

The Debrief

Summary

A key part of learning how to engage in dialogue is creating spaces for “talking about talking,” or shifting student conversation to be about the conversation itself, rather than the topic at hand. One way to do this is through the debrief, when students can reflect back on the conversation they just had and how they’d like to improve or change how it went for next time.

Outcomes

- Participants will reflect on a dialogue process after-the-fact.
- Participants will become familiar with the process of sharing about group dynamics and patterns.

Details

For Who?	Any age, any experience level with constructive dialogue
How Long?	A post-conversation debrief can last 5 minutes to 20 minutes depending on the topic at hand, the nature of the conversation, and the group’s familiarity with constructive dialogue.
Supplies Needed	None

Suggested Language for Instructor Framing

“Sometimes dialogue is about the topic itself, and sometimes it’s about our group’s dynamics. We’re now going to shift our attention away from the topic, and toward our group.”

Details

1. Decide on the Type of Debrief

- a. There are several considerations for instructors around planning the debrief their group might need. They might choose to focus on: Experience, Learning, or Norms.

- i. **Experience Debrief Questions**

1. *“How did the conversation go for you?”*
 2. *“What did you notice about the dialogue?”*
 3. *“Was there a time that was difficult or uncomfortable for you?”*

- ii. **Learning Debrief Questions**

1. *“What did you learn about your peers?”*
 2. *“What surprised you about our conversation?”*
 3. *“What did you not expect?”*

- iii. **Norms Debrief Questions**

1. *“How did our group norms support your participation in this conversation?”*
 2. *“Did the group successfully adhere to our norms during the conversation?”*
 3. *“Which norms were upheld particularly well? Which could we work on?”*

2. Wrap Up

- a. Instructors should finish a group debrief with a summarizing statement or words of encouragement. They can look for shared reflections, moments that inspire hope, and a sentiment that implies that dialogue is an ongoing process that is rarely tied up with a tidy bow – which is okay.

- b. Examples of Wrap-Up Language:**

- i. *“It sounds like this group has a lot to be proud of based on what I’m hearing, and a few ways that we can continue to grow together, which is part of this process.”*
- ii. *“I’m hearing a lot of really concrete ideas for improvement. Everyone has a really good pulse on this group’s progress.”*
- iii. *“There is so much to say about this conversation, and so much more to talk about, and I hope we can bring the same energy to the next one.”*

Instructor Considerations

Adaptations

Instructors can get creative about group structures for a debrief. They can have students pair off, chat in small groups about a given prompt and share out afterward, do a go-round, or share in the full group.