

DEFUSING FOR SUPERVISORS

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| Best Applied: | Must be provided within 8 hours of a traumatic incident. Defusing is generally most effective when provided as close to the ending of the event as reasonable. Most occur within 2 hours of the event. |
| Target: | Homogeneous groups only. Group size is usually small 2-20 people. |
| Location of Defusing: | A neutral environment free of distractions. |

PROCESS TIPS TO CONSIDER

Establish a non-threatening meeting environment.

Deliver some brief introductory remarks.

Go over some basic guidelines for the defusing.

Ask the group members to give an overview or a thumbnail sketch of the traumatic incident.

Do not go around the room but let whoever wishes to say something to do so.

Gently invite anyone who has remained silent to add anything they wish to the discussion, but never pressure anyone to speak if they choose not to.

The defusing team's aim is to equalize the information among the group members. Most people experienced the traumatic event from different vantage points and it is often helpful for all of the group members to know what happened from other people's points of view.

Allow whatever emotional ventilation of trauma experience that group members wish to express.

One aim of defusing is to restore cognitive processing to the group members.

Do not probe for details. Just listen to and accept what the participants say.

Provide information on stress and symptom management as well as suggestions for recovery.

Affirm the value of the participants in the defusing.

Establish methods to arrange for additional support.

Develop positive outcome expectancies for the group members.

DEFUSING GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORS

Defusing Components:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Exploration
- 3) Information

1) Introduction:

Introduce the team members presenting the defusing.

State the purpose of the meeting (provide support to the group).

Describe the process (a structured conversation regarding a traumatic event that the group members encountered together).

State the goals of a defusing (reduction of acute distress, provision of helpful guidelines, restoration of unit cohesion and a return to unit performance).

Motivate the participants to share.

Set the rules or guidelines for the defusing (See "Introductory Remarks for Defusing").

Stress the point that all participants must respect the confidential nature of the defusing and not discuss other participants' views, thoughts and feelings outside of the defusing.

Reassure the participants that a defusing is neither psychotherapy nor a substitute for psychotherapy.

State clearly that the defusing is not part of any type of an investigation.

Ask the participants to complete the defusing process.

Offer to provide individual support after the defusing session.

2) Exploration:

Ask the participants to provide a brief description of the traumatic event from their point of view of the event.

Ask a few clarifying questions as a natural part of the conversation.

The participants share as much of their experience of the traumatic event and their reactions to it as they feel comfortable.

The defusing team listens carefully, formulates new questions if necessary, and observes the participants to determine if some of them will need individual support after the defusing concludes.

3) Information:

The defusing team reassures the participants that their reactions and the signals of distress they are encountering are normal, healthy responses of normal, healthy people to a terribly abnormal event.

The defusing team teaches the participants that their normal reactions can be uncomfortable or even painful, but they will generally recede during the next few days to a week in most cases.

The defusing team presents suggestions that might help group participants recover from the traumatic experience.

Typical suggestions include issues such as nutrition, exercise, recreation, sleep, rest, communicating with loved ones, family life, staying active, returning to work responsibilities and looking out for one's fellow workers. (The handout "Critical Incident Stress Info Sheet" may be helpful to provide.)