The Thoughtful Exchange

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS / PRACTICAL RESOURCE

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01 / FACILITATE

After the Hard Case

A 10-Minute Team Debrief Guide

> **A brief pause for support and next steps.**
>
> Use once patients and staff are safe and care coverage is arranged. Participation is voluntary. This original TTE tool is not a validated intervention, therapy, or a method to prevent PTSD. [1, 2]

Before you invite the team

- Choose a calm facilitator and private space. Offer a trained peer if a supervisor's presence inhibits speaking.
- Anyone may pass, listen, leave, or choose private support. No required emotional disclosure or vivid retelling.
- No recording, patient identifiers, or attributed personal notes. Explain reporting duties; do not promise absolute confidentiality or legal privilege.

Ten minutes: suggested facilitator prompts

0-1 min — **Open and give choice**

"This was a hard case. We can take a brief pause. Sharing is optional; we are not assigning blame or investigating."

1-3 min — **Notice immediate needs**

"What would help right now: coverage, water, a quiet moment, a colleague, or a private conversation?"

3-5 min — **Recognize what helped**

"What helped us work together? What should we keep doing?"

5-7 min — **Identify support or system needs**

"Is there a resource, workload, communication, or safety concern that needs follow-up?"

7-9 min — **Agree on practical action**

"Who will take the next step, and when? What should move to a separate safety or operational review?"

9-10 min — **Close and reconnect**

"What support is available now? May someone check in privately later?" Thank the team; no forced closing round.

If distress rises, pause or end the group check-in and offer private support. Ten minutes is a structure, not a deadline for someone's recovery.

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02 / CAPTURE NEXT STEPS

Team action worksheet

Record practical actions only. Do not record names of patients, personal disclosures, or individual mental health details.

Date / time

Unit / facilitator

Brief, non-identifying context (optional)

What helped the team?

What immediate support or coverage is needed?

Concern to route separately (no blame or patient details)

Agreed action / responsible role / due date

Follow-up check-in / review date

Keep the record limited and secure.

Use approved storage and access controls. Incident reporting, clinical documentation, and formal review follow separate processes.

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03 / FOLLOW THROUGH

Support beyond the pause

An optional conversation cannot replace safe staffing, respectful leadership, or access to care. [3]

Leader and peer-support checklist

- ☐ Arrange needed relief, safe handoff, rest, or a private space before resuming duties.
- ☐ Offer trained peer support, EAP, occupational health, or spiritual care by choice.
- ☐ Agree on a private follow-up, such as within 24-72 hours; check again if needed.
- ☐ Assign and track system fixes; route safety concerns through the required process.
- ☐ Protect personal disclosures. Ask before contacting someone on a colleague's behalf, unless immediate safety or reporting duties require action.

When additional help is needed

Offer professional support for worsening distress, persistent sleep disruption, intrusive memories, increasing substance use, or difficulty functioning. Arrange urgent assessment for immediate safety concerns. For suicidal thoughts, call or text 988 (U.S.); for immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911. Stay with the person if safe.

Peer support / EAP contact

Occupational health / mental health access

Spiritual care / chaplain (optional)

Safety lead / escalation contact

Different purposes, separate processes

This guide: optional support and practical needs. Operational debrief: performance and learning. Formal review: incident investigation and required reporting. Do not turn this check-in into a blame session or trauma-processing exercise. NICE advises against psychologically focused debriefing to prevent or treat PTSD. [1, 2]

Sources (click to read): 1. AHRQ: TeamSTEPPS Debrief | 2. NICE: PTSD, recommendation 1.6.5 | 3. CDC/NIOSH: Impact Wellbeing Guide

Educational resource only; not medical or legal advice, a fitness-for-duty assessment, or a replacement for local policy or professional care. Sources checked November 2026.