

# Motivation and Maintaining Passion

## Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

Compassion fatigue is very common for those in the 'helping' field, especially with educators and school staff. As individuals who work with children, you experience stress from multiple avenues because you are forced to wear many hats. Navigating different administrations, frustration brought on by coworkers, students' issues, lack of school funding and other factors may bring frustration.

As teachers and school staff, your compassion is vital when interacting with students, but it is not a bottomless well. Self care, boundaries and other methods are needed to avoid compassion fatigue and burn-out.

Compassion Fatigue has 4 stages, ranging from over exertion, irritability, withdrawal, and the final "zombie" stage. Guilt, loss of energy and disengagement in your work are symptoms of compassion fatigue. ([From Compassion Fatigue to Resilience](#)).

Burnout is more severe, with symptoms such as withdrawal, endless tiredness, a feeling of emptiness and significant resentment for your work, or career environment.

Experiencing compassion fatigue and/or burnout does not signify that you are a bad person, horrible teacher, or no longer have the ability to be compassionate. It just means the tough reality and demands of your job may be interfering with your ability to stay motivated and maintain your passion in your field of work. You may need to set healthy boundaries, take some time off, or join a support group to start recuperating. It is also helpful to take preventative measures to keep yourself grounded. Either way, compassion fatigue and burnout are common, but they are not reflective of your ability to be an educator, and there is help. ([Teacher Burnout](#))



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## What Can I Do to Stay Motivated and Passionate About My Work?

### **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a hot topic right now and has a significant amount of research to support its benefits. Mindfulness has proven to be one of the most effective ways to relieve and prevent a loss of passion. ([PubMed](#))

There are many articles and resources about the practice of mindfulness and it encourages you to find ways to be present and in the moment. Mindfulness helps you let go of the past and not fret about the future. Meditation, yoga, and adult colouring are some of the most popular mindfulness methods, but don't be afraid to tailor your mindfulness activities. If you are more adventurous, try hiking or spending time in nature. If you feel short on time, try creating a mindfulness routine. Embrace exploring different aspects of mindfulness and focus on being present to all the feelings and sensations that come up during those moments of practice. There's no wrong way to connect to the present moment.

### **Knowledge**

Teaching and lifelong learning are symbiotic. Explore training and learning opportunities relating to your career as it will keep you engaged and excited about the work you are doing. Explore new research, resources and techniques in order to grow your own knowledge surrounding education.

### **Find Inspiration**

It can be disheartening to hear stories of your students struggling through the burdens of their personal lives. Consider reading inspirational stories to witness someone's incredible journey. This activity will remind you of the value and importance of your work.



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## **Set Boundaries and Limitations**

Setting boundaries and limitations may seem counterintuitive, but evaluating a manageable scope of your profession can help prevent you from feeling like you need to fix everything. You cannot fix everything, nobody has that ability, and that is okay. You are in this profession to make a difference, but you cannot be expected to solve every problem that you encounter. We all have limitations. Remind yourself that you are giving students the opportunity to learn to empower themselves and these efforts will positively affect them for the rest of their lives. It is important to set boundaries and clear limitations in regard to your workload and personal life.

## **Build a Support Network**

There is a good chance that your co-workers and colleagues will understand your challenges and concerns in relation to work. It is imperative to support one another and talk about frustrations, but also celebrate during times of success. Set up a lunch, special dinner or even just an hour to take a peaceful walk.

## **Support Resources**

[Happy Teacher Revolution](#) is just one example of an online networking group offering training, support groups and online resources to promote mental health in educators. There are numerous mindful apps available, such as [Calm](#), and podcasts just for educators. [HMH Learning Moments](#) is a podcast focused on sharing inspirational stories and ideas to stay motivated and passionate.

## **Mix Up The Mundane**

Bring newly found passion into the classroom by introducing fun and interactive activities. Your personal learning also happens with students while laughing and having the occasional experimental day. Trying new things can help make school less predictable for the students and yourself.



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## When Should I Seek Additional Help, or Possibly Take a Leave from Work?

Finding the energy to reach out can feel impossible, but burnout and withdrawal from close friends and family can be debilitating causing fatigue. These warning signs need to be addressed quickly to avoid you feeling debilitated. Thoughts of suicide to oneself/others, or an increase in substance use requires immediate intervention. The effects of experiencing fatigue and burnout can be extremely disruptive to your life and seeking professional help is recommended. There are times where you may feel defeated from taking time off work, but you are the most important person in your life. You can only be there for others when you take care of yourself first.

Try to remember why you initially pursued your profession in the first place because it is easy to lose sight of the rewards that come with it.

## Other sources used for this resource:

[Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Teachers](#)

[5 Ways Educators can Grow and Sustain Passion for Teaching](#)

[6 Ways for Educators to Avoid Compassion Fatigue](#)

[Keeping Your Passion for Teaching Alive](#)

[Do You Have Compassion Fatigue? A Teacher's Guide](#)

[Canada Suicide Prevention Services](#)

Phone: 833-456-4566

