting and kind of having that imaginative, "hey, you do this. I'm going to do this" or just that the freedom that comes when we're playing without a lot of rules. [00:06:00] Um, so it does serve those purposes. But to me, I think one of the biggest benefits is in our relationships.

So, you know, if we come home from work and you know, you've just had to deal with some very difficult clients for example, and maybe you've had to euthanize a dog, or you've had to do some kind of medical procedure that didn't go as well. It was tricky to begin with and it just didn't go the way you wished had and you had to deal with grieving pet owners or you know, something like that, you know, that's hard, hard stuff. And so we bring that home with us. And if we do have families beyond our animals that we live with, spouses, or kids, or whatever, it's really hard to make that transition and in my mind, it's not that different than I mean it's different for sure, but they are military service members, you know, they go off and they're in theater and they're dealing with really intensely stressful things. So you have your coping mechanisms up for that. Which sometimes means you turn off your emotions and you turn [00:07:00] off your kind of quote-unquote "normal way of being" and then you come home. I've worked with a lot of military and you know, they come home and sometimes that transition back home is really, really difficult. Well, on a day-to-day basis, I think those of us that work with animals and people and their animals kind of encounter. It's a similar process of "how do you get that out of your head?" But if we really make a commitment to say, you know, when I come home, I'm not gonna allow myself to think about it. And if that means I have to go out and play catch in the backyard with my kids, or we play hide and seek in the backyard, whatever, I mean that might sound a little silly, but actually it's very freeing.

Um and just adding humor in our own. I mean, it doesn't have to be go out and act out all these different things like I just said was talking about. Although that can be beneficial. But it's also a state of mind and how do we somehow make our minds. You know, watching something that's more [00:08:00] humorous than maybe what we were ordinarily read or watch. Um, how do we just lighten things up for ourselves? So we remind ourselves that that is part of my life, too. Yes. Yeah, I deal with tough, tough stuff, but on the other hand, I have this in my life. It's a counterpoint to so some of the tough stuff we do.

Colleen Pelar: Yeah, I think that's a really important way of thinking of it too. Like when you were talking about trying to manage the emotions at work, it reminded me of Brene Brown saying you can't selectively numb. So if I'm trying to just ignore all of these emotions, I'm feeling at work, I'm also deadening my sense of joy and pleasure. Just across the board, I'm deadening everything. Um, so it becomes a real challenging thing in that play can help us to crack that box open a little bit. Let the air again. Let the light back in.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: I like a lot of what she's written and talked [00:09:00] about and so forth. I mean, she's right on the money for a lot of different things. But I think that is the risk is that we're shutting down different emotional systems. We have to close ourselves off sometimes and that is a coping mechanism, but it's not very good coping if it then takes over our life and we're stuffing those feelings all the time. We're also stuffing the things that make life worth living and make life a joyful experience.

Colleen Pelar: Okay, so the benefits are clearly there, but how do we start to do it? So if we've shut play away as something beneath us or in our past, you know, something grown-ups and serious people don't do, how would you recommend someone start being more

playful?

Risë VanFleet, PhD: Real good question too, because what I'm going to say is you don't just say okay "I come home and I play all the time." Or "I'm gonna make a big effort [00:10:00] on this week and I'm going to go out and play every day." Yeah, it becomes a job instead and too goal-oriented. And play is notable, the best play is really notable because it doesn't have a lot of goals to it. So and I think any time we're trying to change our own behavior or own pattern, it's like if we do it in that big kind of way the chances of our continuing it are much slimmer than if we do little bits of things. So one thing is can we surround ourselves with people who make us feel happy? People who laugh a lot. People who bring out the laughter in us. We all probably have a variety of relationships. I know I do and there's some people I just love being with them because you know, their humor and my humor kind of mesh. They make me laugh and I probably make them laugh, which is a good feeling too.

There's other people that are more intense. I love them perhaps as dearly but [00:11:00] it's sort of like if I'm only hanging out with those intense, driven people then um, I'm missing out on the synergy that kind of happens when we're laughing and playing. So I think we can start a little ways just you know, a little bit more often connect with somebody that makes you laugh. If you don't have somebody like that, it's a matter of you know, finding something, some form of comedy that you really like and I mean that would be a simple thing. But it can also be if we have animals I think they're a perfect example of how we get started. I play with my dogs every single day.

