



■ How to Conduct a Debriefing Session

Role of the Facilitator

- The facilitator should listen to what is being said, while encouraging all parties to articulate their ideas.
- The facilitator should try and communicate openly with all participants.
- The facilitator should create a safe environment for all and should have experience in group processes.
- The facilitator should also ensure that the session ends with a sense that something has been achieved.

Step by Step

- 1. How do you feel:** this initial phase should help participants express their feelings in relation to the training they just the training that just took place. The facilitator should make sure the environment is safe and encourage the participants while listening actively in a nonjudgmental fashion.
- 2. What just happened:** This phase should describe what has happened during the training, who was involved, what needs were met. Begin this phase with a broad question about the feelings of participants and also asks the participants to recall important events from the training activity. If it helps the facilitator could create a chronological list of the events that took place and ask questions about specific events.

Questions to help the facilitator could include:

Would someone please describe what took place at the training? Would each person use one adjective to describe the training we just completed? What were the most relevant pieces of information you noticed? Did any of these things surprise you?

- 3. What does this mean:** This phase will allow the participants to identify what they think, feel about or learned from the experience. The facilitator and the participants should examine and interpret the implications of what happened.





- Techniques for this section may include:
 - "The whip" where you ask each person in the group to complete a sentence such as, "I'm glad that I...", or "When we were (doing something) I felt...";
 - "Partner dialogue" where you ask participants to discuss a question and have one of the partners summarize their discussion for the group afterwards;
 - "Fish bowl" where half the group sits inside a circle and discusses the project surrounded by the other half of the group who observes and summarizes the inside group's discussion.
- 4. **What next:** The facilitator and the participants should determine what should be done differently from now on considering what has just been learned. The facilitator should encourage the participants to apply their insights to new contexts and use alternative scenarios to speculate on how people's behaviors would change in them. Begin this phase with a changed scenario and ask the participants to speculate on how it would have affected the process and the outcomes of the activity. Then invite the participants to offer their own scenarios and discuss them.

Practical Tips

- In advance, set up the participants' expectations for the course. This should be a good start for an effective debriefing session.
- Be impartial and focus on what went well and what did not work as well.
- Make sure that all participants are involved.
- Use effective, open-ended questions to help participants express what they have learned from the experience.
- From time to time the facilitator should summarize the general sentiment or the main point(s) in order to clarify an issue or before moving on to another question.
- A good debriefing session should be about what has been learned as well as what should happen next.
- The debriefing should last as long as people have important things to say.



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