

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

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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)



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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.