CHCMGT005

Facilitate workplace debriefing and support processes

CHCMGT005
Facilitate workplace and support processes

Release 2

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 1.1

Aspire

Learning Resources

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1991 to 2023

Contents

> Aspire acknowledges the homelands of all Aboriginal and
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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCMGT005 Facilitate workplace debriefing and support processes*, Release 2.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.
Callouts	Callouts reiterate key learning points to help students revise for their assessments.
Weblinks	Weblinks provide learners with additional content to contextualise their learning and develop their understanding.
Videos	Videos provide a visual reference of key concepts to aid comprehension and guide learner exploration. Each video is accessed by a QR code in the Learner Guide (or a button in the eBook version) for ease of access.
Glossary/margin definitions	Key terms are defined where they first appear to help consolidate understanding. A glossary of terms is provided at the end of the Learner Guide to assist learner revision of key concepts.
Summaries	Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	There are Learning Checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.
Case studies	Case studies are interspersed throughout the learning content to provide a workplace setting that contextualises key concepts.

Foundation skills

As you complete learning using this guide, you will be developing the foundation skills relevant for this unit. Foundation skills are the language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills and the employability skills required for participation in modern workplaces and contemporary life.

These skills are listed below:

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Reading	• Understanding how documents are presented and being able to navigate through documents • Understanding industry- and job-specific terminology • Interpreting key information in relevant documents • Understanding routine workplace checklists and documentation
Writing	• Planning, drafting and writing reports and documents • Communicating through written letters, email and online • Recording progress; reporting incidents
Oral communication	• Clarifying instructions • Providing information • Supporting others through encouragement, negotiation and conflict resolution • Using body language to model desired behaviour and responding to others' body language
Numeracy	• Calculating costs, weights, measurements of height and distance • Interpreting measurements
Learning	• Understanding your job role, organisational procedures and legal responsibilities • Managing your work and seeing how well you are going • Making goals for yourself at work • Seeking professional development opportunities for continuous improvement
Problem-solving	• Identifying problems • Working out how to fix a problem using problem-solving processes • Reviewing the outcome
Initiative and enterprise	• Recognising opportunities to develop and apply new ideas • Generating ideas by thinking of new ways to do something • Making suggestions to improve work
Teamwork	• Working well with other people by cooperating, collaborating, encouraging and building rapport

Foundation skill area	Foundation skill description
Planning and organising	• Planning your workload and commitments • Implementing tasks • Completing work on time • Knowing how to deal with hazards and risks
Self-management	• Understanding and applying decision-making processes • Reviewing your behaviour and the impact of your decisions
Technology	• Efficiently using digitally based technologies and systems correctly and safely • Accessing, organising and presenting information • Using equipment correctly and safely

Note: Not every unit of competency will contain all foundation skills.

What do you already know?

Use the following table to identify what you may already know. This may assist you to work out what to focus on in your learning.

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 1 Monitor welfare of colleagues	1A Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing of colleagues	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1B Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1C Use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1D Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1E Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	1F Develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic	Key outcome	Rate your confidence in each section
Topic 2 Conduct structured debriefings following an incident	2A Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2B Conduct debriefing in a safe environment that encourages discussion, exploration and reflection	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2C Identify and respond to indicators of risk	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2D Document and report outcomes of debriefing	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident
	2E Identify and respond to colleagues needing additional support	❑ Confident ❑ Basic understanding ❑ Not confident

Topic 1: Monitor welfare of colleagues

1A   Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing of colleagues

1B   Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs

1C   Use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing

1D   Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance

1E   Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback

1F   Develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation
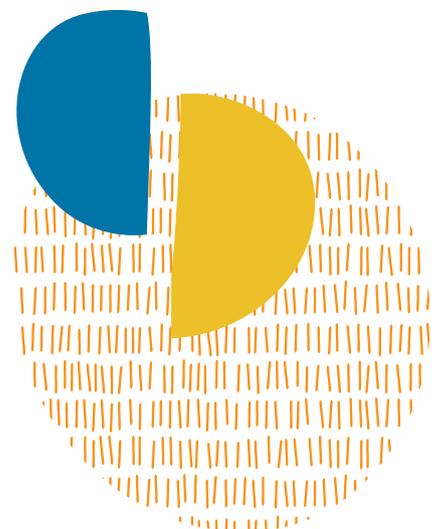
1A Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing of colleagues

You must be familiar with your organisation's standards and procedures regarding how to address issues relating to your colleagues' welfare.

