



Microlearning Summary - Compassionate Action Steps

The six Compassionate Action Steps offer a shared language and practical process for responding to others with compassion while protecting our own wellbeing. These steps help us stay grounded, curious, and connected—especially in complex or emotionally charged situations. Practicing them consistently strengthens team culture, reduces burnout, and supports healthier relationships with students, colleagues, and families.

Why This Matters

- Compassion is essential in schools, but it becomes harder to access under stress.
- A shared framework helps teams respond with consistency and care.
- These steps prevent “fixing,” rescuing, or over-functioning—common contributors to compassion fatigue.
- Practicing the steps builds psychological safety and strengthens resilience across the system.

Link to Microlearning Video

Compassionate Action Steps [▶ School Compassionate Action Steps](#)



Micro-Reflection for after the micro-learning

- [Compassionate Action Reflection Questions for Staff](#)
- [Compassionate Action Leadership Considerations](#)



Signals to Notice

You may need the Compassionate Action Steps when you observe:

Step	Signals You Might Need It
Notice	You're distracted, rushed, or missing cues of distress.
Self-Check	You feel reactive, judgmental, overwhelmed, or unsure you have capacity.
Seek Understanding	You're tempted to give advice or jump to solutions.
Increase Empathy	You feel disconnected, confused, or emotionally distant.
Discern Best Action	You want to fix the situation or take over responsibility.
Take Action	You've agreed to support but haven't followed through or haven't released the stress afterward.

What This Looks Like in Practice

A colleague shares that a student's struggles are keeping her up at night. She feels responsible for his progress and believes she may be the only one who can reach him. You pause to truly notice her distress, check your own reactions, and settle your body. You listen with curiosity, reflect her strengths, and empathize with her care and worry. Instead of offering advice, you ask open-ended questions to help her identify next steps. Together, you clarify what support she wants from you. Afterward, you take a moment to release the emotional weight of the conversation so you can return to your day grounded and present.

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. “I Notice...” Statements

Steps: Use simple observations (“I notice your face looks worried”). Invite students to share what they’re feeling.

Why it’s beneficial: Builds early emotional literacy and models Step 1: Notice.

2. Teacher Self-Check Pause

Steps: Before responding to a distressed child, take one slow breath and ask, “Do I have the capacity right now?”

Why it’s beneficial: Prevents reactive responses and supports Step 2: Self-Check.

3. Curiosity Questions

Steps: Ask gentle questions (“What happened?” “How can I help?”).

Why it’s beneficial: Encourages connection and supports Step 3: Seek Understanding.

4. Empathy Through Storybooks

Steps: Use picture books to explore feelings and perspectives.

Why it’s beneficial: Strengthens empathy and supports Step 4: Increase Empathy.

3–5 Strategies

1. “Help Me Understand” Prompts

Steps: Use prompts like “Tell me more about that” or “What was the hardest part?”

Why it’s beneficial: Encourages deeper understanding and reduces assumptions.

2. Self-Check Anchor Phrase

Steps: Before responding, silently say, “Slow down. Be curious.”

Why it’s beneficial: Regulates your nervous system and supports Step 2.

3. Strength Spotting

Steps: Reflect back strengths you hear (“You really care about your friend”).

Why it’s beneficial: Builds trust and supports Step 3: Seek Understanding.

4. Co-Creating Next Steps

Steps: Ask, “What do you think would help right now?”

Why it’s beneficial: Supports agency and aligns with Step 5: Discern Best Action.



6–8 Strategies

1. Notice Body Language

Steps: Pay attention to posture, tone, and energy shifts.

Why it's beneficial: Helps you catch distress early and supports Step 1.

2. Bias Check

Steps: Ask yourself, "What assumptions am I bringing into this moment?"

Why it's beneficial: Reduces judgment and supports Step 2: Self-Check.

3. Empathy Mapping

Steps: Reflect: "What might they be thinking, feeling, needing?"

Why it's beneficial: Deepens connection and supports Step 4.

4. Open-Ended Questioning

Steps: Use questions like "What feels most important right now?"

Why it's beneficial: Helps others identify their own next steps (Step 5).

9–12 Strategies

1. Active Listening Without Fixing

Steps: Listen fully; avoid offering solutions unless asked.

Why it's beneficial: Supports Step 3 and prevents over-functioning.

2. Empathy Through Shared Emotion, Not Shared Experience

Steps: Say, "I haven't been in your exact situation, but I know what overwhelm feels like."

Why it's beneficial: Builds authentic connection and supports Step 4.

3. Permission-Based Support

Steps: Ask, "Would you like ideas, or do you just need to talk it through?"

Why it's beneficial: Honors autonomy and supports Step 5.

4. Stress Release Ritual

Steps: After a heavy conversation, take a walk, stretch, or breathe intentionally.

Why it's beneficial: Prevents emotional residue and supports Step 6: Take Action.

*Refer back to the Compassion Resilience Schools Toolkit
(<https://eliminatestigma.org/compassion-resilience-toolkit/schools/what-is-compassion-resilience/>) to
explore more resources and information*