

Debriefing Participant Handout

1. Introduction
 - a. We are meeting to identify how to prevent a future occurrence.
 - b. We want to provide emotional support after this difficult incident.

2. Expectations
 - a. This is a “no-fault review.” It is meant to be a learning discussion.
 - b. The meeting is confidential, but important lessons will be disseminated to the wider team.
 - c. It’s helpful if you can share details about the situation, but sharing your feelings and thoughts are voluntary.
 - d. We have also have a number of steps to work through, so while we want people to share, we might also have to limit discussion to work through all the items in the time we have. However, please let us know if you have further things to talk about if we don’t get time to cover it today.

3. Review the incident
 - a. What went well?
 - b. What could have been better? (This about what we as a team, not a specific individual)

4. How is everyone feeling?
 - a. What were your thoughts during the incident?
 - b. What were you feeling?
 - c. What physical or emotional effects are still happening?
 - d. What are you doing to help yourself?
 - e. Does everyone feel like they’ve been heard today? Is there anything that needs to be revisited?

5. Post-meeting email
 - a. You’ll get an email summarizing any actions steps and who is going to take them.
 - b. The email will also provide additional support ideas
 - c. Please reach out to someone if these discussions haven’t covered everything you want to talk about or if you are experiencing any after-effects.

Debriefing Severe Incidents - Facilitator

Why Debrief?

- Identify steps to prevent a future incident
- Emotional support and co-regulation

General Tips

Open question to start, for example, 'What were you thinking?'

- Listen-giving your time and attention can be helpful.
- Validate their feelings.
- Be a compassionate colleague-do not judge, let staff know it is okay to be not okay.
- Offer comfort.
- You are giving protected time to stop, breathe, think and take stock.

Active listening

- Help the staff to verbalise the issues.
- Show you are listening by giving eye contact, nods of the head, open body language, sitting at the same level.
- Allow silence-this is part of showing you are listening and not just waiting for your turn to talk.

Empathise and reflect

- Reflect back what you think you have heard.
- Always try to be tentative just in case you have not understood correctly.

Self-disclosure and sharing

- People can sometimes gain comfort when they hear if others have had a similar experience, but try to avoid saying, 'I know how you feel'.

Encourage discussion

- Explore experiences and encourage questions.

Strong feelings

- Try not to close down strong feelings and emotions.
- Avoid premature reassurance-instead of saying, 'Don't worry, you weren't to blame' instead try, 'What makes you think you are to blame?'.

Safety

- Keep the meeting safe, confidential and with clear boundaries.
- Challenge a colleague if they are being disrespectful, critical or blaming.

Ending

- Keep to time, allow final questions, summarise and praise.

Steps for Debriefing

- 1. Decide if there is a need for debriefing and who should be participate.**

- a. Invite everyone who could potentially be affected. It is better to be over-inclusive
- b. For example:
As most of you are aware, there was a severe incident yesterday with _____. We would very much like to set aside some time to meet as a team to debrief the incident, consider next steps, and offer support. We'd like to meet right after school (3:30-4:30). You are all invited, but not required, to attend. If EAs choose to attend they will be compensated for their time. If you have any questions or need to talk before we meet, please reach out.

2. Decide who should organize and lead the debriefing.

- a. The organizer and person leading the process could be different.
- b. You might decide to have admin/IELT lead the part dealing with reviewing the process and someone else (like the student & family advocate) lead the emotional support portion.

3. Before deciding to lead the debrief, ask yourself

- a. Was the incident particularly severe? Ask for help!
- b. How involved were you in the incident? Did you have an emotional reaction to this incident? What is your body telling you?
- c. Are you dealing with any other large emotional issue?
- d. Do you have an uncomfortable relationship with the staff member? Is the power differential a problem for you and key participants?
- e. Does it trigger feelings/memories of your own previous experiences?

4. Arrange a time when most people can meet.

- a. Debriefing should be scheduled as soon as possible. Definitely within 72 hours.
- b. Try to find a time when the most affected people can attend.
- c. Schedule individual conversations, if some people express an interest, but are not able to attend.
- d. Offer to pay for people's time if it is outside the regular work day.
- e. After school is often the best time.
- f. Chronic/repetitive situations might require seeking permission for the student to move to a shortened day to allow for regular debriefing times.
- g. Choose a location where you are unlikely to have interruptions.

5. Meet

a. Introduce the process

"We are meeting to go over the incident that happened so that we can try to prevent it from happening again. We also know today was quite stressful and we want to support you."

"I'm sorry that you had to experience this event."

“This process is about cohesion and the ability to return to normal work. We find that when people talk about things, it often puts the experience in perspective and helps them to learn something that is useful in future circumstances.”

