

Overpowering Boredom to Discover and Learn Better Approaches to Pet Care

A Special Interview With Dr. Judy Morgan

By Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

Dr. Karen Becker:

Hi, I'm Dr. Karen Becker and Donna has nominated Dr. Judy Morgan for a Game Changer award and we have Dr. Morgan here live with us today to tell us more about all the amazing work that she's doing with animals and with pet parents to help improve the quality and longevity of animal life, so thank you, Dr. Judy Morgan, for joining me and congratulations on your Game Changer award.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

Thank you so much. I am really happy to be here and excited that someone noticed what I'm doing and thought to make a nomination. It's awesome.

Dr. Karen Becker:

It is. It is awesome. And you're doing a lot. You have done a lot and you're continuing to do a lot, so for the listeners and readers that may not be familiar with who you are and what you're doing, will you back up and walk us through two different paths? One, why you decided to become a veterinarian, but then you, like many of our Game Changers, have gone through some additional steps, you have taken additional steps to become trained in modalities beyond what you got in veterinary school. So walk us through the transition into you deciding, "I don't have enough tools and here's why I want to learn more."

Dr. Judy Morgan:

It's been a really interesting journey and it's a journey where I say that things were put in my path and I could either trip over them, run away from them or fall into them and so many of them, I decided that I would fall into and say, "Where is this going to take me?"

I graduated in 1984 from a Midwestern veterinary school, very traditional, that was the only thing I ever knew and that was the type of medicine that I practiced for my first 10 years and frankly, I hated it. I was bored. I kept saying, "If I have to talk about fleas, ticks, heartworms and vaccinations 10 more times tomorrow, I don't know if I can do it. This is just – I have nothing to offer. I have prescription diets that just-" I had nothing, and frankly, I was bored.

So, I got into emergency medicine, which helped with the boredom because there's always a lot going on, but then I accidentally took a chiropractic course because it was called something else and I didn't realize that's what I was learning, and it was one of those, about three hours in, I went, "I think he's talking about chiropractic. I don't even know if I believe in this."

And I finished the course because I paid for the course so when you pay a lot of money, you stick out. And so, I went back and I started using it in my practice and it was a game-changer. Then I had to cry over the dogs and cats that were paralyzed that I couldn't treat in the past and

now I was seeing the changes that I could make so I had to get my forgiveness to myself for not knowing what I didn't know, but because it opened that big door for me, I said, "Well, there's probably other stuff I don't know anything about that if I learned that, maybe I could make even more difference for my patients."

So, I was all over the place. I started studying homeopathy, I studied raindrop therapy, essential oils, light therapy, sound, vibrational. You name it, I was just going to learn whatever I could learn about everything. And then I decided to take an acupuncture course through the Chi Institute and when you go to the Chi Institute, you don't just learn about acupuncture, you learn about all four branches of Chinese medicine, so I learned a lot about herbs, I learned about Tui-na, but then I also learned about food therapy. The food therapy to me was like somebody just hit me over the head and said, "This is what you were meant to do."

And it really resonated with me and when I started using that for my patients, I'll never forget, one of my very first "holistic" consultations was one of my clients had an old Doberman, obese, horrible coat, down, the dog could not get up and she had cancer. So, they came to me saying, "Well, we really don't want to put her to sleep." And I thought, "Oh, boy, this is a challenge." And in the past, I would've probably had that "it's time" talk. And I thought, "You know what? I have so many tools in my toolbox. I'm not giving them that talk. I'm going to give them something to do."

And I said, "Would you be willing to make food for your dog?" She'd been on dry kibble her entire life and, I mean, you could tell, the dog just looked bad for all the reasons that she should look bad, not to mention she had cancer. And they said, "We'll do anything you say, Dr. Morgan." I said, "Okay." So, we did some acupuncture, I made a recipe for the dog. This is very early in my career of making recipes. It was probably something crazy.

And so, we did a few things and I sent them home and then I would see them weekly, every other week and the dog lived about four months, but not only did she live that four months, within about a week and a half, she was up walking, she lost the excess weight, her coat bloomed. She was amazing, and when they brought her in to finally have her put down because she was just at that point, they said, "We are so thankful for the past four months. This has been the best four months of our dog's life and we felt so empowered because we were able to help her and making her food was a joy and we loved seeing the changes, we just wish we had known this earlier."

And I felt like saying to them, "Yeah, I wish I had known this earlier, too." But it's so different when you go from being bored and fed up with what you're doing to having the knowledge and the power to make incredible differences in the life and longevity of the pets. But also, one of my best stories, I had a dog with cancer that came in, saw a lot of those, and again, the dog was being fed all wrong, she was obese, she was having mobility issues, she was hypothyroid and she had cancer.

