

WORDS THAT WORK SERIES

NUTRITION VIDEO SCRIPT



Pet obesity can be a touchy subject, but it's an important one to address with pet owners. We need them to see our genuine concern for their pet's health – and we can do this by choosing the right words. At the same time, we need to advocate for better pet nutrition, while guiding clients toward healthy lifestyle changes for their pets. Remember to be encouraging and supportive so your clients have fun while their pets become healthier!

In this example, watch how the patient's weight issue is addressed with the client. The words used in this video help show empathy and help build a level of trust with the client in order to communicate effectively. Use this video and the script provided as a guide for your own discussions with pet owners.

■ Veterinarian ■ Client

Peepers is adorable. From our physical exam, she appears to be doing well. That said, I'm a bit concerned about Peepers' weight. Are you okay talking about her weight?

Yes.

Pets hide weight well, and it can be hard to tell when they are overweight. If you feel here, we should be able to feel the top of the spine but not see it. And, if you feel here, we should be able to easily feel her ribs, but again, we don't want to see them.

It is difficult for us to feel the top of Peepers' spine and her ribs. This tells us that Peepers has gained more weight than we'd like to see on her.

Okay.

Let's compare Peepers to this chart showing different body conditions. Where do you think Peepers falls on this chart?

I would say she's similar to this one.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

- Invite the client to participate in the exam

- Use pictures, models, or diagrams to help explain complex messages

- Ask for the client's perspective

■ Veterinarian ■ Client

limiting the number she's getting or find a replacement like switching to fruit or veggie treats. This way, you can still give her treats while keeping Peepers at a healthy weight.

We can give it a shot – I don't know if Peepers is going to go for a carrot! And I know my wife and sons love watching Peepers' reaction when they give her a treat.

I can tell that Peepers is important to your family. You can ensure your wife and sons that Peepers knows how much you love her by the attention she gets – not by the treats. I would be happy to put together an information package for your family on healthy food options and why we are recommending them.

Okay – we'll take a look at it tonight.

What other questions do you have about Peepers' diet before we move on?

None. I think that's good for now.

If your wife or sons have questions when you get home, please don't hesitate to give us a call.

Thanks!

One last thing before we move on – I know you mentioned it would be hard to change Peepers' current activity level, but if you can get her out walking or running more, any increase in exercise will help – even 5 minutes a day.

We can give it a shot, but no promises.

That would be great if you could try. If what we're doing isn't having any effect, we will need to revisit our plan. On that note, I'd like to see Peepers back in 4 weeks to be weighed again. I would expect to see some change in her weight by then if our plan is working – ultimately, her goal weight is 15 lb. Would it be possible to bring her back in 4 weeks to be weighed?

That should work. I'm off on Fridays, so I could swing by then.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

- Explain concerns clearly
- Use collaborative words, such as "let's" and "we"

- Recognize the client's efforts
- Address concerns
- Offer take-home information

- Encourage questions
- Offer additional support

- Make clear recommendations

- Explain the benefits of preventive care
- Make clear recommendations

■ Veterinarian ■ Client

Great. If you have any questions or run into problems in the meantime, please don't hesitate to give us a call.

When you bring Peepers back, we just need to get a weight on her – it shouldn't take more than a few minutes. If you or I have any concerns following her weight check-in, we can follow up by phone or email. And, if we feel we need to schedule another visit in person, we'll do that. How does that sound?

Okay. Let's do that.

This video has demonstrated some specific communication techniques you can use to help build better relationships with your clients.

The script for this video is available from the Partners for Healthy Pets website and is provided as a guide to help you use Words that Work.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

- **Make a clear plan of next steps**
- **Be respectful of the client's schedule**