

Debriefing Prompts for Veterinary Teams

What is it:

Debriefing is a process that allows us to safely review a stressful or challenging situation with the goals of reflection, acknowledgment, learning, reframing, and letting go. Debriefing can be helpful after a mistake, a high-stress interaction, an emotionally challenging visit, or any situation that makes it feel difficult to move forward in our day.

Why it's helpful:

Debriefing helps us manage our stress, improve self-awareness, and grow in our work. It helps us move from a flight or flight response to a place where we can process and make sense of the event. Debriefing is an important part of stress-cycle completion.

Debriefing activities

- Thought/reflection while driving between visits or home from the office
- Thought/reflection as part of your end-of-workday transition, such as an after-work walk or meal
- Talking with a friend or family member who is outside of the field
- Talking with a colleague who is within the field
- Journaling to end a shift or workday as part of a wind-down ritual
- Emailing or slacking a manager or coworker to share and process (Ex: using the AV debriefing channel)

Prompts for self-reflection, conversation, or journaling:

- What is my body feeling right now?
- What am I struggling with most right now?
- What could have helped prepare me for this situation?
- What did I learn from this experience?
- What made this challenging for me?
- If my best friend were describing this challenging situation to me, what would I say to support them?
- Was any aspect of this situation directly in my control, and if so, how would I have handled it differently knowing what I know now?
- What aspects of this situation were outside of my control and I can allow myself to let go of?
- Is there anything I could do or share to help a coworker who may face a similar situation?
- What can I say that I'm proud of when I think about how I handled this?
- What is a strength I can identify in this issue/event/person?
- What am I grateful for after this experience?
- Who can I reach out to for help or support in the coming days?
- What concrete actions can I take to move forward today?
- What self-care or coping skills can I employ right now?

Additional resources:

<https://wabisabilearning.com/blogs/inquiry/reflective-questions-debriefing-learning>

<https://www.bcasw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Reflective-Journal-Writing-H1.pdf>

<https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2015-01-01/moral-stress-top-trigger-veterinarians-compassion-fatigue>

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.navta.net/resource/resmgr/docs/wellbeing_blogs/WBTF_Team_Debrief.pdf

https://www.vetmedteam.com/library/local/compassion-fatigue-677/compassion_fatigue.pdf



Mental Health Resources for Veterinary Professionals

Finding professional counselors:

- American Psychological Association (APA) – online Psychologist locator
- Psychology Today Therapist Directory: psychologytoday.com/us/therapists
- Your health insurance website

[State Wellbeing Programs for Veterinary Professionals](#)

[NAMI.orghttps://nami.org/Home](https://nami.org/Home)

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Blue River Petcare:

<https://www.mutualofomaha.com/eap/>

Veterinary Mental Health Initiative (for veterinarians and technicians)

shanti.org/programs-services/veterinary-mental-health-initiative/

Professional Peer Support Groups

- Six-week programs, 60 minute sessions, groups of 5-8 participants
- Current groups are targeted to specific populations (technician group, early career veterinarian group, experienced 15+ years veterinarian group)

Veterinary Drop-in Group on Sunday Evenings at 8 p.m. EST

- This group is open to veterinarians who are experiencing a difficult week and could benefit from timely support
- One-to-One Support Sessions available

Veterinary Hope Foundation (for veterinarians)

veterinaryhope.org/

- Facilitated by licensed mental health professionals
- Six-week program, 60-90 minute sessions, groups of 8 participants
- Attempts are made to match participants based on affinity, primary type of practice, attendee's role in that practice, year of graduation, etc.

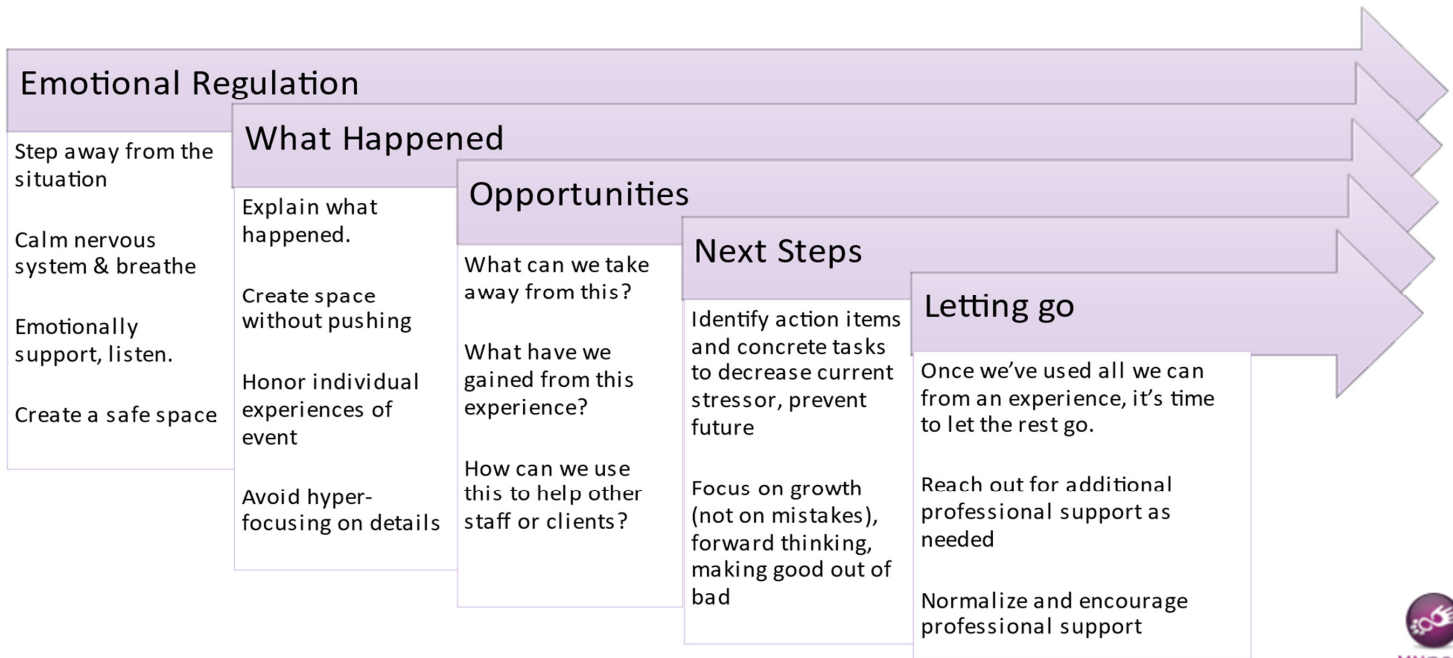
VIN Foundation (VIN membership not required)

VINFoundation.org/V4V

Vets4Vets (for veterinarians and veterinary students): Weekly self-help group

Support4Support (for veterinary staff members): Scheduled, one-to-one peer/professional support for hospital staff (client services, veterinary technicians, assistants, etc.)

Debriefing Roadmap



My Notes and Plan: