

Compassion Fatigue's Path



COMPASSION RESILIENCE

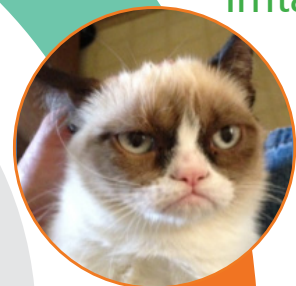
LEAVE PROFESSION

Renewal vs. Pathology

Zealot



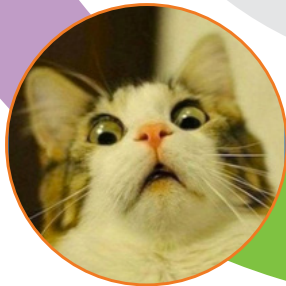
Irritability



Withdrawal



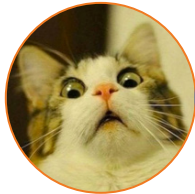
Zombie



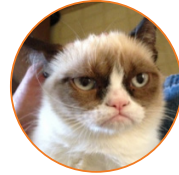
Compassion Fatigue Cycle



Zealot/Idealist — We are committed, involved, and available... Ready to problem solve... Ready to make a difference... We willingly put in extra hours... Our enthusiasm overflows... We volunteer... We are willing to go the extra mile and often do so without prompting... "I'll do that!!"



Zombie — Our hopelessness turns to rage... We begin to hate people... We even hate our coworkers if they dare question us... Others become incompetent or ignorant in our eyes... We work in a silo... We have no time for humor or fun. We may have a sense that we can't ever do enough, an inflated sense of importance related to our work, hyper-vigilance/ sleeplessness, and a sense of persecution.



Irritability — We begin to see the imperfect nature of the systems and people around us... We distance ourselves from students, parents, coworkers and friends... Begin to belittle our colleagues and students/parents... We talk unfairly about their challenges and denigrate their efforts... The use of humor is sometimes strained... We daydream or become distracted when students are speaking with us... Oversights and mistakes begin to occur. We may notice our anger, cynicism, diminished creativity, and sadness.



Withdrawal — We are unable to embrace the complexity of the problems... We lose our ability to see students as individuals rather they become irritants... Complaints may be made about our work and we might have problems in our personal life... We are tired all the time... We no longer wish to talk about work and may not even admit to what we do... We neglect our family, our coworkers, our students and ourselves... Our shield gets thicker and thicker to block our pain and sadness. We may experience difficulty empathizing and feeling to numb to other's pain.



Renewal vs. Pathology — If we have not addressed this cycle earlier, we come to a fork in the road where we either continue deeper into compassion fatigue to a place of pathology and victimization (overwhelmed, leaving the profession, changing positions and repeating the cycle, somatic illness) or we take a turn towards maturation and renewal (hardiness, resiliency, transformation).

The good news is that at any stage in the cycle, one can learn skills and mindsets that change the trajectory towards compassion satisfaction. The goal of this toolkit is for us to learn these mindsets and skills in order to proactively address our ways of being to avoid compassion fatigue and, when it does arise, address it early with confidence and support. It is beneficial to begin by getting a sense of the starting place for ourselves. The ProQOL is a helpful self-assessment that will be shared in this section.