

# Debriefing After Difficult Events

A Tool for the UCSF Department of Anesthesia

## Foundation: Setting the Scene

Creating a Safe  
Space & Setting  
Goal of Debrief

- Introduce the debrief, acknowledge emotions, set ground rules, articulate basic assumptions

Acknowledging  
Other  
Participants

- Introduce individuals with name, pronouns, role, where in the event the person was present

Exploring  
Feelings

- Solicit initial reactions, thoughts, and emotions while avoiding rehashing medical details

## Feelings: Reactions

Exploring  
Meaning

- Discuss what was meaningful and impactful in the case for each person

## Future: Self-Care & Take- Aways

Identifying Take-  
Aways

- Discuss what individuals would do differently in the domains of communication, decision-making, teamwork, or personal reactions

Promoting Self-  
Care

- Solicit how team can support one another, take care of themselves, and find further resources if needed

If you feel you need additional support after this debrief, consider reaching out to Caring for the Caregiver, a peer support program (click or scan)



Please see reverse side for  
facilitator guide with  
suggested prompts

# Debriefing After Difficult Events

A Tool for the UCSF Department of Anesthesia

## Creating a Safe Space & Setting Goal of Debrief

- "Let's spend X minutes debriefing, with the understanding that discussing difficult situations can improve how we work together for patient care and how we cope"
- "Everyone here is intelligent and wants to improve"

## Acknowledging Other Participants

- "Let's circle up and introduce ourselves, and in a few words tell us how you were involved in this case and one word to describe how you are feeling now"

## Exploring Feelings

- "In what ways was this situation difficult?"
- "What emotions has this event brought up for you?"
- "What were you thinking at the time?"

## Exploring Meaning

- "What was personally meaningful to you about this event?"
- "Looking back, what did you learn about how you react in events like this?"

## Identifying Take-Aways

- "That was a great discussion, what are some take-away points from this discussion that you could bring with you to your clinical practice?"

## Promoting Self-Care

- "Thank you all for sharing. Remember that any reactions you had are valid and should be acknowledged"
- "How do you plan to take care of yourself after this?"
- "How can we support each other today?"

Please consider filling out  
our brief feedback survey  
(click or scan)



June 2021. Created by **Steph Gilbert, MD** and **Anthony Little, MD**.  
Adapted from *Bajaj K, Meguerdichian M, Thoma B, et al. The PEARLS Healthcare Debriefing Tool. Acad Med 2018;93(2):336 and Gupta K & Moore K. Leading a team debrief. Presentation for internal medicine residency, March 13, 2020.*