

Creative Ways to Facilitate Debrief Conversations with Participants

Reflection is a skill that is developed. Debriefs should build upon each other, as participants become more comfortable with the debrief process, they are more likely to share. Debriefs should start off simple and become more complex and thought provoking as the group develops.

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Simple Strategies to Encourage Sharing

One word whip: A simple way to start a group and get comfortable with talking. Ask for a one-word reaction to the activity – giving an opportunity to pass, or “whip” it to the next individual. Bonus for sound effects.

Fist to five: With their eyes closed or open, students need to hold up a fist or any number of fingers of one hand to identify how they feel about a certain question (e.g. how well did we do on our goal to communicate better?). Ask follow up questions regarding the different opinions.

Postcards, emotion cards: Lay the cards out in the middle of the circle. Ask participants to pick a card that represents how they feel about the activity, the group, their personal role in the group, a strength, area of growth etc.

Concentric Circles: Create an inner and outer circle of participants. Pairs can do a quick silly activity together (finger tag, tie a shoe using one hand of each person, etc) and then answer a question that the facilitator asks about the activity the group is processing. This can be less threatening for participants to speak to one person at a time. At the end you have the option for participants to share something.

Dyads and Triads: Students are sent off in groups of two or three to reflect together on the experience. This can be through predetermined questions, a mapping assignment (see below) or a loose unstructured conversation. Skills list: In dyads or triads students brainstorm a list of skills used in an activity. Then create a sentence of how they might apply one or more skills to a real life situation. Present out to the larger group.

Nature object: Each group member picks a nature object that represents how he or she felt about the experience. Dice/cube/spinner: With the roll the dice questions and potential answers are chosen at random.

Fish bowling: Split group in two. Outer circle observes inner circle’s discussion. Share observations.

Ball of string: toss the ball of string with the tail unraveling from speaker to speaker. Identify patterns.

Personal White Board: Write a phrase about how they are feeling or what they thought about the activity. Gives a quiet moment for participants to put together their thoughts before everyone begins sharing.

Play Clay: Have participants sculpt how they are feeling about the activity, or the role they played, etc. Add a creative aspect to the debrief and may engage those who might be reluctant to share.

Shared Learning Circle: The leader begins by explaining that this circle is a sharing opportunity for group members, and then asks everyone to complete a given statement according to their feelings or thoughts. Examples: One thing I appreciate about myself..., OR about the person to my right...I thought it was neat because I felt.... The feeling today that I would most like to share was....I felt most proud today with....

Mapping as final closing and transfer activity: Participants identify a road map including where they started, what their journey has been like (challenges, obstacles, learning, highlights) and where they are going next (goals, hopes, action steps).

Journaling: Participants can do a “free writing” activity or can answer specific reflection questions.

Processing Questions for Deeper Reflection

In planning your activity, you likely had a goal or learning objective in mind. These debrief questions are grouped by category and can help focus participants and encourage thoughtful reflection surrounding a given topic.

Communicating Effectively

- Can anyone give an example of when you thought you communicated effectively with someone else in the group? (consider verbal and non-verbal communication)
- How did you know that what you communicated was understood? (consider different types of feedback)
- What could the communicator do differently next time to give a clearer message
- What could the message receiver do differently next time to understand the message?
- How many different ways were used to communicate messages?
- Which ways were most effective? Why?
- Did you learn something about communication that will be helpful later? If so, what?

Expressing appropriate feelings

- Can you name a feeling you had at any point in completing the activity? (consider – mad, glad, sad, or scared) Where in your body did you feel it most?
- What personal beliefs were responsible for generating that feeling? (What was the main thought behind the feeling?)
- Did you express that feeling to others? If not, what did you do with the feeling?
- Do you usually express feelings or suppress them?
- How do you imagine others felt toward you at various times during the activity? Were these feelings expressed?
- What types of feelings are easiest to express?...most difficult?
- What feelings were expressed non-verbally in the group?

Deferring Judgment of Others

- Can you think of examples of when you judged others in the group today?...When you didn't judge others?
- What were some advantages to you by not judging others?
- What were some advantages to others by you not judging them?
- Were some behaviors of others easy not to judge and other behaviors difficult?
- Would deferring judgment be of some value in other situations? Explain.

Listening

- Who made suggestions for completing the activity?
- Were all of these suggestions heard? Explain.
- Which suggestions were acted upon? Why were the other suggestions ignored?
- How did it feel to be heard when you made a suggestion?
- What interfered with your ability to listen to others? How can this interference be overcome?
- Did you prevent yourself from listening well? How?

Leading Others

- Who assumed leadership roles during the activity?
- What were the behaviors that you described as showing leadership?
- How did the group respond to these leadership behaviors?
- Who followed the leader even if you weren't sure that the idea would work? Why?
- Did the leadership role shift to other people during the activity? Who thought they were taking the leadership role? How did you do it?
- Did anyone try to lead the group, but felt they were unsuccessful? What were some possible reasons for this? How did it feel to be disregarded?

Following Others

- Who assumed a follower role at times throughout the activity? How did it feel?
- How did it feel to follow different leaders?
- Do you consider yourself a good follower? Was this an important role in the group today?
- How does refusal to follow affect the leadership role?
- What are the traits of a good follower?
- How can you improve your ability to follow in the future?

Making Group Decisions

- How were group decisions made in completing the activity?
- Were you satisfied with the ways decisions were made? Explain.
- Did the group arrive at any decisions through group consensus? (some didn't get their first choice, but they could "live" with the decision)
- Did everyone in the group express an opinion when a choice was available? Why/why not?
- What is the best way for this group to make decisions? Explain.
- Do you respond in similar ways in other groups?
- What did you like about how the group made decisions? What didn't you like?

Cooperating

- Can you think of specific examples of when the group cooperated in completing the activity?
- How did it feel to cooperate?
- Do you cooperate in most things you do?
- What are the rewards of cooperating?
- How did cooperative behavior lead to successfully completing the activity?
- How can you cooperate in other areas of your life?
- Did you think anyone was blocking the group from cooperating? Explain.

Respecting Human Differences

- How are you different from some of the others in the group?
- How do these differences strengthen the group as a whole?
- When do differences in people in a group prevent reaching certain objectives?
- What would this group be like if there were very few differences in people? How would you feel if this were so?
- In what instances did being different help and hinder the group members from reaching their objectives?

Respecting Human Commonalities

- How are you like some of the others in the group?
- Were these commonalities a help to the group in completing their task? Explain.
- Were these commonalities a hindrance to the group in completing their task? Explain.
- Do you think you have other things in common with some of the group members that you haven't found yet?

Trusting the Group

- Can you give examples of when you trusted someone in the group? Explain.
- Is it easier to trust some people and not others? Explain.
- Can you think of examples when trusting someone could not have been a good idea?
- How do you increase your level of trust for someone?
- On a scale of 1-10, rate how much trust you have in the group as a whole. Can you explain your rating?
- What did you do today that deserves the trust of others?
- How does the amount of fear you feel affect your trust of others?

Closure Questions

- What did you learn about others?
- How do you feel about yourself and others?
- What new questions do you have about yourself and others?
- What did you do today of which you are particularly proud?
- What skill are you working to improve?
- How can you use what you learned in other life situations?
- Would you do anything differently if you were starting the activity again with this group?
- What would you like to say to the group members?