

## Acquiring knowledge and building confidence through... *Debriefing*

While the participation of learners in a simulation is very worthwhile, the real learning value is in the 'de-brief' that occurs afterward. Typically, those who participate in a simulation without being allowed to talk about their experience will do their own version of a 'debrief' by asking themselves, "Did I make a fool of myself?" "Was it a good performance?" "Did I pull that off?" Arguably, that's pretty much where the learner leaves it. They also tend to judge their performance against their understanding of what is correct or incorrect practice. Which may be different from best practice?

We can use this debrief tool to help our learners get greater value from the experience. ***Here's how!***

### The 3D Debriefing Model

The primary goal of feedback is for the giver of feedback to help the receiver of feedback attend to their experience in a systematic way.

Learners who engage in learning activities (and also assessments for that matter) do not gain much from the experience unless ***specific*** feedback is provided about their experience.

Learners need to revisit their performance in a supportive and guided way to know what they did well, what they did incorrectly and what they can improve.

Specific feedback achieves the following:

- a) Helps make clear to all what the right performance looks like.
- b) Supports self-reflection of learning.
- c) Delivers timely, individualised information to learners about their learning progress.
- d) Encourages an open dialogue about the learning that was experienced by all.
- e) Encourages positive beliefs and self-esteem.
- f) Provides insights about own skill or knowledge gaps.
- g) Provides information to facilitators to help guide them as to what to teach next or what content needs to be revisited.

The 3D model provides an inherent process that achieves these outcomes as well as the learning outcomes of the workshop or training. However, this can only be achieved by creating an environment where learners know it is safe to make mistakes and where they can honestly talk about them. Judgements of poor, bad or failure do not belong in learning and equally not in the de-briefing process.

The stages of the 3D model include the following:

- Pre-briefing**
- 1. Defusing**
- 2. Discovering**
- 3. Deepening**
- Summary**

## Pre-briefing (instructions for the sim)

In this stage, the facilitator makes explicit the aim/goal of the simulation activity. This includes what learners are to do during the simulation. Who is playing a role and who isn't. When to end the simulation – when the goal is achieved. The role the facilitator will have during the simulation (to guide the progression of the simulation or play the role of the consumer or both). What will those not directly involved in the simulation be doing?

The 3D debrief begins immediately after the simulation is finished and starts with the first 'D' Defusing.

## 1. Defusing

The goals of defusing are to:

1. Discharge/vent emotions.
2. Recap what happened.

Defusing has two purposes. The first is to allow time to discharge the emotional tension that the simulation is likely to have created. Moments of excitement as well as apprehension, doubt and uncertainty are signposts for what went well and what didn't during the simulation.

You will find that learners will naturally want to share their feelings and talk about what happened. They will talk about the positives first as they are usually excited by the experience. They are also likely to mention what didn't go well by sharing when they hesitated or went blank and didn't know what to say or do.

Players may not be ready to learn from the experience until they have let go of any strong feelings. Most people can't think objectively on their experience while they're still in an aroused state.

The second goal is for the players to recap what happened and share their perceptions of what happened with each other (which they may have agreement or disagreement about). These moments provide important clues for where the facilitator should focus discussions during the 'discover' phase.

It's important that the facilitator guides the players away from analysing the experience prematurely.

To help this the facilitator might say:

"Thank you for bringing that up. Let's hold that observation to give all players a chance to share their experience of that moment."

**The key aim of this phase is to:**

**Discharge  
and Recap**



to settle big feelings and identify moments to examine and learn from

## 2. Discovering

The goals of the discovering phase are to:

1. Analyse and evaluate what happened with what should have happened, using self-reflection and the group process.
2. Correct misinterpretations and facilitate re-learning.

To achieve these goals the facilitator will need to gently focus players' attention on strong feeling states identified during DEFUSING, where the players felt excited (to highlight 'correct' actions) but also where they hesitated or experienced doubt (to highlight 'missteps' or knowledge gaps).

It is critical through this phase that the players are asked to describe their thinking/reasoning behind decisions/actions.

Asking questions such as, "I observed that you asked the consumer to talk about their childhood trauma. Can you tell me what you were thinking when you asked that?" If the facilitator assumes a stance of curiosity, not criticism, then the players are likely to feel safe to disclose their reasoning. The facilitator can also share the right thinking or accepted standard of practice or ask the observers what they think it is. When all learners are afforded the opportunity to compare their thinking to 'correct' thinking they are using self-reflection for learning. Making comparisons helps learners adjust/modify their mental models.

Sometimes the players may be unaware of the missteps they made during the simulation if they believe they were doing the approach correctly. This is when the facilitator must step in. Where there are obvious gaps in understanding, the facilitator will need to re-teach those aspects.

### The key aim of this phase is to:

**Elicit**  learner's thinking behind actions

**Make explicit**  right thinking to support comparisons

## 4. Deepening

Deepening occurs through a discussion about how the players would do the scenario simulation differently or better now that they have corrected any misunderstandings/ misinterpretations.

This should be followed by letting the players test out their newly acquired understanding by redoing the simulation. For the learner, they get to see if the revised thinking fits and makes sense to them. If it doesn't then it is an opportunity for them to question their understanding of the target model anew and may give rise to further reflection on their actions during the first attempt.

Without immediate experimentation, the learner will have to attempt to retain the new information until his/her next opportunity to apply it in a real work situation. In most cases, this delay will cause the information to be lost and the learner may revert to their old way of thinking or doing.

If running through a second attempt at the scenario isn't possible then the facilitator can achieve 'deepening' through discussion by prompting learners to connect what they just learned to the workplace. A simple strategy is to ask learners how they can use the new strategy or information in real work situations. By talking about how they would apply the new strategy they are in fact rehearsing for future use.

### The aim of this phase is to:

**Deepen**  by re-practicing and considering modifications for different work contexts or consumer needs

## Summary (how to end the debrief)

At the close of the debrief, facilitators should provide a summary of the lessons learned from the entire activity. This should be a summarised review of what was learned through the process of debriefing the simulation, including the solutions or target mental models that were revealed. In this way, the players and other learners leave feeling they know the 'correct' approach and they have seen that it is practical and useful.

(Reference source: Zigmont, JJ, Kappus, LI and Sudikoff, S.N. (2011) *Seminars in Perinatology. The 3D Model of Debriefing: Defusing, Discovering and Deepening*, ELSEVIER, doi: 10.1053/j.semperi.2011.01.003)