



A culture of care for human wellbeing: The importance of cross-pollination across animal-related fields

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Abstract

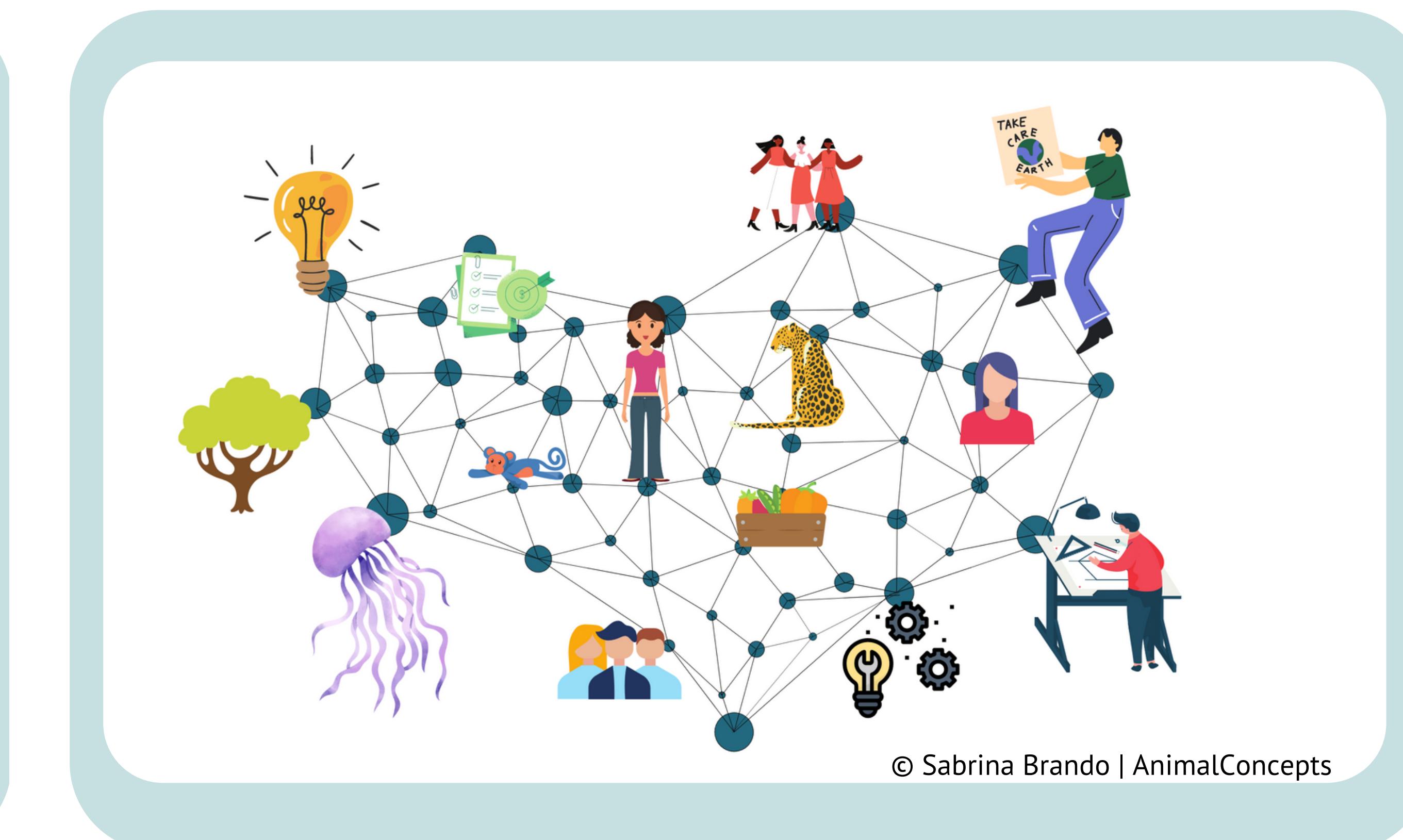
Animal care professionals across different disciplines such as laboratories, shelters, zoos, aquariums, sanctuaries, and farms experience a wide range of occupational stressors (sorrows) as well as satisfactions (joys). Sorrows may include extended workloads, dysfunctional teams, limited time and budgets, grief, loss, and euthanasia; joys may be supporting good animal wellbeing, the connection with the animals, species conservation, connecting to the public, animal and environmental protection, contributing to other goals such as research and education. While differences between the professions exist, there are also large overlaps grounded in common humanity. The knowledge that we are not alone, that life is all about relationships and connections and that we can find support and strength in each other unites us. The cross-pollination of stories across disciplines and fields, as well as learning and contributing different proven strategies and methods is what we can all benefit from, both the animals and the people in these professions. Creating healthy workspaces, attention to psychological wellbeing, benefits of gratitude and mindfulness, addressing bullying and toxicity, and systemic causes of stress and burnout are equally as important as holding space for people to grieve, have rituals, and time to feel connected. What all people need most is to feel loved (Baer, 2011), today a deep and true culture of care is about love in the workplace.

