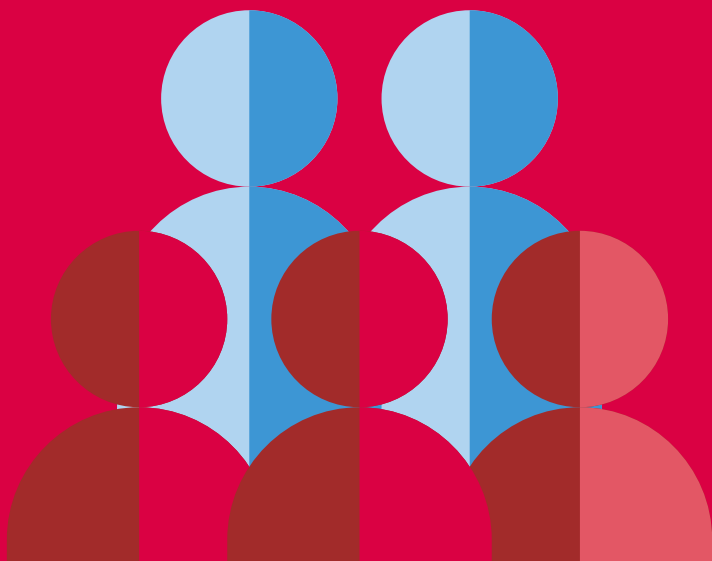




Royal College
of Nursing

Time and space

Enabling defusing activities



Making time for nursing teams to defuse after challenging or difficult situations can support their psychological wellbeing and enhance their self-care and management. It can also help to sustain a workforce and reinforce teamwork. It is also a perfect opportunity to share success and positive experiences.

The purpose of defusing

- To aid communication and understanding.
- To acknowledge what has been happening.
- To celebrate success/growth.
- To maximise the functionality of individuals and the team.
- To offer support/reflection opportunities.

Opportunities for defusing exist at the beginning (handover), during (at an agreed time) and at the completion of each shift of duty. The nurse in charge should assume responsibility for facilitating defusing activities per shift and should:

- a) explain the importance of honest and open communication and reflection, encouraging the team to connect regularly
- b) plan an agreed time that the whole team can get together and connect with the nurse in charge mid-shift and at that time briefly check:
 - that original task allocations are working/ manageable and re-evaluate this if necessary
 - to raise any concerns and agree ways forward.
- c) bring the team together (facilitate connection with the nurse in charge) again at the end of the shift.

Remember...

keep it fairly brief

1

Acknowledge that it has been a particularly busy and/or difficult shift.

2

Emphasise areas of good practice and how well everyone has done. Thank them for their efforts during the shift.

3

Ask how everyone has been feeling during the shift and how they are feeling now.

4

If any strong feelings or opinions are expressed, just let this happen. Don't feel that you have to rationalise these or come up with the answer. The simple message should be, 'it's okay to have feelings and it's okay to express them.'

5

Reassure staff about the normality of any reactions, thoughts or feelings they may experience ie, normal reactions of normal people to extreme and busy circumstances.

6

If any physical interventions were used during the shift, check the physical wellbeing of staff.

Suggested content of a more detailed defusing session after a particularly busy or difficult shift of duty.

7

Ask staff if they have any important points or observations they want to make about anything that has happened during the shift or any problems eg, racial abuse, threats, procedure or equipment. Don't try and sort these out now. Comment or explain if you can but make it brief. Where necessary, encourage staff to take any issues to the weekly staff meeting/ clinical supervision.

8

Try and give staff a sense of proportion, perspective and control over what has been happening during the shift.

9

Some staff may want to ventilate feelings, others will prefer not to talk about what happened, both at the time and afterwards. Encourage staff to use existing supervision arrangements and staff meetings as a means of getting support and also as a way of supporting each other.

10

Finally, emphasise areas of good practice again and how well everyone has done. Thank them for their efforts during the shift.



Shared success

and positive experiences





For further information and
advice please go to:
www.rcn.org.uk/time-and-space

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