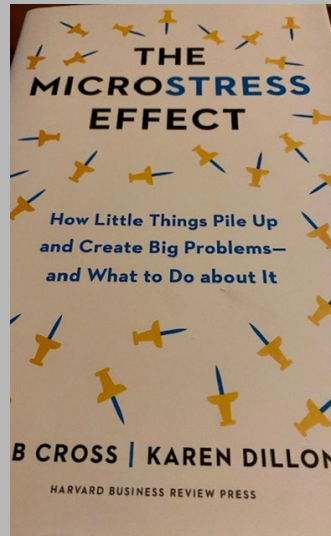


# From Microstress to Mindfulness

Presented by: Paula Freeman, Ph.D.



# Objectives

- Explore our own micro-stress.
- Discuss supportive practices to overcome micro-stress.
- Strategies to limit micro-stress in our classrooms.







# The Micro-stress Effect (Cross & Dillon, 2023)

“A micro-stress is a tiny moment of stress triggered by life circumstances, or behavior of people in our personal and/or professional lives; stresses so routine that we barely register them, but the cumulative toll is debilitating.”



## Micro - stress

- The colleague who is unresponsive or “quiet quitting”
- An itchy rash
- Last moment science projects
- A sibling with a tone in his/her voice
- Arguments about little daily events (towels folded incorrectly, toothpaste cap)

## Major stress

- An unpredictable boss who has disrespectful mood swings
- Being diagnosed with an incurable disease
- Needing to make big decisions for an aging parent
- Divorce or grief
- Being terminated or housing/food insecure

Why is this important?



# A Hidden Epidemic

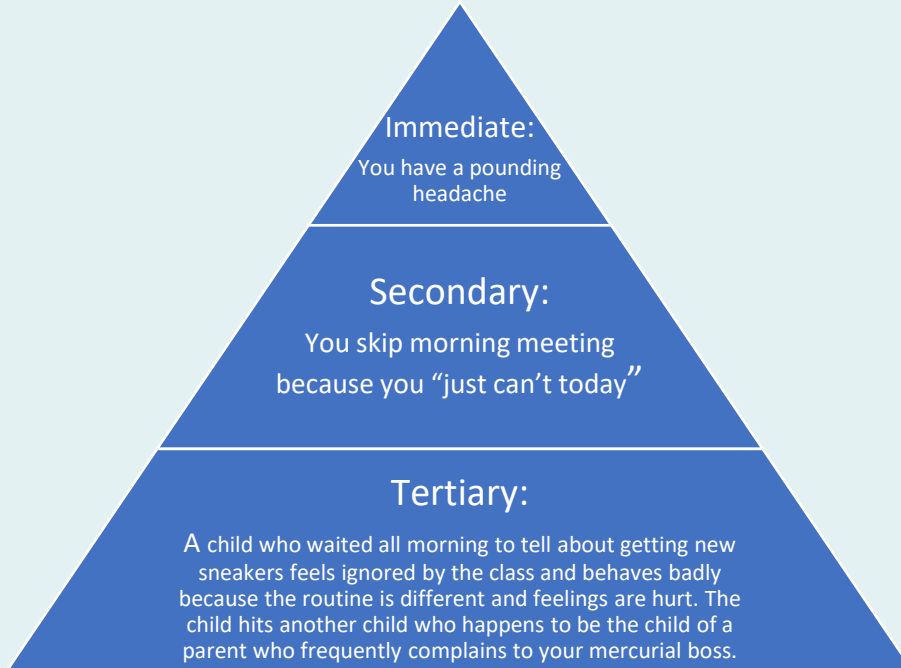
“Our brains do not distinguish between different sources of stress. If our bodies are already depleted by life circumstances like physical illness, financial hardship, hormone surges, not sleeping or exercising enough, our brains become highly vulnerable and cannot metabolize additional stress. We burn out and break down.”





# The Boomerang Effect

There are three levels of micro-stress and the final level creates a micro-stress boomerang.







# Obesity:

- If you are exposed to micro-stress within two hours before you eat, your body metabolizes food in a way that adds 104 calories to what you consumed. If this happens daily, we gain 11 pounds per year.

So just eat healthy (they say)...

- If you eat healthy foods in one day of micro-stress overload, your body metabolizes healthy fats (like in nuts or olives) as if they were filled with bad fats.



What can we do  
about it?