Now, I do play therapy with kids and families. I also involve dogs in that work and one of my requirements in the way I work in animal system play therapy is the animals actually have to enjoy it. So they need to be playful and they need to be playful in their own way. So I have dogs now and one cat. Just lost two [00:12:00] cats not too long ago, but they both had really fun playful lives. So it's you know, I play with my animals every day. Now not all my animals work with me, but I play with all of them. One of my dogs was a formerly feral dog, and she actually came along and is pretty indistinguishable from a normal dog now, quote-unquote "normal." And it started with two dogs playing and then my joining the play and it was a very gradual process, but she is a great dog to play with and you can kind of do chase games. I mean if people came and watched me and my backyard, they might think I'm a little goofy, but I don't care because I'm having fun. My animals are having fun. So even with Katie who was the feral, she was from a puppy mill, completely unsocialized. We know her whole history because the puppy mill got shut down. The first games I played with her and I couldn't play with her for a long, long time. So, you know, we did some things with another dog for [00:13:00] starters. We're just like little paw games. So I kind of creep my fingers toward her paws and just touch it with one little finger and then back away and that was after she had reached a point where she understood more about play. The play was inherent in her, but we had to bring it out and great make her safe enough. So doing that brought great joy to me because she responded. And so the other thing I think we can do right away is, if we're not very playful ourselves or we can't access to many outlets for it, just sit back and watch your animals play, you know. Give them opportunities to play. You

don't even have to play with them in the beginning so you can kind of sit back and say I love watching my dogs play. And that's kind of predictable. Certain times of the day or night. I used to have two beagles that were a littermates, long, long time ago. They lived until they were 17. Every day at four o'clock, they went through crazy play till almost their ending days. They got a little feeble toward the end [00:14:00] but then they went out and pooped. So the play would get their body stimulated. There's probably a biological part to it, but it was so much fun.

And you know, it's not about having perfect animals. It's about having animals that, you know, behave well in our lives, but then it's you know, we're in it for the relationship. Most of us. So watching them play can give us ideas of what they like to do with play. And so then you can kind of mimic some of that with your animals a little bit. Um, I will caution people about getting down on the floor and doing play bows. I've done that many times, but I had a friend of mine who did that and had Salukis who were very fast and very excited. Hers are quite excitable. And she was playing with them. She got down did a play bow. And the Saluki came running toward her and didn't quite judge the stop. Actually broke her brow bone. Um and the next day she had to appear in court. She's also a therapist. She had to appear in court for a [00:15:00] domestic violence case. Her eye was like as black as could be, but you know, that's the spirit though, is how do we introduce items toward dogs? And then watch them. Then we can start engaging with them a little bit more in that play.

Colleen Pelar: They are pretty awesome role models for us in terms of play. I often think that's one of the main reasons why we have animals is that they make us laugh every day. That outlet of joy and unexpected moment where you're like, oh my gosh, "did you really just do that?" Um, it's very fulfilling to us. We love that.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: I think that makes a lot of sense. I mean, I actually think that there are times. I mean, I've been married for 21 years now, something like that. I think we just had our anniversary. I think um, but um that aside, I think there are many times, especially in those early days when you kind of start you're trying to learn to live with each other and it's kind [00:16:00] of like, oh, "this isn't what I thought it was going to be at all" certain days. I really am convinced that because our dogs were comical and we would stop and we couldn't keep an argument going because we'd get laughing at the dog. So I mean there's those benefits to us, but that's again that power of joy and playfulness is really quite profound, I think.

Colleen Pelar: Yeah, are there any downsides to play?

Risë VanFleet, PhD: Um, I think there can be. The downsides can be, again, how we play. So for example, I mean there's a couple different guys. I'll just talk briefly about this for one thing. We can get too obsessive about it. So that whole like if we are into sports and things like that how we become kind of you can become obsessed with winning, then you're not playing anymore. It kind of tilts over into something [00:17:00] else. If you have kids, similar to dogs and other animals, um that play brings out a lot of arousal and some of us are kind of wired and also our experiences have allowed us to handle arousal better than

others. You know, it's just kind of it's probably kind of a combination of biology and psychology and learning experiences and so forth but if you don't have very good self-regulation--and that's true of dogs, is true kids, is true of adults--that sometimes we get playing and we go too far. And so then it can tip over into sort of aggressive things or sarcastic things or other ways that can be hurtful to others or even to ourselves, you know, if we get to wound up in it, so it's a matter of doing it in a dose that feels good to you.

