



DEBRIEFING

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Debriefing

Youth can participate in a learning experience—the way this experience becomes the most meaningful is through debriefing. Debriefing gives youth an opportunity to think about their experiences and determine how they could use the learning in their life and in being the most effective learner possible.



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Instruction

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Debriefing

Key Points

When you complete this e-Book you will have an understanding of the importance of debriefing and effective strategies to utilize when you debrief. Debriefing is a key strategy to ensure that learning has occurred.

Terms/Glossary

Debrief: The strategy of asking questions to determine what a person has learned from an activity once the activity is over.

Learning Opportunity: Although we provide young people with many opportunities to participate in hands-on, interactive activities, when you probe for the learner's understanding of the experience you are taking the activity or event to the level of a learning opportunity.



Generalizing: The ability to take a "lesson learned" in one situation and apply it across the board to other situations; to make a general reference or connection.

Reflection: The opportunity to think about one's learning and how that experience will influence you in your personal and "professional" life. (Remember, for youth going to school is their professional life.)

Prior Knowledge

Do you recall a time when someone asked you about an experience you had? Do you remember them probing for understanding? Do you remember them asking which part you enjoyed most or learned the most from? Whether or not that was formal or informal, the person was debriefing your experience to ensure that you had a deeper understanding of what was going on.



Brain Power

Debriefing helps the learner to answer the questions: "What?" "So what?" and "Now what?" It allows you a forum for thinking about what you have learned and experienced, but more importantly how you will use that information.

Introduction

Debriefing provides you with an opportunity to reflect on an experience and make it meaningful by identifying what you learned about yourself and others. No matter which debriefing technique you use,

as the leader, your job is to make the group think. It is essential that you have created a safe space for discussion to occur. Ultimately you would like for youth to facilitate debriefing of the experiences.

Debrief

What was your key learning about debriefing? How do you see this being used in your after-school program? How do you believe you would transition this responsibility to youth?



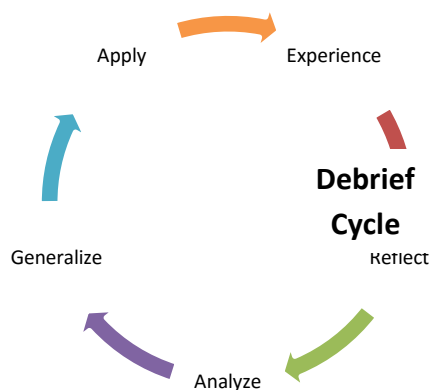
Knowledge and Information

Debriefing works best when you have established guidelines that the group buys into. It is best that these guidelines are established by the group. When playing “king or queen” of the world (thinking about how the debriefing would look and sound if it were executed perfectly), will include many of the following guidelines:

- Hold each other in unconditional positive regard and respect
- Honor confidentiality—what happens in debriefing stays in debriefing
- Be open and honest when you share with the group
- Speak for yourself, not the unidentified “we”
- Participate as much as you can
- Be silent when you are not sure of what you want to say.
- Stop the discussion anytime you believe the items above are being honored.

When these and other guidelines are in place, you will find that youth will speak up and share insights and thoughts. Experiential learning, learning that requires youth to experience something more than simply hear about it, is the perfect type of learning to debrief. Once the activity is complete, youth reflect on the activity and then utilize their analytical skills to derive some useful insight from the experience, and incorporate that new understanding into their daily lives. If you think of your brain as resembling a closet pole, debriefing helps you to know where to hang the learning. Once you begin to make connections, you discover that today’s learning not only fits in this sport but also in several others. It is like discovering that a favorite shirt goes with more than one pair of pants.

For experiential learning the debriefing cycle is this:



- 1- **Experiencing**: If the experiential learning process stops after this stage, all learning is left to chance, and you have not fulfilled your responsibility for facilitating learning. Research has demonstrated without debriefing, connections between the “experiencing” and the “learning” are often left, unmade. An experience is only Step 1.

