

What is Debriefing?

It's been said that "Debriefing is a critical component in the process of learning through healthcare simulation". But how does one start? It's considered best practice to base the debriefing on a theoretical framework that is purposefully structured. There are a variety of different debriefing frameworks which exist. There's no need to memorize all of these different frameworks – what's important is to know that they exist, and that they all have some key things in common.

Regardless of the specific debriefing framework, there are always, at minimum, three phases during a post-simulation scenario debrief. They are: the "gather" or "reaction" phase, followed by an "analysis" section, and concluding with an "application" or "summary" section.

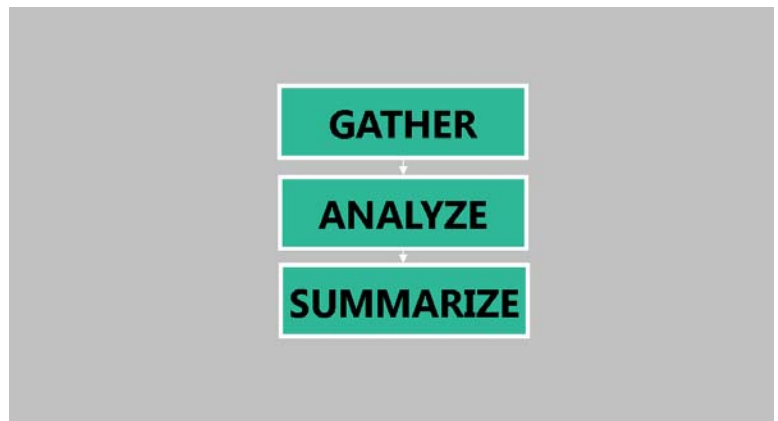
The **Gather** phase, also called the "reaction" or "description" phase, is often where the debriefing begins. It is fairly brief, and includes questions such as:

- How did that feel?
- How was that?
- What's popping up for you right now?

It allows participants to share their first reactions to how the sim went. It also allows for an emotional reaction; if there is an intense emotional reaction, this will need to be attended to before you move on, as learning can be blocked when emotionally triggered.

The "description" part of the gather phase is a brief summary of what the case was about and what happened. Participants are asked something along the lines of: "Can someone walk us through the scenario as it unfolded?"

This allows for a shared understanding of the case, as oftentimes people are busy doing specific tasks, or join the scenario at a later time, and are unaware of the overall picture of what occurred.



Next is the **Analysis** phase. Analysis is the "heart" of the debriefing – where the group will spend the most time. As such, there is another video dedicated specifically to the variety of methods which can be applied to the Analysis phase of debriefing.

Generally, this phase is where the group does the most reflection, speaking, and learning. The facilitator guides learners to:

- Systematically examine technical and non-technical skills: how they performed, communicated, interacted as a team, etc.
- Explore their successes and challenges
- Discuss and explore potential solutions for any deficit in practice

As the facilitator, it is key that your demeanour reflect a sense of genuine curiosity. If possible, try to include as many participants in the debrief as possible. Remember to be inquisitive and assume nothing; base your questions on objective observations. Push the learners to self-reflect on both their outward behaviour and interior rationale for that behaviour. Refer to the video about "Attitudes" to find out more.

Examples of “analysis” questions include:

- What went well?
- What would you like to improve?
- What made things more challenging?
- How can you relate this to your clinical practice?

Lastly, we have the **Summary** or “application” phase. Contrary to popular belief, it is the participants who conclude and summarize the debrief. This is done by asking the group how they will apply what they’ve learned. Example questions include:

- How will you apply this to your clinical practice?
- What will you do differently at work tomorrow?
- What will success look like?

Many novice sim facilitators will use a template or cognitive aid to help them through the debriefing portion of a simulation-based education. Not sure where you can find one? Connect with your local sim experts to find out more, and be sure to check out the “Focus on Analysis” page, where we’ll dive deeper into the “analysis” portion of debriefing.