Colleen Pelar: And all those around you.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. So I think there's that that piece of [00:18:00] it. You can do too much. Life is I think about finding that right balance for yourself. So it's not about playing all the time, it's about finding that balance of building that more into our lives. But at the same time, you know, we take our jobs and our work seriously. But even when I'm working, it's nice to be able-- this isn't Pure Play necessarily--but what play brings is sort of an appreciation for things in life. So like today I was finishing off a PowerPoint for great big presentation that I do over four days and you know, I'm putting some pictures in it and they're funny pictures of my dogs. And that brought me great joy. So even though I'm kind of really working and thinking about of a lot of work things is that oh, I remember that moment, you know, and that was such a moment. And so it can be a little touchstones I think for us along the way too. It doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing thing because then it's probably not going to be play anymore.

And the other thing I'll just [00:19:00] say is with the use of humor, in general, especially if we're in a workplace where we want to bring some more playfulness into the workplace, which I think is a very good thing too, then it needs to be more affirming kind of humor of as opposed to sarcastic or put-down kind of humor.

I mean there might be people in our lives who understand that and like that, we can use it with them but not necessarily with everybody. I have a Veterinary waiting room example, which is what I mean by affirming humor. Um, which is this is just totally silly but it was a nice connection with a woman. I came in. Went in with one of my dogs. We were waiting. There was another woman kind of across the room and it was at night. Um, it was after most people had left. It was an after-hours appointment. And so she had a dog in arms who was really anxious but very cute. I could see that she [00:20:00] was pretty stressed. I was stressed too because I was there for a reason that, you know, I didn't want to have to be there and I looked at her and we got talking a little bit about the dog, but my first comment to her was "how cute." And then I looked at her, there's a little pause there, and I said, "And your dog's really cute too." She really just laughing, and it was such a release I think for both of us because I could laugh with her. I mean it just popped out of my mouth. Fortunately, I had a father who was full of that kind of humor, so I had a good role model for it. But you know, it's kind of like and she wasn't the kind of person that probably got called cute very often. But the fact I did that and it was an unexpected moment, we're laughing together and we could do both talk about our dogs and our worries and stuff. But in a much more relaxed kind,

Colleen Pelar: Yeah and with a nice connection. You went from two strangers in a waiting room to [00:21:00] two people sharing an experience, which I think is really part of the goal that, you know, that play does connect us and bond us and bring us together. So to going back a little bit on the work angle, I think that it can be tough to interject play into situations where it hasn't been there before. So would your suggestion be just start with small bits of humor, or do you have other ideas for just trying to lighten it a little bit?

Risë VanFleet, PhD: You can go a couple different routes. I would probably recommend just doing a little bit. Um, but the other thing you can do if you have regular staff meetings or whatever, um, you know, where some kind of short little meeting, you could institutionalize it a little bit where maybe people get to share a funny story about an animal in their life, and you just have one person do that each [00:22:00] time. I'm not advocating that you make fun of your clients because that doesn't set really the right tone with your clients in mind. Unless it's just really funny. You know, it's not a "oh, we can't believe how stupid this person was." Um, so I mean, there are people in the organizations who will sometimes have staff Retreats and they will make them more about laughing and doing kind of some fun kind of interactive things together. I've done some of those, but I'm not sure those will last. It might help reset a tone. But especially if it's been a pretty serious intense environment, maybe people haven't always gotten along well or they're so driven, or maybe if you're the veterinarian or in charge of that practice, manager or something, maybe it's been hard for you to be light about things or you've seen people goofing off too much. You know that they really aren't doing their job and they're telling all kinds of stories from out of work that shouldn't be there, [00:23:00] then I think it's a matter of going those small little steps. So just smiling more can make a big difference and I know smiling is not comfortable for everybody. You know, we all have had different growing up experiences, so, um, you know, we may have learned to keep a scowl on our faces. There might be a very good reason for that scowl. But we also know that it can alter us internally if we just smile a little bit more. And so there's an old saying in psychology--I sometimes like it and sometime--"don't fake it till you make it." I really think we should try to be genuine about it, but it might mean we have to push ourselves a little bit out of our comfort level. Not very far because if we could push ourselves too much then it's kind of like "naw." So it's part of accepting ourselves for who we are and then trying to find that humor is in us. I train play therapists and [00:24:00] some of them are not coming from a playful place in their own lives. And so they don't know how to access it and they'll say, "I don't think I'm a very playful person." And I'll say "well, you've been taught that somewhere along the line. You've learned that and you know, maybe you've been punished for being playful or people haven't responded to you." So it's a matter of first kind of figuring out what kind of humor appeals to you and then bringing it in, you know, to work in other places. Just a smile can make a big difference and it doesn't have to be a big wide tooth-showing grin. It can be a little smile and then just noticing the good things in people around you. You know, just say, "Oh thank you. I really appreciate the way these things look." Catch people being good. Even though it's a behavioral intervention, it can be done in kind of a playful way. So you make that your game but it should be - not a game in the sense of being insincere. It needs to be sincere. I think little steps are the way to go [00:25:00] and to realize it's really about not taking yourself so seriously. We take our problem seriously. Take those surgeries

