



Debriefing Tool

Purpose: To assist leaders to appropriately debrief with staff after an incident has occurred. This is designed for situations that have been reported through the organisation's incident reporting system, and were not subject to an investigation. The key points of the debriefing and agreed actions should be recorded as part of your organisation's incident reporting process. The process should ensure leaders and staff together identify key information, reflect, collaborate to develop preventative actions for the future, and provide feedback to the organisation about systemic changes required.

About this tool: There are two parts to the debriefing tool.

1. **Debriefing Tool Prompts:** This tool includes prompts for staff participants and facilitators of key points from the Debriefing Tool Guide. The prompts are designed to be printed and kept somewhere where they can be easily referred to e.g. in a notebook, laminated and put onto a key ring.
2. **Debriefing Tool Guide:** There are two guides. One for staff who were part of the incident, and one for facilitators. The column for "Debrief Details" is the same in the participants and facilitators guides. **The guide for staff participants** contains specific information for involved staff members to consider in the debriefing process. Staff participating in the debrief should read the prompts beforehand, and some may want to print the guide to be able to refer to through the process. **The guide for the facilitator** contains specific information for the facilitator to consider in the debriefing process. Facilitators should familiarise themselves with the content before a debrief, some may opt to have this guide printed to refer to through the process.

How to use: This tool can be used each time there is an incident. It is best used when both the staff participant/s and facilitator have had time to read through the relevant **Debriefing Tool Guide** and have a shared understanding of the process, their roles, and responsibilities. The tool can be used with multiple participants and/or facilitators. This tool does not replace the role of clinical, grief or trauma debriefings lead by an experienced mental health professional.

Debriefing Tool Prompts

Debriefing Tool Prompts – for Staff Participants

1. Facts

- Provide detailed information
- This is an important part of the debrief, not a critique

2. Reflections

- Why might have contributed to the incident happening
- How did you feel?
- What have we learned?

3. Agreed Actions

- What actions can we take in response?
- Who will do these, and when?

4. Feedback Loop

- Do what is agreed
- Remember confidentiality
- If concerns arise later on, get back in touch again to debrief

Debriefing Tool Prompts – for Facilitators

1. Facts

- Get a clear timeline of events
- Use open questioning e.g. 'what happened next?'
- No corrective suggestions here

2. Reflections

- Discuss together the reasons why this may have happened
- Use cooperative language
- Offer Employee Assistance

3. Agreed Actions

- Agree on what actions can be taken
- Discuss on what feedback can be provided

4. Feedback Loop

- Complete agreed actions
- Provide feedback
- Explain any limits to information

Debriefing Tool Guide—Staff Participants

	Debrief Details	Staff Participant Prompts
1	<p>Facts Find out the details of what happened, who, what, where and when.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you have a clear timeline of events, including when and where things happened • Full details of the incident including who was involved, when, why • Who was informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debriefing begins after you've made sure everyone is safe, and any required reporting has been completed and any investigation has been completed. Debriefing is a learning experience once an issue is resolved • Remember that recalling detail is important—facilitators will need to ask questions, this is part of the process and not about criticising • Provide objective information • Consider the impact on others
2	<p>Reflections An opportunity to explore and reflect on why the incident occurred, and what could be done differently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why might this have happened? • How did you feel? • What have we learnt? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to understand all the reasons why the incident may have happened • Keep an open mind to consider what could have been done differently • Use a continuous improvement approach to explore the reasons why this may have happened • How you felt and are feeling is important, this is a space to talk about it e.g. 'I feel...', 'I think...', 'I wonder'...
3	<p>Agreed Actions Turn the reflections into practical actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic expectations for what can be done, and within what timeframe • Discuss what sort of feedback is possible, what will be provided, by whom, and when 	<p>Thinking about solutions and planning is a collaborative effort, be prepared to brainstorm and contribute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic actions • Ask about what sort of feedback you can expect, and discuss this together
4	<p>Feedback Loop Ensure that all parties keep each other updated on relevant feedback, especially on agreed actions.</p>	<p>Follow up on agreed actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain confidentiality of the incident debrief, especially if you have heard other people discussing their personal responses • Return to facilitator or a trusted person if you need further help, assistance or advice • Remember not everything can be shared in feedback, e.g. staff disciplinary matters

Debriefing Tool Guide—Facilitators

	Debrief Details	Facilitator Prompts
1	<p>Facts Find out the details of what happened, who what where and when.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you have a clear timeline of events • Full details of people involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather all the information needed • Use open ended questions to open the conversation e.g. ‘tell me more about that...’, ‘what happened next...’ • Ask questions to get detail • Take notes, use diagrams to assist if needed • Check in—repeat events back to the person/people involved • Take care to avoid blaming, accusations, or to offer too many corrective suggestions at this stage, there will be a chance to reflect later
2	<p>Reflections An opportunity to explore and reflect on why the incident occurred, and what could be done differently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did this have happen? • How did you feel? • What have we learnt? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen more than you talk in this section, be patient and let the participant/s express how they are feeling • Spend time developing an in-depth understanding of the root cause of why the incident occurred, this may involve asking why a few times • Use cooperative language e.g. ‘how could we learn from this’ vs ‘what could you have done better’ • Mention availability of the Employee Assistance Program if people find they are struggling later on
3	<p>Agreed Actions Turn the reflections into practical actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set realistic expectations for what can be done, and within what timeframe • Discuss what sort of feedback is possible, will be provided, by whom, and when 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be receptive to ideas from others, it is a collaborative process • Ask for more detail about why before saying ‘no’ to an idea • Remember it is OK to not have all the answers now, further reflection and advice can be sought • Consider whether there may be actions relevant to the organisation’s continuous improvement plan
4	<p>Feedback Loop Ensure that all parties keep each other updated on relevant feedback, especially on agreed actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow through on agreed upon actions, or provide feedback to involve parties if there are delays • Remember that feedback builds trust, and is crucial to building safer services • Explain limits of confidentiality—think about what can be shared e.g. how / where the incident has been reported