

# Debriefing

To debrief is to question. Debriefing should not be looked upon as separate from the team-building activity; it is connected to the whole of the experience (Rohnke, 1989). The debriefing of an activity is critical to the learning that results from taking part in that activity. During a team-building activity, the teacher must continuously scan the group to determine the appropriateness of the activity and for substantive information that can be useful during a group discussion (Nadler & Luckner, 1992). When there is time or with difficult groups, a three tiered process is suggested (Knapp, 1972, as cited in Rohnke, 1989). The three tiers are: "the what?", "the so what?", and "the now what?"

1. **"The what?"** helps the teacher ease into the discussion by beginning with the facts. Sequencing the events will orient the students and prepare them for the next tier of the debriefing. This can be referred to as a "play-by-play" account.
2. **"The so what?"** pertains to the difference the experience made to the students, the consequences, and the meaning for them. Students generalize what they have learned from the experience. Students should reflect on goals set for the task.
3. **"The now what?"** is the process of taking lessons learned from the experiences and reapplying them to other situations. These can be called transfer points. Helping the students to take what they have learned from one activity and carry it over to another activity can help them connect it to the "big picture."  
(Knapp, 1972, as cited in Rohnke, 1989)

The teacher's understanding of the importance of the debriefing helps the process become a *meaningful* experience for the group. The teacher must be a good listener and observer in order to effectively carry out the debriefing sequence. When debriefing an activity, the teacher will facilitate discussion allowing students to respond and give feedback to one another that relates to the activity.

## Other Debriefing Techniques

1. **The Once Around** – Students stand in a circle and one at a time, each will say one word or phrase that captured the experience for them. Variation: each student, one at a time, states something positive about the person standing to their right (or left). The interpersonal skills of altruism, compassion, honesty, and respect are addressed here. Perfect for situations where time is an issue.
2. **Use of Metaphors** – One idea is the acceptance of the role each student played in the activity. Example: a "Captain, Crew, Cargo" metaphor can be used to address the use of leadership and followership skills in the group. Each student self-identifies, one at a time, if they were a captain, a member of the crew, or cargo. Metaphors can also help student transfer what was learned to the "big picture."
  - **Body Part Debrief** – Split into small groups, each with a "body part." Take a few minutes to discuss what you learned during class, or activity, and how it can transfer to other settings. Have each group come up with a metaphor that connects what they learned to their body part. Groups then share their metaphor with the entire group or class.
3. **Journaling** – This takes no time from physical education class, but requires the agreement and participation of the classroom teacher to provide time for writing. Guided reflective questions can be used to help students put their thoughts into writing. All of the interpersonal skills can be addressed through journaling. This debriefing strategy also ties in the language arts curriculum.