Staff wellbeing can be strongly influenced by supportive leadership. As a leader or manager in your workplace, you need to have the skills to monitor the emotional wellbeing of your colleagues and recognise when a colleague is unwell, not working safely or at risk of physical, psychological or emotional harm. Stress at work can also lead to reduced productivity, **burnout** and workplace injuries.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is 'a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community'.

The WHO recognises stressful work conditions as one of six major risks to mental health, along with other risks such as social exclusion, rapid social change and gender discrimination.

Burnout
A syndrome that is characterised by complete physical and emotional exhaustion and associate with excessive and prolonged stress.

Common factors contributing to workplace stress
Doing shift work
Time pressure
Having limited control over how you do your work
Job insecurity
Lack of job clarity
Poor communication
Bullying
Work that requires high emotional involvement
Discrimination

Source: www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/workplace-stressors

Stress and its impacts

Stress can be good for us in some circumstances. Short-term stress can boost our immune system and enhance our performance. For example, imagine you are stressed about giving a speech in public. Your heart is racing, your chest feels tight and your palms are sweating. But when you get in front of the audience, the stress 'pumps you up' and helps you demonstrate your passion for the topic you are talking about. The passion you are demonstrating will make your presentation more engaging and compelling, which will increase its overall impact on the audience.

Although stress can be good for us on occasion, excessive stress can leave us feeling depleted, overwhelmed and struggling to cope. Excessive stress can have a negative impact on our physical and mental health, as outlined below.

Stress
A response to pressure or a threat. Stress causes our body to produce hormones that bring about a 'fight, flight or freeze' response.

Impacts of excessive stress
Suppresses the immune system, which makes us more vulnerable to viruses
Increases the risk of type 2 diabetes
Can lead to back, neck and shoulder pain
Can lead to peptic ulcers, stress ulcers or ulcerative colitis
Can lead to high blood pressure
Can lead to plaque build-up in the arteries
Can lead to psychiatric illness including neuroses, anxiety and depression
Can lead to chronic fatigue
Can lead to fertility problems

Sources: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3341916/; www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/stress#effects-of-stress; www.healthdirect.gov.au/stress#consequences

For more information about the impacts of stress see: aspirelr.link/black-dog-stress

Video: Dealing with acute stress
This video from the UK National Health Service describes how humans deal with acute stress: aspirelr.link/yt-acute-stress

Indicators of stress

Many people experience symptoms of work-related stress at some stage in their lives. Here are some indicators that a colleague is experiencing significant stress.

Indicators of stress in a worker
• Appearing tired
• Regularly arriving late to work
• Taking additional leave
• Getting frustrated with others
• Mood swings
• Lack of motivation
• Lack of confidence
• Being aggressive or threatening towards others
• Trouble concentrating, making decisions and managing multiple tasks
• Getting overwhelmed or easily upset
• Avoiding social activities

Sources: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/colleagues-employees-and-mental-health-in-the-workplace#signs-that-a-work-colleague-needs-help; www.hse.gov.uk/stress/signs.htm

Burnout, grief and loss

Your colleagues may be facing a range of other issues that are contributing to their stress and/or are impacting upon their emotional wellbeing.

Burnout, grief and loss are common issues that can be created by or contribute to workers' stress and/or emotional wellbeing. Following are descriptions, impacts and signs that may indicate a colleague is experiencing one of these issues.

Burnout	**Description**
	Burnout is a syndrome that is characterised by complete physical and emotional exhaustion associated with excessive and prolonged stress.
	Although burnout can be caused by stress, burnout and stress are different. When you are stressed, you will often believe you can get things under control if you work harder. When you have burnout, you feel hopeless – as if nothing you do will improve the situation.
	Burnout develops over time and typically occurs in organisations with high demands and low personal rewards. It is caused by workload and institutional stress.
	Impacts
	The impacts of burnout include:
	• fatigue
	• insomnia
	• substance misuse
	• heart disease
	• high blood pressure
	• anxiety
	• depression.
	Signs
	Signs that someone is experiencing burnout include:
	• pessimistic views
	• rigidity
	• diminished sense of humour
	• increased physical complaints
	• social withdrawal.

