

DEBRIEF GUIDE AFTER RESTRAINT WITH A CHILD/YOUTH

Supporting providers to debrief pediatric restraint



Restraint is inclusive of all types of restraint (chemical, seclusion, physical and mechanical). The goal of debriefing after a restraint event is to learn together and find ways to create safety for the child/youth, other patients, families and the health care team. This document provides a guide for the full debriefing session with the child/youth, which should take around 15 minutes (but may require more time). Please be aware that this is only 1 out of the 3 recommended moments for debriefing after a restraint incident, and the other 2 debriefing moments (while different than the format/goal for this full session) are also important to the child/youth's recovery process. Provided here are some possible child/youth debriefing questions following a restraint event. Please be prepared to take notes.

** The care provider's genuine presence is essential for there to be authentic and meaningful sharing between the child/youth and the care provider. Consider changing your approach or rewording as appropriate to meet the developmental level and communication style of the child/youth. Keep it brief (no longer than 10-15 minutes). Change your approach to match the unique characteristics of the child/youth (e.g. withdrawn, non-communicative, neurodiversity). The term "restraint" is used for all the questions, but the healthcare professional is encouraged to use the child/youth's own words and according to their situation.*

Introduction to the debrief:

WHAT TO SAY	RATIONALE
[Child/youth name], can I talk with you about what happened today?	This is asking for consent; if the child/youth says no then try again later.
I (care provider name) felt like things didn't go well and it seemed like it was a hard day. I'm sorry we used restraint to handle the situation. That's never our goal and we only use it as a last resort when there is a safety emergency. I felt ____ after it happened.	Sharing vulnerability builds trust and connection.
Some kids have told me they have felt angry, ashamed and/or hopeless when an event like this happens. I know that when people get overwhelmed things can sometimes escalate and become unsafe. I am hoping we can work together to make things safer for everyone moving forward.	This can help normalize feelings of shame etc. that the child/youth may experience.
I would like to work together to learn how we could have better supported you yesterday. Is this okay? And is this a good time/place to talk? Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable?"	Asking permission, offering choice, meeting needs is providing trauma informed care.

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Debriefing with the child/youth:

WHAT TO SAY	RATIONALE
Can you tell me about/describe what happened?	To establish the basic facts of the event, which may have been heard or seen differently by the child/youth. Be open to hearing the child/youth's perspective. Do not justify, argue, or explain; bear witness.
What was going on for you as this was happening? (Thoughts, feelings, reactions, perceptions)	
What was happening before the restraint? What sort of things were you feeling leading up to that event? What was causing you to feel that way? So you felt... when...?	Confirm feelings and triggers to develop understanding, trust and engagement.
When did you start to feel your emotions escalate/ upset/out of control (use the child/youth's language)? Can you tell me about any early warning signs or cues that care providers might have missed that could have let us know earlier that you needed help?	
What did you find difficult during the restraint?	Validates it was difficult! Anger may come out and that's ok.
What has worked before when you were feeling upset/etc.?	Hope-friendly talk is an opportunity to emphasize the child/youth's strengths, which may also be then added in the care plan.
While you were feeling unsafe, was there anything we could have done differently or helped you with? What about once you were restrained? What did you need? (i.e., a warm blanket or anything from your care plan we could have used?)	
a) How did you feel after things calmed down? b) I (care provider) felt _____.	*Should be a two-way conversation and sharing of the experience, not just the child/youth sharing. This can be a hard thing to talk about and by you also sharing the impact of the experience on yourself as a care provider can help to rebuild trust and connection. It can be a validating experience.
How did you know you were ready to rejoin the unit/ your room/group etc..? Do you think the timing was right (was it too early to return or too late?)?	

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Debriefing with the child/youth:

WHAT TO SAY	RATIONALE
How do you feel about the care that was provided to you? Were you treated with respect? Was your privacy maintained? How can we do better?	
Is there anything else you would like to talk about related to what happened? Or that we can learn from the experience to help us support you if your emotions escalate, or if a similar situation occurs?	Consider outcomes that can be changes to policy and practice too.
Let's talk about how we as a team are going to move forward from here. This is what I (care provider) am going to do ____.	Letting the child/youth know who you are going to talk to next can help decrease anxiety the child/youth may be feeling. It also adds accountability.
What is important to share with the rest of the team? Is there anything you want me to do/communicate? (E.g., talk with your family/guardian; check-in with the other kids on the unit).	To confirm with child/youth exactly what information they are comfortable with being shared. Clarify that this is a safety event – family will need to be informed. Reassure that only facts of the event will be disclosed.
How are you feeling now? I'm (care provider) feeling _____.	
What can we do now? (e.g., go for a walk, listen to music, colour –refer to care plan)	*It can be a nice way to close/end the debrief, facilitate rebuilding of trust & connection. Also consider whether the child/youth would like to talk further with another team member such as Aboriginal Patient Liaison, social worker, attending physician, child life etc.
Thank you for taking the time to talk and debrief the incident with me. I really appreciate it.	Give support, encouragement and control back to child/youth and instill hope.

Additional step for care provider to do with the child/youth at a later time:

WHAT TO SAY	RATIONALE
Let's go over your SELF tool/care plan/safety plan. Is there a way to communicate your rising level of distress? (E.g. red light, yellow light, green light) What could we add or remove from your care plan to help us support you, if there is a next time?	This is a further opportunity to support the child/youth to process what has happened, the outcomes of their actions and emotional reactions.

Cross Reference:

- [Debrief Guide After child/youth Restraint with Health Care Team](#)
- [Debrief Guide After child/youth Restraint with Family](#)
- [Debrief Guide After child/youth Restraint with Other Patients](#)
- [Preparing for Debriefing Pediatric Restraint](#)