Ideas and approaches

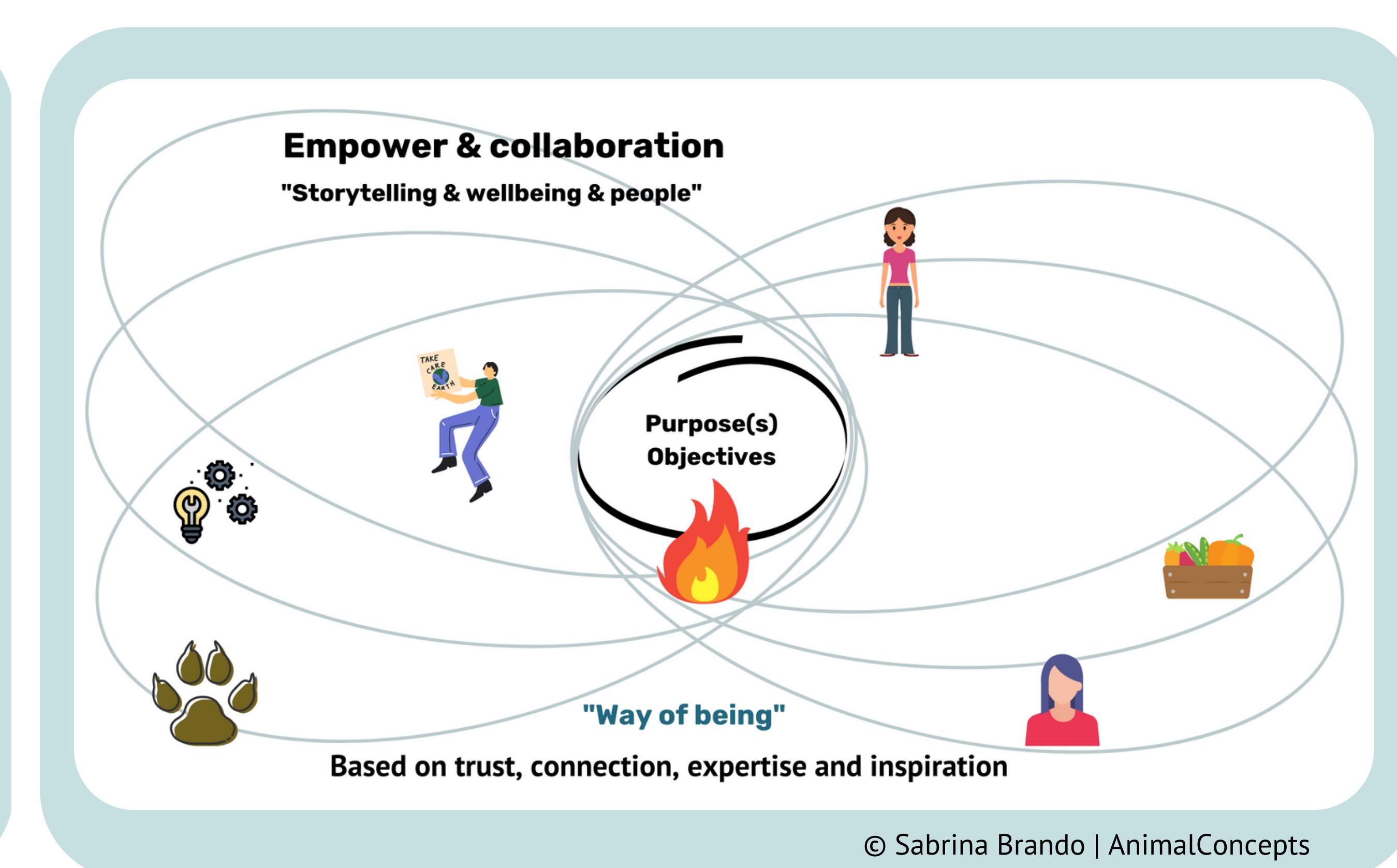
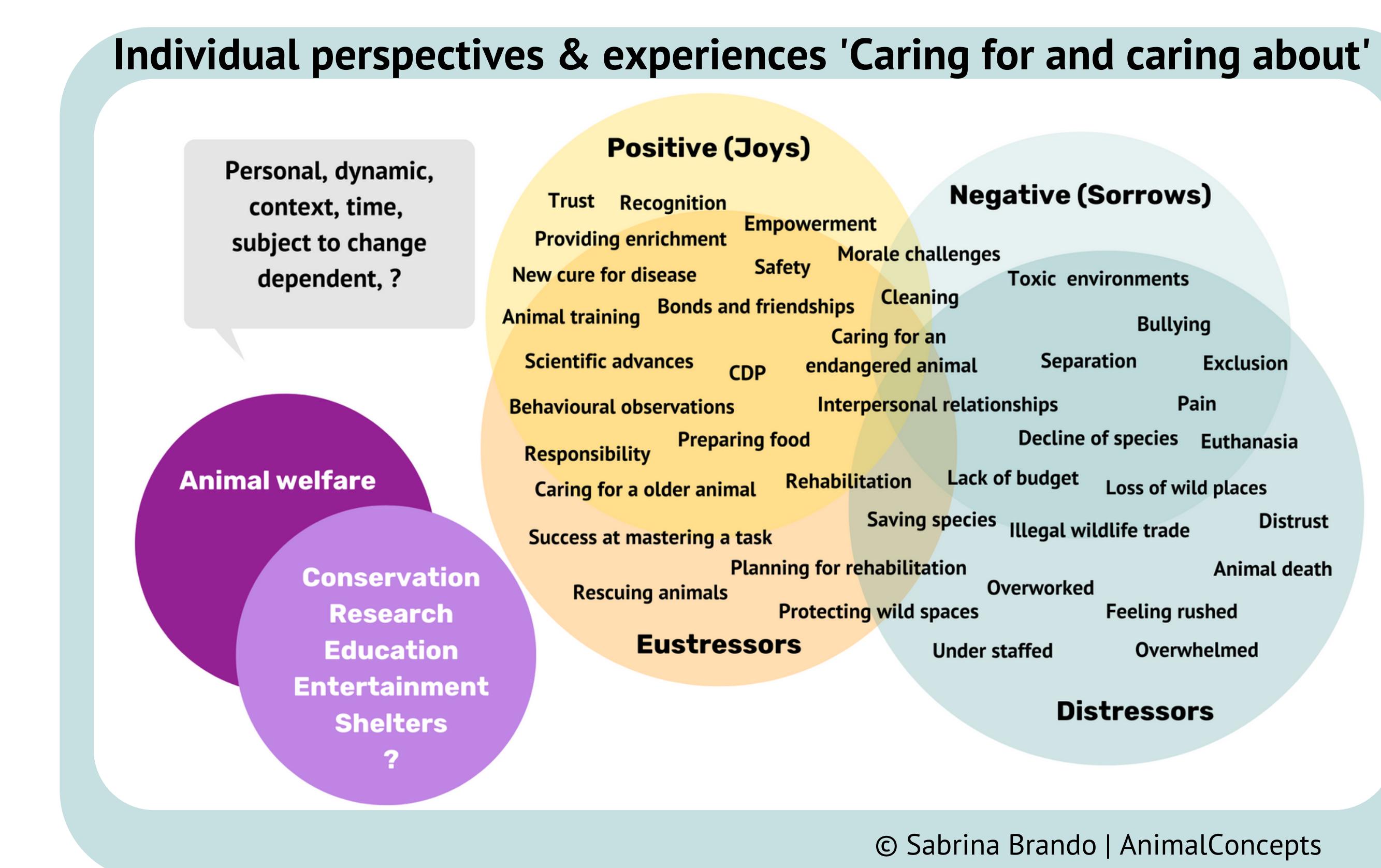
Love, caring and empathy in the workplace revolves around a sense of belonging, feeling respected, supported and cared for. Anwar et al. (2021), propose in "Love as a Business Strategy: Resilience, Belonging and Success" that it boils down to a culture without fear. In which people are rooting for each other's growth, where ideas and concerns are valued, where mistakes are treated as learnings, there is support in affronting new things, our weaknesses are supported by other's strengths, and leaders share their mistakes and vulnerability too. A deep culture of care considers human wellbeing at an individual, leadership, and organisational level and recognises that every work environment is an ecosystem of systems, where actors interact with other actors for a common purpose e.g., providing excellence in animal care, saving species, finding cures for diseases, rescuing animals, or protecting wild spaces. Articulating what the common purpose or purposes are, reflects a Systems Thinking (Sarah, 2021) approach and that everyone and everything is interconnected.



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Baer (2011) writes, "people need to be loved and taught", to understand how we can move from Loved → Seeing → Accepting → Loving. "The more loved we feel and the more we practice seeing and accepting people, the more loving we become." In his book "REAL LOVE in the workplace", Baer posits that we need to keep telling the truth and that we are all learning, to move from Truth → Seen → Accepted → Loved. Professional preparation and maturation through holistic education across all staff combined with continued personal and professional development (CPD) are key. Empathic and compassionate leadership and organisational approaches that are rooted in humanity, inclusion, vulnerability, forgiveness, and the ability to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, assist in creating a culture of belonging and empowerment.



References

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Baer, Greg. Real Love in the Workplace: Eight Principles For Consistently Effective Leadership In Business.
Brando et al in prep. Understanding job satisfaction and occupational stressors of distinctive roles in zoos and aquariums
Sarah A. 2021 Systems Thinking and the Need for Systems Literacy