

Debriefing critical incidents

Instructions

- Read the scenario out loud and use the guiding questions and key discussion points to have a conversation about how you can support each other following an incident.
- If possible, hold this safety huddle in a location where you may debrief an incident, such as a break room, board room, or another spot where participants will have privacy to share their feelings.

After this huddle

Staff will be able to:

- Identify safe spaces and people with which to discuss incidents at work.
- Discuss critical incidents with dignity and respect for all involved.
- List available resources to support staff through difficult times.



Guiding questions

If you were in this situation:

- What would you need to feel safe and supported in the conversation?
- What could your managers do to help you feel supported physically, mentally, and emotionally at work?
- What would you do to practice self-care while still providing others with the best care you can?

Notes to the huddle leader

- During these conversations, use active listening skills to hear anything employees are willing to discuss without interrupting or offering solutions right away. Explore with curiosity and hold your judgments.
- These debriefs help develop trust and for staff to feel supported. They are not a replacement for professional mental health services. If your mental health, or that of your staff, are impacting work or personal life, they should be encouraged to find professional support from their employee assistance program, a mental health professional, or spiritual leader, if applicable.
- Do you have an employee assistance program? If you do, are employees aware of it and how to access their program? These assistance programs are helpful for providing employees with support when it is most needed, especially after critical incidents.
- Following this huddle or a critical incident, employees may need one-on-one conversations to be supported. Make sure to remind employees to ask for these as needed. Managers should check-in with staff individually to see how they are doing.
- If you do not feel you have the training needed to debrief a critical incident, you can contact the Mobile Response Team for short-term psychosocial support.

Additional support

Creating a safe space for heavy conversations with employees is crucial for fostering open communication and support. Here are five steps, along with questions a leader can incorporate into their approach:

SET THE TONE OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

- Clearly communicate what is shared in these conversations will be kept confidential. Emphasize the importance of trust and reassure employees their concerns won't be shared without permission.
- **Question for leaders:** "Can you share how we can ensure that our discussions here remain confidential, and trust is maintained?"

EXPRESS CURIOSITY:

- Come from a place of curiosity rather than judgment.
- **Question for leaders:** "What does a safe space look like or mean to you?"

NORMALIZE VULNERABILITY:

- Acknowledge that being vulnerable can be difficult, but it is an essential part of building a supportive environment. Encourage employees to express their thoughts and feelings openly.
- **Question for leaders:** "In what ways can we make it easier for everyone to share their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment?"



ENCOURAGE ACTIVE LISTENING:

- Stress the importance of active listening. Encourage employees to listen to each other without interrupting and to ask clarifying questions to ensure a full understanding.
- **Question for leaders:** “How can we cultivate a culture of active listening, where everyone feels heard and understood?”

PROVIDE RESOURCES AND FOLLOW UP:

- Offer resources or support services available within the organization. Follow up with employees after the conversation to check in on their well-being and see if additional support is needed.
- **Question for leaders:** “Are there specific resources or supports you feel would be beneficial for you or our team after our discussion?”



Additional resources

Care for Caregivers | *Care to Speak*

SafeCare BC | *The Working Mind for Employees*
[workshop]

Initial

Notes
