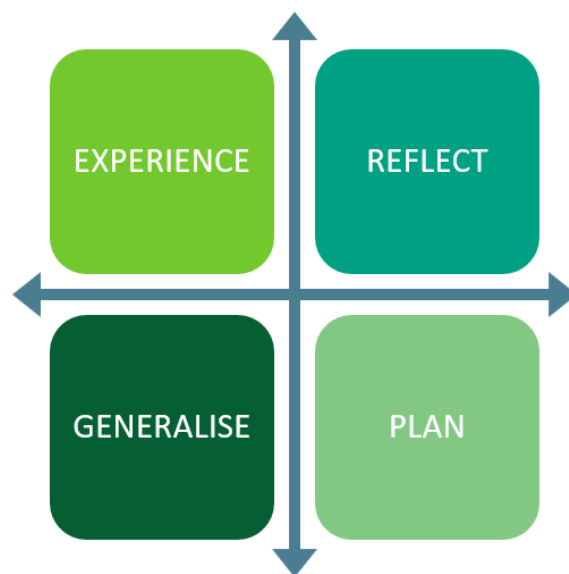


Support for the supporter - Debrief

In the wake of having a tricky conversation, a debrief is especially valuable for those involved, whether they are professionals, caregivers, or a person offering help to the public within their daily interaction. Concerns on how the conversation went can play on our mind but reflecting on the interaction with a trusted support can help ensure the wellbeing of both the person seeking support and the person providing it. The following is based on Kolb's Learning theory and provides a good practice approach to looking after your wellbeing.



Why is Debriefing Important?

Processing Emotions

Conversations about mental health can be emotionally charged and draining. A debrief helps the person providing support to process their own emotions and reduce the risk of overthinking about the situation. It offers a safe space to discuss any emotional impact the conversation may have had.

Identifying Challenges and Successes

It allows the support worker to reflect on what went well in the conversation—whether they were able to effectively listen, empathise, and provide appropriate guidance.

Equally, it helps identify any parts of the conversation that felt challenging, such as struggling with a particular topic or feeling stuck in offering support.

Improving Communication Skills

A debrief gives an opportunity to reflect on how well the conversation was handled. Were open-ended questions used effectively? Was the person's emotional state appropriately acknowledged? Did the conversation remain respectful and compassionate?

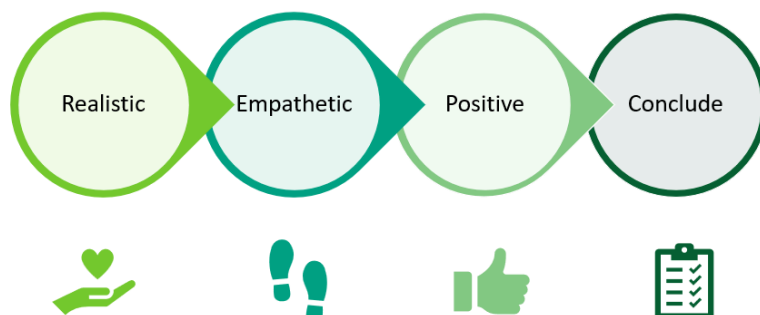
This reflection helps refine communication strategies for future difficult conversations.

Avoiding Emotional Overload

Talking about someone's mental health issues can sometimes stir up difficult feelings, including anxiety, sadness, or helplessness. A debrief can act as a release valve to prevent those feelings from accumulating over time.

Ensuring Support for the Supporter

Mental health professionals and volunteers working in this area also need support. A debrief can help ensure that the person providing the support isn't carrying the weight of the conversation alone and that they have access to help if they feel overwhelmed.



Learning from Experience

Every difficult conversation is unique, and a debrief helps supporters learn from each interaction. Reflecting on what worked and what didn't provides valuable lessons that can improve their approach in future conversations.

Maintaining Boundaries

In tricky mental health discussions, it can be easy for the support worker to become overly invested. A debrief helps them reflect on whether they maintained professional boundaries and avoided overcommitting emotionally.

EXPERIENCE

Ask:

- How are you?
- What was your focus?
- What was your aim?
- What did you expect to happen?

Explore:

- What actually happened?
- What observations or concerns do you have?
- What went to plan? What didn't happen?

GENERALISE

Ask:

- List 3 things you might have assumed.
- How else could you have managed it?
- What did not go well and why?
- What was the critical moment?

Explore:

- What was not addressed?
- What conclusions are you drawing?
- What other, unexpected outcomes did the situation produce?

REFLECT

Ask:

- How do you feel the situation went?
- What past events are relevant to the situation?
- What did the situation remind you of?

Explore:

- Describe your feelings of the problem.
- Has there been any transference?
- What feelings were you left with?

PLAN

Ask:

- What are your next steps supporting the person?
- What are you responsible for and what are you not?
- What is urgent and essential?
- What else could be useful not considered so far?

Explore:

- What training, supervision, mentoring or support options have been raised for you?
- What would be a successful outcome to the next situation from your perspective?

Who do you debrief with? _____



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