# The three things that help

- Identify, sort, and then push back on one micro-stress under which you have some amount of control.
- Schedule time to do what you love and find social groups who share your interests
- Recognize when we create micro-stresses for others. These stresses boomerang back on us.



# “Name It To Tame It” – Dr. Daniel J. Siegel

Use the sticky notes at your table to write one micro-stressor per note. Pile them up. Let them roll. Name them to tame them!



# Sorting Micro-stress

Pile 1:

**Things over which I have  
some control:**

Social media intake

Accepting too many invites

Eating habits

Sleep

Pile 2:

**Things over which I have NO  
control:**

Other people's bad behavior

Building temperature

Number of bathrooms

Delayed flight



# Sorting Micro-stresses

| Common Micro-stresses<br>by Category | Capacity Draining       | Emotion-Depleting       | Identity Challenging    |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|                                      | Misaligned priorities   | Disrespect              | Personal value conflict |
|                                      | Unclear roles           | Confrontation           | Undermined confidence   |
|                                      | Unreliable colleagues   | Lack of trust           | Family changes          |
|                                      | Unpredictable authority | Other people's problems | Professional changes    |
|                                      | Poor communication      | Political maneuvering   | Aging                   |
|                                      | Unhealthy habits        | Disingenuous behavior   | Poor health             |



Identify what you love to do, and connect with others who share your joy...



What do you love to do?

# Pool Noodle Drumming: Brain Friendly Community Builder

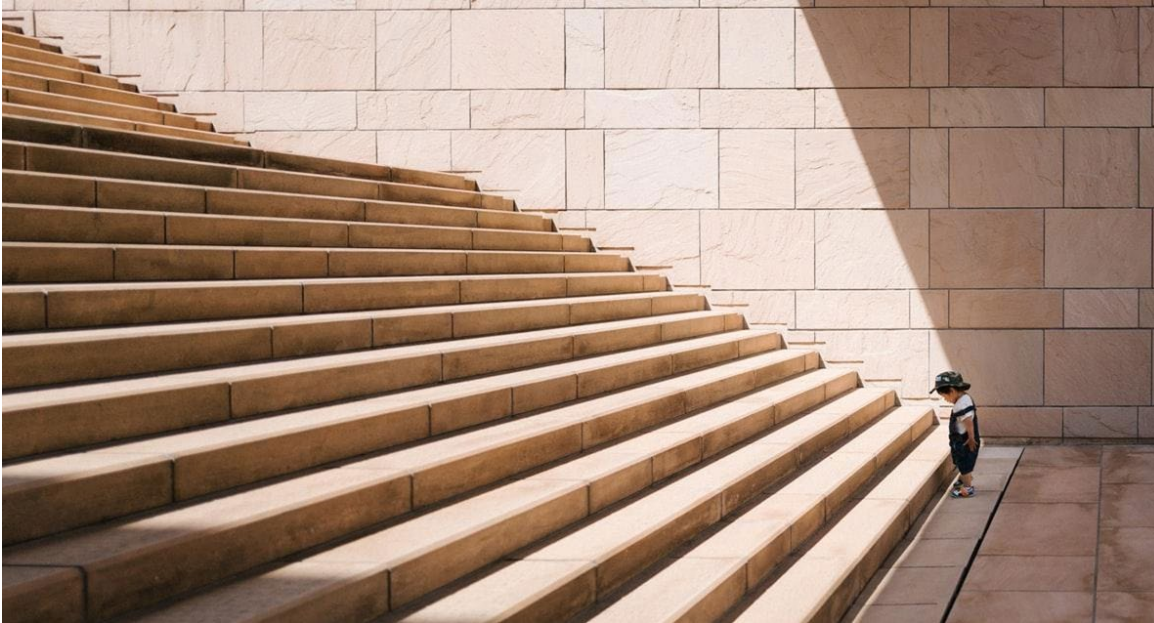




# Some ideas:

- Ground yourself: activate your parasympathetic nervous system (mindfulness walk, deep breathing, spiritual practice)
- Build structure and stick to it
- Make time for breaks (brain breaks, breathing breaks, quiet breaks)
- Be empathetic, not a “fixer” (remember who owns the problem)
- Do something social and not school related each week
- Schedule and create space for students to clean up, organize, breathe, be quiet, focus, and show them how
- Avoid gossip: “Speak about ideas not people.”
- Connection before content

Go Granular: Make one **small** change



What are you taking  
away from this  
session?



# PLAY ALONG DRUM CIRCLE

## INTERACTIVE!



with Giving Tree Music