seriously. Take those animals that have really been through hell and back seriously. But that doesn't mean we can't step back from that a little bit and say, "But I don't have to dive into that." I mean it's that's what I do. And that's what I deal with and that's what I try to help but I am out here.

I always think of it as like on the bank of a raging river. I want to be on the bank. Maybe the clients that I have or the animal clients that I have are in the raging river. I don't want to dive into the river with them because I can't help them anymore. If I stay on the bank of the river and figure out, "how do I throw a life preserver to them?" I can do that. So it's about getting ourselves grounded in a place where we can say life has meaning. I'm an okay person no matter who I am. If I'm not super playful there's nothing wrong with that. [00:26:00] But we're wired to be playful and that is in us and so it's something that we can discover. Um, I used to be far too intense. I would analyze myself and this is even before I became a psychologist. I was trying to be perfect. And then the day I discovered that I didn't have to be perfect and that it was okay, I could embrace my imperfections was a freeing day. And it wasn't just a day. It was a process I went through where then I could laugh at myself a little bit and say, "yep, I screwed that up." Yep. All I do when I go bowling is throw a gutter balls and that's okay. It's finding the areas in your life that you can just laugh at yourself and just say, "I can be good over here. I can not be good over here. And that's part of who I am and that's okay."

Colleen Pelar: And I think that is a hard life lesson but one of the most valuable ones. It's one I've had to learn a few times myself, but I think that that's also a real common challenge for [00:27:00] veterinarians because they tend to be very high achieving perfectionists, "I can control all the variables" types. Then to say, "I can be good at this and not good at that and that's okay. That's just how it is" is worth cultivating. Learning to do that and to think it's funny and fine.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: And I think the other thing when you're in veterinary practice, um, and this spills over to I think everybody that's involved in it, but it really hits veterinarians pretty hard is that what our clients expect of us, the human clients expect of us. We you know, I'm not ... I'm using "us." I'm a behavior and animal behavior person, but I'm not a veterinarian. But I think it's a matter of realizing that when they say, "You didn't do this right," they're probably not really saying there's something wrong with you. There's they're just expressing, in a not-so-nice way, how sad they are. How disappointed they are. How [00:28:00] helpless they feel. So sometimes if we can kind of pull ourselves back and say "Okay, they're directing it at me because I'm the one that has a scalpel in my hand" or "I'm the one that can't help their animal." And as a veterinarian, people would be feeling helpless to because, you know, people don't go into veterinary medicine unless you want to save lives and help animals be healthy. So when you can't do that, and there's times when obviously you can't. I mean, it's just life. None of us have that kind of control over what life does our way. So we're already feeling a little bit helpless and guilty and whatever, and so then you have a client say that to you, it can really feel very, very bad. And then we can react to it in kind of unpleasant way with their client or we take it on and it becomes kind of a depression thing. So it's a matter of just trying to keep again that footing on the ground

and our clients are having their reactions. And it's very, very often. I mean, I just saw something on Facebook, [00:29:00] um several things on Facebook this week with people ranting about veterinarians. And you know were the veterinarians at fault? I don't know. I wasn't there. Chances are that at least some of them were not and even if they were, they're not perfect. You know, it's not like any of us has that kind of control over what happens. So it's hard to get that in our heads and keep it there because, you know, that's not the focus of the training of veterinarians. It's not the focus of training of medical doctors. It's not the focus of training of psychologists or you know, any of us that are kind of in the helping fields.

