Debriefing 101
sharing our stories safely

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What Is Debriefing?

General, wellbeing debriefings are **structured** conversations where staff can **reflect** on and safely **express** thoughts on the difficult nature of their work and how they are being **impacted**.

Sessions might involve discussion of a recent case or event, but not necessarily!

Today: we’re reflecting on how the work has impacted us in positive ways.
Trauma Exposure @ Work

- Primary Trauma (Direct)
- Secondary Trauma (Indirect)
- Vicarious Trauma
More Debriefing = Reduced STS

Research findings consistently show that teams report lower levels of Secondary Traumatic Stress when they have regular access to supportive, professional conversations where they are encouraged to reflect and express their experiences regarding their work.

Source: Rocheleau, A., The Benefits of Peer Check-in and Debriefing Groups Bibliography
Why Sharing Helps

• Reduces isolation, normalizes experiences

• Shifts distorted thinking (may be fueling guilt, anger, etc.)

• Strengthens social support

• Opportunity to learn coping strategies, self-awareness techniques, and resilience tools
Debriefing Opportunities

- Formal peer groups, facilitated
- Reflective supervision (supervisor, mentor)
- Critical incident debriefing
- Informal conversations

Outside of work:
- Therapy
- Friends, Family
- Peer Groups
Use Low Impact Debriefing

1. **Self Check:** Slow down, are all the gory details necessary? Mind the (STS) slime.

2. **Heads Up:** Content warning, "I'd like to talk about a hard experience I had with a cruelty case involving a puppy."

3. **Get Consent (before you vent):** "Can I talk to you about it? Is now a good time?" Wait for + respect answer!

4. **Limited Disclosure:** Start w/least traumatic info, focus on feelings, reactions, thoughts (may be enough), listener controls dial.

Adapted from Low Impact Debriefing: Preventing Retraumatization by Françoise Mathieu and Guidelines for Debriefing Effectively for Helping Professionals by Amanda Rocheleau
Tips for Sharing Safely

• Org support needed
• Trained facilitator
• Not the time for performance reviews (save for another meeting)
• Agree on + uphold discussion guidelines...
Tips for Listening

• Keep it confidential
• No advice or fixing!
• Listen w/out cross talk (1 mic, 1 speaker)
• Track your own stress reactions and regulate (ground, breathe, etc.)
• Validate, normalize feelings and reactions
Let’s Practice!

Reflect on positive impact of work, practice structured discussion, mind the slime, hold space without fixing.

Handout available for more □

Questions?

Discussion boards or email: jessica@jessicadolce.com