

Microlearning Summary - Compassion Fatigue: Understanding the Cycle & Returning to Resilience

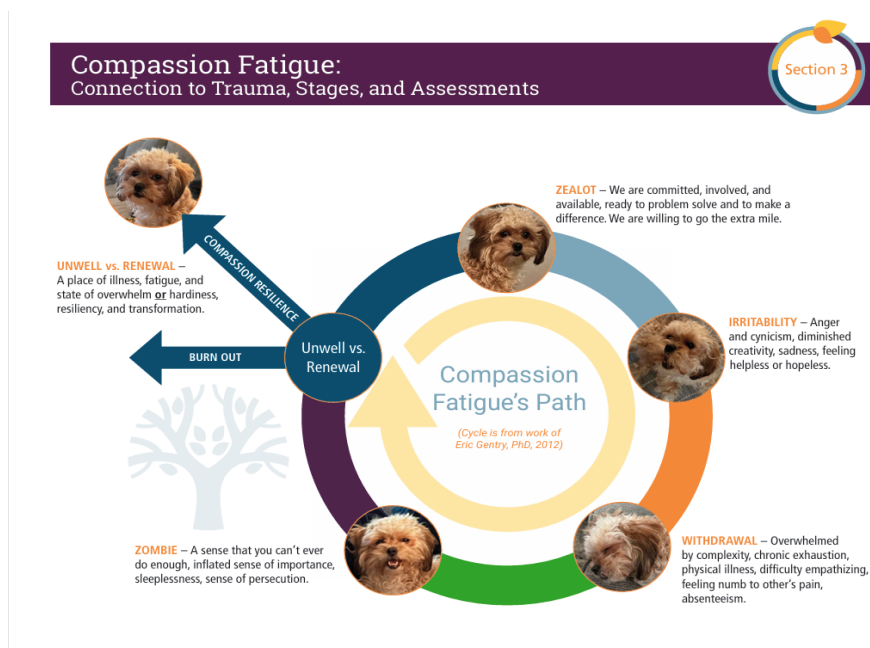
Compassion fatigue is a normal response to supporting others through challenges. It can show up as exhaustion, irritability, numbness, or a sense of overwhelm. This microlearning introduces the Compassion Fatigue Cycle and helps educators recognize early signs so they can return to a place of resilience, hope, and grounded compassion.

Why This Matters

- Compassion fatigue impacts individual wellbeing, team functioning, and school culture.
- Early recognition prevents burnout and supports sustainable, compassionate practice.
- Awareness helps educators maintain empathy, creativity, and connection with students.
- Understanding the cycle empowers staff to choose renewal rather than depletion.

Link to Microlearning Video

Compassion Fatigue Cycle  [School Compassion Fatigue's Cycle](#)



Micro-Reflection for after the micro-learning

- [Compassion Fatigue Reflection Questions for Staff](#)
- [Compassion Fatigue Leadership Considerations](#)

Signals to Notice

These indicators may show up in yourself or colleagues:

Stage	Early Signs	Later Signs
Zealot	High enthusiasm, overextending, taking on extra tasks	Unsustainable pace, difficulty slowing down
Irritability	Cynicism, frustration, strained relationships	Mistakes, diminished creativity, emotional reactivity
Withdrawal	Emotional distancing, reduced empathy	Chronic exhaustion, absenteeism, physical symptoms
Zombie	Feeling indispensable, “only I can do this”	Numbness, sleeplessness, sense of persecution
Unwell	Overwhelm, illness, hopelessness	Disconnection, collapse, burnout
Renewal	Awareness, boundaries, support-seeking	Resilience, transformation, restored hope

What This Looks Like in Practice

A teacher begins the year energized and eager (zealot stage). As demands increase, they notice growing irritability and frustration with minor student behaviors. They start withdrawing—closing their door, avoiding collaboration, and feeling emotionally numb. After recognizing these signs, they pause, name their fatigue, and ask a colleague for support. They reset boundaries around after-school work and begin using short regulation breaks. Over time, they feel more grounded, connected, and hopeful.

Grade-Band Strategies You Can Use Tomorrow

The following grade-band strategies offer quick, practical ways to apply this microlearning in your daily work. They are not required steps — simply additional options you can use to deepen the learning, strengthen resilience, and support students and colleagues in developmentally responsive ways. Choose the strategies that fit your role, your context, and your current needs.

K–2 Strategies

1. Name & Normalize Feelings

Steps: Model simple feeling words; invite students to point to visuals; narrate your own emotional state.

Why it's beneficial: Builds co-regulation and helps educators catch early irritability or overwhelm.

2. Two-Minute Reset Corners

Steps: Create a calming space; teach proactive use; use it yourself briefly.

Why it's beneficial: Supports emotional regulation and prevents escalation.

3. Predictable Routines with Visuals

Steps: Use picture schedules; preview transitions; offer countdowns.

Why it's beneficial: Reduces cognitive load for both students and teachers, lowering irritability.

4. “Help Me Notice” Buddy System

Steps: Pair students; teach them to notice when a peer needs a break; model supportive language.

Why it's beneficial: Reinforces empathy and reduces the teacher's sense of carrying everything alone.

3–5 Strategies

1. Expectation Check-In

Steps: Pause before lessons; ask “What's realistic right now?”; adjust pace.

Why it's beneficial: Prevents the zealot → irritability shift by grounding expectations.

2. Compassion Pause

Steps: Notice tension; take one slow breath; ask “What story am I telling myself?”

Why it's beneficial: Interrupts withdrawal and restores perspective.

3. Shared Ownership of Problem-Solving

Steps: Present a challenge; invite student ideas; choose one small next step.

Why it's beneficial: Reduces the sense of over-responsibility that fuels fatigue.

4. Mini-Movement Breaks

Steps: Add 30–60 second stretch or movement moments; model participation.

Why it's beneficial: Increases energy and reduces irritability and cognitive fatigue.

6–8 Strategies

1. Energy Mapping
Steps: Identify low-energy times; adjust tasks; add micro-breaks.
Why it's beneficial: Helps educators pace themselves for the “marathon.”
2. Shared Problem-Solving with Colleagues
Steps: Name the challenge; ask for perspective; choose one next step.
Why it's beneficial: Counters the “I must do it all” mindset of the zombie stage.
3. Normalize Asking for Help
Steps: Model asking for support; celebrate when students do the same.
Why it's beneficial: Reduces isolation and increases collective resilience.
4. Values Check
Steps: Identify a core value; ask “Is my current pace aligned with this?”
Why it's beneficial: Supports renewal by reconnecting to purpose.

9–12 Strategies

1. Boundary Reset
Steps: Identify an area of overextension; clarify what you can offer; communicate it.
Why it's beneficial: Protects energy and models healthy limits.
2. Meaning-Making Reflection
Steps: Recall a moment of impact; write 2–3 sentences; share if comfortable.
Why it's beneficial: Reconnects educators to purpose and hope.
3. Cognitive Reframing
Steps: Notice a negative thought; reframe it with accuracy and compassion.
Why it's beneficial: Reduces cynicism and emotional reactivity.
4. Peer Debriefing
Steps: Schedule 5-minute check-ins; share highs/lows; validate each other.
Why it's beneficial: Prevents isolation and supports emotional processing.