- 2- **Reflecting:** Youth who have participated in a learning opportunity must take time to look back and examine what they saw, felt, and thought about during the activity. This is a metacognition stage when people think about the thinking. Reflecting is one of the ways we choose a different course rather than repeating the experience in the same way and expecting different results.
- 3- **Analyzing:** Once youth have reflected, they need to make an analysis of those observations and feelings so they are able to generalize. In this phase youth are asking what did I learn and how might it apply to my life. Otherwise it can be like shooting a lay-up from center court.
- 4- **Generalizing:** “So What?” The goal in this stage is for youth to figure out what they are going to do with the learning. Will they identify patterns which will help them make inferences from a specific experience to everyday life? With debriefing this is more likely. Fortunately we don’t have to touch every “hot” thing to understand “hot.” Generalizing allows us to learn from other similar experiences.
- 5- **Applying:** “Now What?” Effective use of these questions allows adults to assist youth in planning ways to put action into the generalizations they have learned in previous stages. Once you have had a key learning, to solidify that learning requires action—and then you are right back where you started and begin the next learning activity.

Debriefing Strategies

Following are several different strategies for debriefing activities and/or the day with students. It is important to vary the strategies that you use so that the learning differences in students can be accommodated. It is also important to listen closely to what students say so that you can continue to offer activities they enjoy, help them take their understanding deeper, or include more activities that they would enjoy.

Liked Best, Next Time (LBNT): In this simple debrief, students talk about the activity or the day and share what they enjoyed most and/or what else they would have liked to have done, or what they would have liked to have spent more time on. LBNT allows students to express an opinion about the day.



Four Step Debrief: This strategy has four steps, each one designed to help the student “connect the dots” between the activity, the learning, and how that learning may be used in their everyday life both immediately and in the future.

Step 1: Describe: Student(s) describe what they did during the activity.

Step 2: Interpret: Students answer one, some or all of the following questions:

What were your key learnings when you participated in this activity?

What skills did you need to utilize to participate in this activity?

How did you feel when participating in this activity?

Step 3: Generalize: How can you use the skills or your key learnings in your life?

Step 4: Apply: How can you use the skills or your key learnings in your work?

What's Important About That? This strategy allows for the debriefing to take a single student's learning and thinking deeper. Unlike other strategies which encourage the facilitator to get the input of many students, this strategy focuses on one student's opinion and thinking. Students are reminded of what they just participated in. The first question asking students generically, what is important about that (use the words to describe the activity that was just completed. Ex. If you have just finished your homework time, the student is asked, "What is important about completing your homework?") When one student responds, it is important to listen for what the student says is important about the activity that was just completed. Building on that statement, the question again is, "What is important about that (whatever was stated by the student.) This process proceeds up to five times, each time taking the child's understanding of what is important to a deeper level. At the end, the facilitator states, "Then what I heard you say is that (this activity that we just finished) is important because (fill in with the last thing that the student said.)"



Three What's

Ask the following three "what" questions:

1. What did you enjoy most about this activity?
2. What was the biggest challenge with this activity?
3. What did you learn from the group?

WHI?

Ask the following three questions:

1. What were some of the questions that came up in your group?
2. How did you go about including everyone?
3. If you were to try this again, what might you do differently?

Likes and Dislikes

Create a chart and list what students liked and what students didn't like about the activity. You might probe by asking, "What about this activity ..."

Confirm, Tweak, Aha!

The format of this debrief is: **Confirm, Tweak, Aha!** When you participate in a learning opportunity you will experience things that **CONFIRM** what you already knew. This confirmation will encourage you to continue on the path you are on. Ask yourself, "What did I just do that confirmed things I already knew?" For example, you believe that your red shirt can be worn with your navy pants. A second experience you can have is gaining an insight that you did not have before. This is called a **"TWEAK."** Certainly you understood the basics before, but this new understanding allows you to **TWEAK** the way you see things. Continuing with the example above, you realize that your red shirt can also be worn with your khaki pants. Finally, you have an experience and you are simply blown away by what you have experienced, you truly had no idea that the learning was the case. This is called and **"AHA!"** and is often accompanied with the sound of your palm hitting your forehead. This sort of **AHA!** moment is mind blowing and we often wonder why we didn't know that before. For whatever the reason, the **AHA!** moment is a clarifying insight that appears to happen in an instant.



