

How a Sick Son Opened This Vet's Eyes to Integrative Medicine

Allopathic and conventional medicine just wasn't cutting it with her toddler's chronic respiratory issues. After visiting a board-certified integrative doctor, she embarked on a journey that would change her life - and the focus of her veterinary practice.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Today's Pet Game Changer is integrative veterinarian Dr. Allison Brown, co-owner of the Dongan Hills Veterinary Practice in Staten Island, NY
- Dr. Brown began her career practicing conventional veterinary medicine, but her experience healing her sick son opened her eyes to the benefits of an alternative approach
- Dr. Brown firmly believes that nutrition is the key to good health for both pets and their humans, and that "if you focused just on nutrition, most medicines would never be needed"

My guest today is integrative veterinarian Dr. Allison Brown, who was nominated for a Game Changer award by Wade S. Dr. Brown and her husband, also a veterinarian, have been co-owners of the Dongan Hills Veterinary Practice in Staten Island, NY since 2012. She started there as a veterinary assistant back in 1995, went on to become a licensed veterinary technician and ultimately, a DVM.

Dr. Brown is also a member of the College of Integrative Veterinary Therapies (CIVT), the American Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy, and the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA).

A Child's Healing Leads to an 'Aha Moment'

Dr. Brown explains that after graduating from veterinary school in 2005, she went into practice as a conventional medicine practitioner, got married, and had children.

"One of my children became very ill with chronic respiratory issues as a toddler," says Dr. Brown, "and allopathic and conventional medicine just wasn't cutting it. I ended up seeking out a board-certified pediatrician who practiced homeopathy and holistic medicine — integrative medicine — and we embarked on a journey that transformed our lives. That doctor changed my family's life.

My son got better over time through nutritional changes, lifestyle changes, and lots of supplements. At the time, which was back in 2012-2013, I was also feeling dissatisfied and a little frustrated because I wanted to do more to help my patients and their owners.

I had kind of an 'Aha moment' and I said, 'If I can do this and heal my family, I can certainly do this for my patients.' So, I began integrating what I was learning about homeopathy and holistic human medicine into my veterinary practice every day."

Education, Persistence, and a Bit of TLC Opens Doors

I asked Dr. Brown how her colleagues and clients felt about her transition from conventional veterinary medicine to a more integrative approach.

"Well, I co-own the practice with my husband, and he saw the transformation with our son," she explains. "So, while he was also a conventional veterinarian, he was very open to trying new things."

Dr. Brown says that when it comes to her clients, most of whom don't know a lot about alternative approaches, she loves to educate them about the benefits based on her own personal experience.

"Some people will say, 'Well, I don't really want to change the diet right now, or I don't want to add this or add that,'" she explains. "I give them time. It's about education, persistence, and a little bit of tender loving care. Most come around. They really do come around and start to see the difference. I can't change everything at once, just one thing at a time, with very slow implementation."

I usually start with nutrition and other basics, keeping in mind that finances are always an issue. So, I start with little things like adding some vegetables or a little bit of protein to kibble, and then a year later we're on freeze-dried or raw food. I feel that once I tell my story to my clients and let them know that it's totally doable, that my husband and I have transformed our family, most are really open to change."

Chaos in the Home Affects Pets' Health

Wade, the lovely gentleman who nominated Dr. Brown for a Game Changer award, told us about his German Shepherd, who had an epulis (aka "gum boil"), which is a benign tumor in the mouth. Wade didn't want to have the proliferative oral tissue removed surgically and wanted to try a nonsurgical approach.

He told us Dr. Brown was the only veterinarian he talked to that would even entertain the idea, and he was so very grateful. As I do with all our Game Changers, I asked Dr. Brown what she loves most about her work.

"I think what I love most are the connections I make with my clients, the longstanding connections," she answers. "I have patients I've been seeing for many years, and I have learned from evaluating their home lives, that so many have the same or similar illnesses to their owners. Things like hypothyroidism or cardiac illness or renal disease, whatever it is, someone in the house is suffering from a similar illness."

*I started looking into the energetics of the home and how they play a role in the health of our pets, who are like sponges that **absorb our energy and often reflect the chaos at home**, including my own. So, I started focusing on that, and I really enjoy transforming not only my patients' lives, but owners' lives also.*

If they need resources, I tell them about our local nutritionist. I recommend things like getting meat from our local butcher or farmer's market. I share examples from my own life, things I love to do, like yoga and running. And we build from there. The relationship grows and we become a family because my practice is really a family practice.

At follow-up appointments, when I can see positive changes — the patient looks so much better, for example, and the owner is so much happier, and they feel better — it's indescribable. I just can't tell you how happy and gratifying it is to be able to contribute to society that way."

Nutrition Is the Key to Health

Finally, I asked Dr. Brown what one thing she would tell the world if she had the chance.

"I'd like everyone to know that for humanity and for our animals, nutrition is the key to health," she replies. "It really is so vitally important that if you focused just on nutrition, most medicines would never be needed. The body has a wonderful ability to heal itself when it receives what it needs. I really think eating well is our salvation. It's our path to a healthy life and a wonderful experience and journey."

If you'd like to learn more about Dr. Brown and her practice, you can visit the website at [**Dongan Hills Veterinary**](#), or their [**Facebook**](#) or [**Instagram**](#) pages.