So, did the usual list of things that we do, including diet changes and exercise changes, just a lot of changes for the dog. The dog lived another year. And then the people got another puppy and they brought the puppy in to see me, but I didn't recognize the woman. She came in and I had no idea who she was. And she said, "Well, you helped us with our last dog." And the dog had died

at home so I didn't even see the dog at the end. And I went, "Well, I remember the dog, but I don't remember you." And she said, "Oh, well, you wouldn't remember me."

And she took a picture out of her wallet and it was a picture of her and her husband when they got married, and they were both about a hundred pounds overweight and really just struggling with a lot of health issues, and she said, "Over the past year, because you told us how to feed our dog and what would help her and she did so well, we thought, 'Well, if we're doing it for her, why don't we do it for us?'"

Between the two of them, they lost 200 pounds. They looked like totally different people. They felt better. She said, "We go to the gym, we go hiking, we are so excited." And then they had a new dog that they were going to start off on the right foot.

So, not only are we able to change the lives of the animals, but a lot of times, we're able to change the lives of their caretakers because they see the power. So, that's what you want in a career, not the boredom of, "Oh."

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. And good for you for recognizing, as a clinician, A, "I'm bored and I can't keep going." Good for you for deciding to not "put up with it" or just get to the finish line of your career. Good for you for saying, "I am not going to live this way. I would like a more satisfying, fulfilling career." So, you gained the tools you needed to be able to provide that.

But out of that, what incredible, recurrent soul-nourishing stories from, I don't want to say treating the whole family, but health travels up the leash, so by you treating the patient, in a way, we "holistically" are caring for the family and that everyone is gaining the tools and the knowledge and the information needed, if they choose, to incorporate some of those health changes into their entire family, which you've probably seen over and over and over as well as probably countless clients saying to you, "My animal was the healthiest they've ever been while they were dying."

And I think that's a big gift that integrative holistic medicine can give to families, that they have the opportunity to see the body bloom in a way that it can when it's being provided all the resources to be able to have a functional healing response. Despite the fact that there's metastatic disease everywhere and the patient's actually in the process of shutting down, the body will still put forth an effort to heal where it can, and you witnessed that, and that's pivotal for you as a clinician, because that's what feeds your soul in a way to just keep going and going and going. And you did keep going and going and going, which is wonderful.

So, then you went on to write some books. Let's talk a little bit about how you became cellularly inspired to keep going. You decided to do some other stuff.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

I did. So, the first book came out, I actually wrote it in 2013 and it was released in 2014. I didn't know anything about writing a book, I didn't know anything about getting it published, I didn't know anything about promoting a book. I just thought, "If you write it, people buy it." Haha.

And actually, I had no intentions of writing a book. I was asked to join a Facebook group of Cavalier King Charles Spaniel lovers, so it was a small group of about 300 people and they figured out pretty quickly that I was a veterinarian and that I was giving different answers to their questions than what they were normally hearing, and so they finally figured out that I was a holistic veterinarian and as new people would join the group, the group has stayed, we've kept it at about 400 people, here we are eight years, nine years later, but as new people come in, they would ask the same questions over and over and finally, somebody just said, "Why don't you write this all down somewhere?" And I said, "Huh, maybe I'll write a book."

So, I did and I figured out how to get it published and spent way too much money getting it published, but that's okay. And then after I had it, I sold a couple hundred copies and I was like, "You know what? There's really good information in here. I don't know how to get this out to more people." So, I signed up with some groups to figure out how to actually market a book and started my professional Facebook page, and then started a website and started marketing a couple of natural products that I had in my veterinary clinic, thinking, "Well, if they're helping my patients, they could help other people as well."

And then it just sort of snowballed. So, the second book came out the following year, the third book came out the year after that, the fourth book was about a year and a half after that and the fifth book has been sitting in my computer for a year waiting for the last chapter, but so because I'm so into food therapy, three out of the four books are actually cookbooks for dogs using Chinese medicine food therapy, and the website, my little tiny website, has now grown into something crazy.

So, when I decided to retire from clinical practice in 2020, which I did for a couple of reasons, one was my daughter lives in North Carolina and she announced that she was pregnant for my first grandchild and I said, "Well, I cannot live in New Jersey and have my grandchild in North Carolina." So, my veterinary clinics went up for sale very quickly because I was bound [inaudible 00:12:16] and determined I was going to be here to-

Dr. Karen Becker:

Be a grandma.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

Be a grandma. And, you know, my daughter – my mother lives with us and my daughter and my mother, so grandma and granddaughter, have a very close relationship and they always have and I said, "I want that same relationship with my granddaughter and I won't be able to have it from 600 miles away." So, that spurred us to move south to North Carolina, and also, in the process, my website had grown into something huge as an educational platform as well as a marketplace for natural and high-quality products for pet owners.