If you are asking youth to share about a project they have just finished, consider reviewing in one of these ways:

1. Share pictures, photographs, or videos
2. Have each person give one word or phrase about the project.
3. Have youth begin to review what was done in chronological order. If another student thinks that something has been left out, he/she can call "Hold it!" and interject what was omitted.
4. Have youth create a written record that can be posted on a chart. Be sure to date the chart and title the event so you can refer to it later.
5. Ask youth to describe the project and refresh everyone's memory.
6. Each youth says one adjective that would describe the project.
7. Ask youth to identify not only what they noticed when working on the project, but what surprised them.

After reviewing the activity, ask youth to consider what they will do now that they have identified the key learning from the project for them. This is really about answering the question, "So what?" Now that you

know something, what will you do with that information? You can encourage youth to think in these terms by asking:

1. Youth to whip around, each one completing a sentence starter such as “I’m glad I learned....because”, “When we were doing I felt” and so on.
2. If you want to ensure that youth are thinking and debriefing have them participate in a partner dialogue where they discuss and summarize for the partner. You can also ask partners to share out with the entire group.
3. Consider having a “Fish Bowl.” In this exercise, ½ of the group sits inside a circle and discusses the project while the other ½ of the group sits on the outside of the circle and summarizes the “fish bowl’s” discussion.
4. If you have a quote or a story that summarizes the intent of the activity, share that with the students and then have them reflect on how all of it is connected.
5. You can also ask the youth, “What do you know now that you didn’t know before?” or “What attitudes and feelings do you have about the experience that you didn’t have before?” or “How did you actually learn what is most important to you?”
6. You might also ask youth to share the part of the project that was most valuable to them; how the group had been helpful to them; how they believe they contributed to the group; and what would have made the experience more meaningful.

Once a learning activity has been completed (the learning experience can go on and on), you will want to be sure that youth understand ways in which the learning from this activity can be transitioned to learning on other projects. Consider asking:



1. What will you remember about this experience that you can apply in the future?
2. What will you share in words to someone on your team in the future that didn’t have this same experience?
3. What personal changes, if any, will you make that will affect how you experience things in the future?
4. What suggestions do you have to make this experience even stronger?
5. What do you think the group should do next?

Debriefing will help you and your youth make sense out of experiences and also retain the learning into the future.

Bullet Point

- The Debriefing Cycle has five parts: experiencing, reflecting, analyzing, generalizing, and applying.
- There are a variety of debriefing strategies: Liked Best—Next Time, 4 Step Debrief, What’s Important About That? The Three What’s, What, How If? (WHI), Likes and Dislikes; Confirm, Tweak, Aha!

- Ask questions about “What?”, “So What?” and “Now What?”

C4K Minute—Making It Real

The next time you complete a math activity, debrief with the youth. If it is a first time, ask them what they liked and what they didn't like. Remember, just because they didn't like something doesn't mean that you have to change it. Thank them for the input and if it makes sense, make changes, if it doesn't, then don't.

Debrief

What is your key learning from the information above? How will you apply that key learning in the next 72 hours?



Review

Tricks of the Trade

Make debriefing a habit. Put it in your lesson plan. Write the questions you are going to ask. Once you are in the habit of debriefing, you will keep up the effort, but until then, schedule it to be sure that you implement.

Gem of the Day

In the beginning when you first start to debrief activities, ask the following three questions:

- What did you like about this activity?
- What didn't you like about this activity?
- How should we change the activity next time?

Important Take-Aways

In research done on the preschool program, Sesame Street, it was found that while the activities shown on the program were engaging and interesting to preschoolers, it was the interaction, or the debriefing, that the child engaged in with an adult after the program was over, that ensured that the learning occurred. This has proven to be true across all age groups.



Troubleshooting

What happens if I try to debrief a lesson and none of the students say anything, there is just silence?