Colleen Pelar: Right, and I think I think that's a piece that, because it is left out, many people are blindsided by. You're trained for the helping skills. In the case of a veterinarian, all the physical helping for the health of the animal and in case of behavior work, how do we change the behavior of the animal? But we're not really trained for the "how do I deal with the emotional component of the human [00:30:00] who comes with." And that piece is the piece that burns us out in most cases. It's how do I deal with the emotions of the humans? Because they're profound. They're extreme emotions because of course these people adore their animals, and are coming from a place of anxiety and fear and desperation, in many cases. And you want to help but don't meet their needs for whatever reason and then it turns to anger so often and it's hard. That's a real tough piece.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: Yeah, it's it is a very tough piece and I mean I've been working humans, I mean. Sometimes there's parallel processes with child psychologists like I am, and I'm also a play therapist. So, you know, there's certain things that we could work with the kids and say well that goes great, but then there's a parents. Well parents are just grown-up kids. They're maybe not as cute, as I always say. [00:31:00] Forgive me, that's just an off-the-cuff kind of thing, but, you know, so you can get very frustrated with the parents the same way as here I am working with the animals. I know what to do with them and I'm doing my best for them. And then we've got the people. Most of us, especially who work with animals, I think, don't go into it thinking we want to work with people. Some people do but many people don't. So that's why I wrote my book. *The Human Half of Dog Training* was really written for trainers, but the more I've thought about it since--and I know they've been veterinarians and vet techs and other people who have read it--but it gives the tools that we need. Not necessarily play, although I do use humor a lot, even in my interactions. But when you have somebody that's very upset instead of feeling like you have to answer them and make it better or convince them that you were right, sometimes the best thing you can do is just kind of acknowledge that they're very upset and then don't add to it. Then it can you know, [00:32:00] there's certain tools you can use different strategies to kind of deescalate things. That might be a topic for another time, but ...

Colleen Pelar: There are great strategies in that book. And yeah, maybe we will come back and talk specifically about that in a future episode because I agree *The Human Half of Dog Training* has some really helpful strategies and language in ways of looking at things that I do think veterinarians and vet techs and other animal-care professionals can really benefit from. Of course, you know that because you have that active, thriving discussion group

about it where people bring up the "I have a client who ..." and out comes the story. What should I say next? And if so, that's fantastic that's been hugely helpful. How could our listeners learn more about you and about your books.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: I have I have a lot of websites. I'll give two, just two websites. If you use my name, which is www.RiseVanFleet.com, it'll bring you to a page that shows [00:33:00] because I have a play therapy website. I have a website called The Playful Pooch, which is more about my work individually. I do behavior work in home with families and their dogs primarily. Um, and then the other one I'll give you is the International Institute for Animal-Assisted Play Therapy, which is www.IIAAPT.org. So that shows more of the work that we're doing with dogs and horses and cats and rabbits and other species to get them involved in play therapy work with our human clients and mental health and occupational therapy and physical therapy and speech and things like that, education, but we're trying to do it in a way that really is playful. So there are some playful bits of information. I think I just put up an article. It's more about how I interact with my dogs. I'll pay attention to where the squirrels have been we live and our neighbors have a Grove of trees and we have some oak trees and other In our property so I can watch for [00:34:00] the squirrels have been and so then I'll go out and I'll take my dogs out usually one at a time. I'll say, "Look, what's here. It's right here." I'll point to where I know of this their scent and they think I'm brilliant even she knows how to find the squirrels. Um, so there's things like that that you know are part of it. I think some of those articles are now up on the IIAAPT.org website and I'm going to be adding to that.

Colleen Pelar: Fantastic. I will make sure to have links in the show notes to both of those so people can check that out and I think we will wrap it up here.

Risë VanFleet, PhD: I'll mention one thing. On Facebook, I do have a group called [Animals and Play](#); it's not specific to human play. But it does have a lot. It's not a super active group. It's not a real big group. It's a nice group and we just share, sometimes it's funny stuff, and sometimes it's discussions of "is this play or not play?" And things like that. So [00:35:00] based on this topic that might be something that would be of interest too.

Colleen Pelar: Okay, so there we have it. Working with animals is emotionally draining but there are lots of ways to restore your balance and play certainly is a big one. Every week on UNLEASHED (at work & home), we talk about simple strategies for making your days a bit brighter. If you're ready to take some baby steps toward greater resilience, why not go to my website and download the free PDF, 10 Ways to Recharge When You Don't Have Time to Take a Break? It's at www.colleenpelar.com/10tips.