And my daughter is a systems engineer, which is very handy to have in the family, by the way, and she was working for a startup company and she was working a hundred hours a week and she wanted to do something different and I said, "Why don't you take over running my website and see if you can make it grow?" Well, silly me, she took over, she has run full-steam.

It was great at the beginning because after she had my granddaughter, Sarah, she was able to take her to the office with her and it was during COVID, she's a COVID baby so there was no such thing as getting her into daycare or taking her somewhere else so it actually worked out really, really well and Gwen has just done amazing work with our store, which has over 400 products in it now, which, in order to get your products in our store, first of all, you have to have a really high-quality, natural product that is going to cause no harm to our pets and is going to be beneficial, but you also have to be an ethical company, so if we get wind that somebody who is high up in the company is not being ethical with their suppliers or with their buyers, we'll drop them in a heartbeat. It's so critical to us that integrity and quality maintain really high.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yes.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

And then, this past – actually, during COVID, we started Dr. Judy's [Online] U, which is a "university" of sorts, but it's a learning platform so people can take courses on how to make homemade dog food or how to increase the health and longevity of your cat or your dog, we actually have a horse course that's coming on, we're now partnering with other holistic veterinarians who have more knowledge in certain subjects than I do, which is amazing because it's also – one of the things that I find very sad about our profession, Karen, is that we've got these older veterinarians who have just so much incredible knowledge.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Wisdom, yes.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

And they are really struggling to find young veterinarians who want that knowledge, who want to carry on those practices. I got very, very lucky in that my associate was willing to take over my practices. She had been with me for four years. She still has a lot to learn, but at least she had those basics and it makes a huge difference and I'm very saddened by the fact that the knowledge that these people have is stuck in their heads, and so one of the things that we want to provide through Dr. Judy's [Online] U is a way for pet parents, younger veterinarians, whoever wants to learn this stuff so that it doesn't die with them. There's power here and we need that power.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Well, my gosh, not only do we need that power, I'm 51 and technology is so painful for me, I can't imagine being 61, 71 or 81 trying to do computer stuff. It just is hard, it's really hard so it's beautiful that you're providing a means for these gifted veterinarians who have decades of clinical experience and stories and evidence and protocols and techniques that they have used. What you're doing is helping them provide knowledge transfer to younger veterinarians, but also pet parents that might not have access to these gifted veterans, really, warriors for integrative medicine that, maybe because of technology, are not capable of transferring that knowledge other ways. So that's really beautiful.

If people, now is a good time to talk about, if people wanted to find more information about that,

where do they go? Where are you on the internet? What is your website or what are your websites for all?

Dr. Judy Morgan:

We're everywhere. So, my main website is DrJudyMorgan.com, so very simple, D-R-JudyMorgan.com. We are on Instagram as [DrJudyMorgan](https://www.instagram.com/DrJudyMorgan). Facebook, I believe, is [JudyMorganDVM](https://www.facebook.com/JudyMorganDVM). We also have a YouTube channel. My daughter plays around with TikTok, I don't get it at all.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Me either.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

But she does really cool videos. And through our website, you can get to all of our platforms, but then we also have what's called DrJudyU.com, but there's a link to that on DrJudyMorgan.com.

So, DrJudyMorgan.com has blogs about just about everything and if we get enough questions about the same topic, we will make a blog on it. The books are available there and also on Amazon. And then we have, like I said, over 400 products and a lot of them are grouped by allergies or arthritis and we're really trying to help pet parents navigate the traditional veterinary world, help them navigate away from all the chemicals, the overuse of antibiotics, the medications that they're told are helping their pets and in reality, they're really shortening their lives and causing so much damage.

So, we want to be able to educate people to alternatives, and while people that are overseas may not have access to purchasing products through the website, at least they can get information on how to make their own. We've got a lot of DIY things for flea-and-tick preventative and that sort of thing. And we have a huge, worldwide following. Karen, I never set out to be an influencer and the first time somebody told me I was an influencer, I was like, "What? I don't even know what that is."

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. Yeah.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

I did not set out to do that. It's just, it sort of snowballed. Like I said, things just kept getting put in front of me and it snowballed into something that I'm really proud of and that I am thankful for because my original goal was to just educate a few people on a Facebook page and then, couple years in, I made this lofty goal and said, "I want to change the lives of a million pets worldwide."

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yup.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

Well, that one's sailed so now we're going for 10 million and it can be hard to quantify. The million was easy to quantify because we've had a couple of posts that have gone over a million so we know that we hit that, and I think that... I mean, you have lots of posts that go over millions and I think you can probably say, if you had something that reached a million people, you probably hit 10 million pets. But that's still my goal.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah. And it's such a good goal because there's still so many people that don't know and you don't know what you don't know, so I think that that's also motivation to get up every day and keep teaching, keep providing resources, keep doing what you're doing, because there's either younger generations that don't know this or people that are still unfamiliar with the fact that there are alternatives out there.