This is possible, especially in the beginning when young people aren't used to being asked about what they think. Be patient and be silent. Sometimes we rush to restate the question, believing that the problem is ours when really we just need to give the youth a chance to process. Remember that you can always model a debrief by asking yourself the question (or better yet giving the student a card with the question on it to read to you) and then answering the question, modeling the kind of response you would like to have.

Best Practices

- ✓ It is important to get student input.
- ✓ After each major activity, do a Debrief with the students.
- ✓ Help students respond with complete, coherent sentences.

FAQ's

What happens if you forget to debrief an activity?

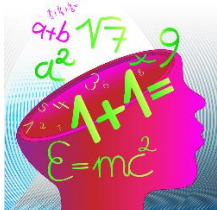
First of all, schedule the debrief so you won't forget. More than forgetting you may feel crunched for time. You can always debrief while you are walking to the yard, back to the multi-purpose

room, or on your way in from physical activity. The place you debrief is not nearly as important as doing it. If you realize you have forgotten and have already begun the next activity, call a time out and rewind. Debriefing will pay huge dividends.

Universal

Thinking about “lessons learned” should be foremost on our minds, otherwise we are doomed to repeat the same “mistakes.” When we don’t think about the learning we will live up to Einstein’s definition of insanity, “Doing the same thing again and expecting different results.”

After-School



One of the “habits of the mind” we want to develop in students in the after-school program is to intentionally think about what they have learned. The routine of debriefing ensures that they will have this opportunity.

Positional

Begin by leading the debriefing activity yourself. As soon as you can, begin to transition this responsibility to the youth. Kindergartners can learn how to debrief an activity. Encourage them to try while you are there to jump in and support the effort.

Review

Key Learning

Since you have reviewed the material, ask yourself how you can translate the information into a learning for you, and then how will you practice that learning by implementing it or executing on a specific action. Think in terms of your personal and professional life. For example:

Personal: I have learned that if I want to be sure I understand something I need to debrief what has occurred

Professional: Learning requires the learner to make connections. I will do this with the youth in the after-school program.

Journal Entry

I did this well and celebrated by _____.

I did not do so well at _____, and I will strengthen my performance in the future by doing _____.

Walk Through the Day

Pre-Pre-Opening: On your way to work debrief the activities you've been involved in before going to work. If you take the time to think about them it will free your mind to be more focused in the after-school program. You will have brought order to your understanding.

Practical Application: Make a list of three things you have learned. Categorize them as a confirmation, tweak, or Aha! Reflect on whether you've moved on or you have repeated the same learning with no appreciable results.

Pre-Opening: If you have watched a C4K Mini, take the time to debrief by listing the key points and responding to the questions posed on the Perspective. This will help ensure that you are going to retain what you have been trained on.

Practical Application: Watch the C4K mini on Debriefing to ensure that you have an understanding of the process and then make the commitment to practice this information in today's program.

Opening: You probably have many different aspects in your Opening routine. Debrief what went on with the students so you can determine what went well and what didn't.

Practical Application: Once students have shared "likes" and "dislikes," change what you can change and then go to work on what makes sense to change that can't be instant. Provide feedback to the group who debriefed with you.

Rotations: At the end of each rotation, debrief what went on. Ask kids to voice their thoughts. Once you have introduced and practiced the various debriefing strategies, write the titles on popsicle sticks and then draw one for the day or the activity. Debriefing doesn't need to look the same way every time.

Practical Application: Teach the youth how to debrief each other in partners. This way everyone has a chance to share.

Closing: Debriefing at the end of the day is an essential part of the program. Usually when children leave for home, parents or caregivers will ask, "What did you do today?" If you haven't prepared youth to answer this question through debriefing, their response will most assuredly be, "Nothing!" Debriefing will give youth something to say as they share information about their day.

Practical Application: At the end of the day distribute a Post-Its® to each child or youth. Have them write or draw a picture about what they did during the after-school program that was the most fun. Ask them to be sure what they write and draw shares what they learned.



Connect to Online Instruction

- PL Mini #30 Debriefing
- PL Module Activity to Learning Opportunity
- SC Lesson Debriefing x 5

