

# COMPANIONS



## DEBRIEFING

While this learning bite focuses on structured debriefing, it's important to recognise the value of informal approaches as well. Many Conferences already include informal debriefing as part of regular meetings, where members reflect on visits and discuss companions' needs. These discussions offer a supportive, familiar environment to process emotional experiences, share insights, and strengthen team cohesion.

Informal debriefing, when guided by mutual respect and active listening, can be just as beneficial for emotional wellbeing and resilience. Encouraging regular sharing in a trusted group setting helps ensure members feel heard and supported.

Formal debriefing is a structured conversation that allows members to reflect on experiences, express emotions, and maintain personal well-being. It helps prevent burnout, supports emotional resilience, and reinforces our connection to the Conference mission.

### Importance of Debriefing

#### Emotional Well-being:

Debriefing helps members process their emotions and experiences, reducing the risk of burnout and emotional fatigue. It provides a safe space to express feelings and gain perspective.

#### Spiritual Health:

Reflecting on experiences helps deepen spirituality by allowing members to see the impact of their work and connect more deeply with the Conference's mission.

#### Sustaining Enthusiasm:

Regular debriefing sessions can rejuvenate members' passion for their work, reminding them of the positive effects they have on others' lives and reinforcing their commitment to the mission.

### Effective Debriefing Requires

Effective debriefing requires optimal conditions, which include:

#### Confidentiality:

Respect for confidentiality is crucial. What is shared during debriefing should remain between the parties involved, fostering trust and openness.

#### Skilled Active Listener:

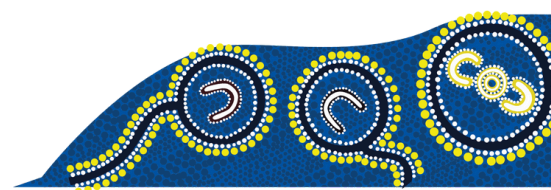
A listener who is empathetic, respectful, and non-judgmental.

#### Mutual Respect:

Both parties should respect each other's perspectives and feelings, creating a supportive atmosphere.

#### Safe Environment:

A private, calm space free from distractions.



## The Debriefing Process

The debriefing process itself is straightforward.

### Agree on Timeframe:

Allocate equal time for both participants (e.g., 20 minutes each).

### Sharing Experiences:

One member speaks while the other listens attentively.

- Focus fully on the speaker.
- Notice verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Allow silence for reflection.
- Use open posture and maintain eye contact.
- Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions.
- Encourage honest emotional expression.

### Avoid During Debriefing

To ensure the effectiveness of debriefing, avoid the following:

- **Interrupting:** Avoid interjecting with sudden recollections of your own similar experiences. This can shift the focus away from the speaker and make them feel unheard.
- **Minimizing the Impact:** Refrain from downplaying the significance of the event or the speaker's feelings. Validate their emotions and experiences.
- **Breaking Confidentiality:** Maintain strict confidentiality to build trust and encourage openness. Never share what is discussed with others without explicit permission.
- **Giving Advice:** The purpose of debriefing is for the person to disclose and reflect, not to receive advice. Focus on listening and supporting rather than solving their problems.

### Additional Tips for Effective Debriefing

- **Regular Scheduling:** Make debriefing a regular part of your routine. Regular sessions can help manage stress and maintain emotional well-being.
- **Training in Active Listening:** Consider training sessions in active listening for all Conference members. This can improve the quality of debriefing and overall communication within the group.
- **Use of Reflective Techniques:** Encourage the use of reflective techniques, such as summarizing what the speaker has said, to ensure understanding and validate the speaker's feelings.
- **Follow-up Support:** After the debriefing session, check in with each other to offer ongoing support and ensure that any unresolved emotions are addressed.



By following these guidelines, Conference members can effectively use debriefing to process their experiences, support one another, and maintain the emotional and spiritual health necessary to continue their valuable work.

Here are some questions that may be useful when debriefing

- How do you feel?
- What happened? Describe what took place, who was involved?
- Why do you think it happened?
- Tell me about what led to that choice?
- What were your thoughts when you made that decision?
- What did you find most challenging? What surprised you?
- What was positive about the experience?
- What next? Do things need to be done differently considering what has been learnt?



## TRY THIS Activity

Invite a member to share an incident that triggered a strong emotional response. Then, have another group member ask some follow-up questions to help debrief the situation.

Afterward, ask the rest of the group to discuss how this debriefing process could be effectively applied in a conference setting.



CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn provide our employees, volunteers and members and their families with a free, voluntary and confidential counselling service. Counselling is a process where issues can be explored, reflected upon and challenged in a safe, supportive and trusting environment.

This may assist in the prevention, early intervention or resolution of personal, family or volunteering issues - before they start to affect your volunteering performance.

Appointments are made by telephoning Marymead CatholicCare Canberra/Goulburn directly on (02) 6162 6100 during business hours, Monday to Friday.

