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FACT SHEET

How to hot debrief

Something significant has happened in your department and you think the team (and you) would benefit from getting together and talking or debriefing. Significant events can be exceptionally positive, challenging, or confronting.

What?

A hot debrief is a five- to 15-minute team exercise that occurs as immediately as possible after an event or situation. This may be while still in theatre or during the same shift. The **aim** of a hot debrief is to **generate insights** into individual, team, and systemic processes such as technical skills, decision making, communication, use of time and resources, leadership, and teamwork. The hot debrief focuses on process not outcomes.

Who comes?

Only people who were directly involved in the event or situation should attend. **Debriefs are voluntary.** If someone chooses not to participate that's okay and the debrief may still proceed.

Who leads?

Facilitating a hot debrief requires emotional intelligence, situational awareness, and compassion. The facilitator encourages open discussion, maintains psychological safety for the team, and manages conflict. The facilitator is encouraging and non-judgemental and summarises the discussion and actions.

When?

As soon as you identify that the team would value five to 15 minutes to meet and reflect or learn from an event. Ideally, this occurs within minutes of the event or as soon as the imminent crisis is over. A hot debrief should always occur in the same shift.

Where?

Environmentally, the most important consideration for a hot debrief is confidentiality and privacy.

Why?

Hot debriefs aim to build insight, learning, skills, and improve team function. Ideally run a hot debrief if there's global distress or trauma to the team or there are major learnings. Don't run a hot debrief if there's high conflict, judgement, or hostility in the team.

How?

Hot debriefs aim to develop insight, learning, development, and processes.

The framework has the acronym **IRASTT (intention, reactions, analysis, take homes, thank you)** and follows six simple steps for each letter. This structure has similarities to the simulation PEARLS framework (Cheng et al, 2016).



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IRASTT framework for hot debrief

1

Introduction and intention

Debriefing is voluntary, get consensus from team members that they're happy to participate. The facilitator asks everyone to **introduce** themselves. Important to set **ground rules** of confidentiality, and supportive and non-judgemental language. Participants have shared an experience, they may not have a shared perception or emotions. The facilitator forms the **intention** of the hot debrief, "I'm proposing we take five to 10 minutes to commit to reflecting on the event that just occurred with an **intention** to xxx".

2

Reactions phase

Ask open-ended questions. For example, "what are people's initial reactions to the event?", "how did that just land for people", or "what are people's thoughts about the event?"

3

Analysis phase

This is where you should spend the majority of your time.

1. Summary of the situation: One to two minute factual description of the clinical situation.
2. The analysis: Address issues raised in the reactions phase. Explore various performance domains such as decision making, technical skills, communication, use of resources and time, leadership, and teamwork.

Use the **plus (+)/delta (Δ) framework**. **Plus (+)** phase highlights things that the team and individuals have identified went well. The **delta (Δ)** phase explores function or decisions that we would change in the future. This is where we reflect. If we had the same patient come in tomorrow, would we choose to do anything differently? Where and what are the learnings?

4

Summary phase

Facilitator needs to sum up and recap on the learnings and sharings of the hot debrief.

5

Take home phase

The facilitator asks people to identify any outstanding issues or concerns. Any actions to follow up are designated to the team. The facilitator may say "the key learnings from today were xxx". The group needs to agree how other stakeholders may need to be involved.

6

Thank you phase

The facilitator is to sincerely thank the staff for choosing to work in the hospital context. Focus on the quality improvements and improved outcomes for patients. If there's ongoing global distress or something unresolved for the group, plan to have a cold debrief in five to 10 days.

Remind staff that acute critical stress symptoms are common and of the [employee assistance program](#) and other local peer support options.

The IRASTT framework was developed from the PEARLS debriefing tool (Cheng et al, 2016), and the research and writings by Arriaga et al (2020), Clegg and MacKinnon (2014), and Nijs et al (2021).