“What we are doing today is “guided conversation”. It is not psychotherapy nor is it a substitute for psychotherapy.”

b. Set boundaries and expectations

“This meant to be a ‘no-fault’ review. We aren’t looking to blame, just learn and understand what we can all do to prevent future incidents.”

“The meeting is confidential, but important lessons will be disseminated to the wider team.”

“This will take about an hour and we’d like you all to stay until the end.”

“It’s helpful if you can share details about the situation, but sharing your feelings and thoughts are voluntary.”

“We have also have a number of steps to work through, so while we want people to share, we might also have to limit discussion to work through all the items in the time we have. However, please let us know if you have further things to talk about if we don’t get time to cover it today.”

- If someone does leave determine if it is a timing issue (like picking up kids) or emotionally triggered and requiring follow-up.
- Try to finish sooner than the length of time you’ve said for the meeting.

c. Review the incident

“First I’d like to go over what happened. Who would like to give me a description of the incident.”

“Does anyone have anything else to add?”

d. Explore how things progressed

“What went well?” “What could have been better?” “This about what us as a team, not a specific individual”

“In hindsight, could anything have been done differently?”

“Was there part of the plan missing? That wasn’t clear or understood? That couldn’t be followed?”

“Is there something with training, equipment, or people that could reduce the likelihood of this happening again?”

- Not all questions suggested above need to be asked if they are answered as part of the discussion.
- If required, make sure you have enough information to complete 5-18-B Debriefing on the use of Restraint/Seclusion form.

e. Wrap up the review portion of the discussion

“Does anyone have anything else to add?”

“If you think of anything later, please let me know”

- Review what changes or actions have been decided and who will be responsible for implementing these steps.
- Summarize this portion of the meeting with an email to everyone.

f. Emotional support

- The purpose is to help people understand, validate, reflect, and manage the effects of their stress response. Resilience can be developed through debriefing that allows “conversation and connection.” It is both a cognitive and affective process. While it is helpful for people to see the situation from different perspectives, the facilitator needs to acknowledge and not argue against anyone’s feelings.

i. Emotional support - Thoughts

- “What were your first thoughts when things began to escalate?”
- “What other thoughts did you have as the event continued?”
- “What was the worst part for you?”
- “Did anyone have a different thought?”

ii. Emotional support - Feelings/Reactions

- “What were you feeling during the incident?”
- “What or where were you feeling it in your body?”
- “Did anyone have a different thought?”

iii. Emotional support - Lingering effects

- “What thoughts, feelings are still lingering with you after the event?”
- “How is your body feeling as we talk about it?”

iv. Emotional support - Moral Injury

- “Did anything about this incident violate or compromise your values or professional responsibilities?”
- “What is important to you that you still have control over?”

v. Emotional support - Action Planning

- “What are helpful things you can do tonight to help manage the remaining feelings or thoughts?”
- “How are you going to shift from ‘work mode’ so you can go back to your family tonight?”
- “What relationships can you use to help you as you go forward?”
- “Are there actions you need to take as a professional to address any issues from this incident?” (Skip this question unless moral issues have been identified)

vi. Wrapping up

- “Does everyone feel like they’ve been heard today? Is there anything that needs to be revisited?”

“I’m going to send you some resources in an email. One of them is a list that identifies particularly concerning issues. If you find yourself experiencing these please seek further support. Another is this list of helpful activities.”

“Please get a hold of me if you would like to talk more or if you want share anything about our discussion today.”

vii. Wrapping up - optional Grounding Activity

“Before we go today, take a minute to breathe slowly. Notice three things you see in the room, Æ now notice two things you can physically feel, Æ now notice something you can hear. This is called ‘grounding’ and can be used to bring our thinking back from dwelling on something to focus on the here and now. You can do the same thing at home by paying attention to your breathing, chewing strongly flavoured gum, or taking a cold shower.”

“Thanks for participating today.”

6. Post-Debriefing Email to Attendees

Thank-you for taking part in the discussion today. As a result of the meeting we identified _____ that needs to happen. _____ said they would be responsible and do this by _____.

Thank you also for sharing your thoughts and feelings. If you would like to talk further, please contact myself or one of the team.

I’ve attached a copy of two handouts. One that list positive activities to cope with stress and the other identifies potential outcomes of stressful events. If you find yourself experiencing these symptoms, you can seek help through Inkblot, the free confidential support services provided through Pembina Hills. Your benefits also provide coverage for psychological services.

7. Take care of yourself as the facilitator of the debriefing

- Be conscious of vicarious and cumulative stress in yourself.
- Take the advice and make use of the resources for yourself.
- Reach out to one of us to talk.