When you get up in the morning and start your day, what do you love most about what you're doing now? You've done a lot of things historically, but now, what do you love most about what you're doing now?

Dr. Judy Morgan:

What I love most is our farm sanctuary, getting up in the morning and going out and cleaning stalls for the donkeys and feeding the 45 animals that live on this farm, that's actually the favorite part of my day and that's usually how the day starts and ends, so that's pretty cool.

But in the 8 to 12 hours in between, I love teaching, so whether it's putting together courses or doing – I do a ton of podcast interviews, and frankly, somebody who has three listeners on their podcast, I still want to talk to them because that's three people that we could touch and those three people might touch three more. So, for me, anything I can do to help educate and change the lives of those pets and the pet parent, because you don't know what you don't know.

And sometimes I come across with a ton of – it's like, "blah", a ton of information in an interview and sometimes, for the listener who has only heard everything traditional for so long, it can be like, "Whoa."

Dr. Karen Becker.

Too much, too much.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

Like, "Wow, that was way too much." But if it's just enough to spark, a couple days later, they think about it and go, "Now, what was that?" If we just spark that little bit of interest or change or questioning, then we've made an inroad.

And the first time I ever heard about feeding, actually, when clients started coming to me and asking me about raw feeding, I gave them the old line, "Oh, bacteria, blah, blah, blah." And it took a few years until when Ian Billinghurst had his raw food available here in the U.S., that was when I finally changed. And I ordered it for my dogs and I said, "Whoa, look at this." I had Dobermans at the time. I think I had a couple Cavaliers and a Doberman and I made the switch

and said, "Oh, my gosh, how stupid have I been that I believed that old line and I was feeding it to my clients?" And, sorry.

So, you don't know what you don't know.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Exactly. Exactly.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

And you learn.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah, exactly. And first of all, Doberman and the Cavs are two breeds to do well on, goodness sakes, they need all the meat-based amino acids they can get so-

Dr. Judy Morgan:

You betcha.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Good to learn on, but it is interesting how we all go through our own evolutions of saying... Going from, when I think back about raw food, my dog was just anorexic and so literally would eat nothing, had liver enzymes off the scale and someone said, "Feed raw." If she would've been stable and healthy, I would be like, "What?" This was in veterinary school circa 1994, but she was anorexic and I was told she was going to die anyway and they're like, "Just-" And this was the internist at the vet school was like, "Just try raw."

Dr. Judy Morgan:

Really?

Dr. Karen Becker:

And I was like, I didn't even question it. And she was such a common-sense internist, she's a old-school intern and she's like, "Listen, your dog's dying. Who the hell cares? Just feed it anything. Feed it some raw meat." And I was like, "Okay."

And out of that, if my dog would've been healthy, I wish I could say, "I decided to be proactive and I knew that fresh food had" and I didn't know any of that. And I was also, if she would've been healthy, I never would've tried it. It was out of my desperation that I listened to "wacky" advice that I never would've followed if she was well and I'm sad about that. I'm sad that I had to be a reactive pet parent in order to understand how important it was to think about food before your dog gets sick, but I didn't know.

We all don't know what we don't know, and yet it is such a blessing to be able to have – you're right, we do a lot of apologies for not knowing what we didn't know, but then we also just keep learning to try and make up the difference and to share with as many people as we can, even

when you're in the grocery line and you see the person behind you and you're like, "Hey, you're going to feed that? No. No." Right? And so-

Dr. Judy Morgan:

My husband does not let me go in the pet food aisle anymore.

Dr. Karen Becker:

I understand. I understand. So, you had this really lovely, beautiful, diversified career. With where you are now, if you could tell or share with the world one thing that you would want them to know or think about, what would it be?

Dr. Judy Morgan:

It's never too late to make changes for your pet's health or your own health. I mean, we've taken 15, 16-year-old dogs that were in horrible shape and turned them around and they hang around for another three or four years, which is pretty amazing. So, it's never too late to change and even if you can't make a major change, even a minor change.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Yeah.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

And don't beat yourself up for what you didn't know, because you can't go back, you can't change that, you didn't know. I can't go back and change all the prescription diets I sold. I can't go back and change the animals that were put down because I didn't have all these tools in my toolbox. But what I can do is be thankful for every animal who taught me something along the way and I think, even as pet parents, your pets are teaching you all the time and be thankful for that and give them all the love you can and then any changes you can make for the better, that's awesome.

Dr. Karen Becker:

Mm-hmm. Really good advice and we are so thankful that one of your thousands, millions of followers, Donna, nominated you to be a Game Changer. We're also extra thankful that you took some time out of your very busy day to spend some time with us so we could get to know you better and learn all about the inspiring things that you're doing. Thank you so much and congratulations on your nomination.

Dr. Judy Morgan:

Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.