Grief and loss	Description
	Grief is a response to loss. A person can experience grief over a range of different types of loss including:
	• death of a loved one
	• life-changing illness or injury
	• the breakdown of a relationship
	• a child leaving home
	• death of a pet
	• infertility.
	Impacts
	The impacts of grief are different for different people and situations. However, some common impacts include:
	• sadness
	• shock
	• denial
	• numbness
	• anger
	• relief.
	Signs
	It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. However, after the initial grieving period, signs that a person who is grieving might need help include:
	• difficulty functioning in daily life
	• neglect of personal hygiene
	• withdrawal from others
	• substance misuse.

Sources: Working Well, Comcare; Middleton, J (2015) 'Addressing Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue in Work with Older Veterans: An Ethical Imperative', *New Journal of Geriatric Care Management*, Spring 2015; www. beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/grief-and-loss; www.healthdirect.gov.au/grief-loss#effects; www.helpguide.org/ articles/grief/helping-someone-who-is-grieving.htm; www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/ burnout/art-20046642; www.webmd.com/mental-health/what-to-know-about-work-burnout#

For more information about grief, see: aspirelr.link/grief-info-sheet

Video: How to identify signs of burnout in healthcare
Watch this video to better understand signs of burnout and how to prevent and respond to burnout: https://aspirelr.link/yt-burnout

Violence and threatening behaviour in the workplace

Workplace violence poses a threat to workers' mental health and wellbeing.

Some examples of workplace violence are:

- physical assault

- sexual assault

- harassment

- aggressive behaviour (e.g. stalking, verbal threats).

Workplace violence can be perpetrated by:

- customers, clients or members of the public

- co-workers and colleagues

- supervisors and managers.

Workplace violence can happen in an employee's usual workplace (e.g. an aged care home, community service provider or office) or in another setting where an employee is working (e.g. a client's home).

People who work in community services, healthcare and social services are, in general, at a higher risk of workplace violence than people who work in other sectors.

> **Workplace violence**
> Any occasion when an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in the workplace or while they are working.

Impacts of workplace violence
Feelings of loneliness and isolation
Loss of confidence
Social withdrawal
Injuries from assault (e.g. bruises, fractures, concussion)
Depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
Stress-related illnesses
Suicidal thoughts

Source: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/workplace-violence-and-aggression/overview

Employers are required to provide employees with information about how to respond to workplace violence that is directed towards them, what to do if they witness workplace violence and how to report it. They are also required to support workers who experience or witness workplace violence.

For more information about, and resources relating to, workplace violence see: aspirelr. link/swa-workplace-violence

Safe Work Australia has developed a guide for organisations to help prevent harm to workers' psychological health, which is available at: aspirelr.link/swa-psych-health

Taking appropriate action

Research has shown that supervisors who know when to intervene and how to offer appropriate support can contribute to workplace wellbeing and help those facing work-related stress factors.

The first step will often be a conversation with the affected person. Prior to having that conversation, it is a good idea to do some planning. Think about how you might begin the conversation. It may be useful to start with an observation about the person's behaviour in the workplace, such as "I've noticed you've been getting upset in our team meetings lately". This will help the conversation flow more easily than a direct comment based on assumptions, such as, "Are you depressed?"

Try to make your observations neutral and non-judgmental. For example, do not say: "You really don't seem to be coping." Rather, say: "You left the meeting early yesterday and at last week's meeting you seemed quite agitated."

People may be more willing to speak with you if you clarify when and how you will respect their privacy. For example, you could say, "I just want you to know that whatever you share with me will not go any further than this room, unless you want it to." Depending on the situation, however, you may need to remind the individual that there are situations where you do need to share information they have shared with you, such as if they are suicidal or threatening harm to others.

Here are some tips to help you prepare before starting a conversation with your colleague:

- Spend some time thinking about what you want to say.
- Make sure you set aside enough time for the conversation.
- Choose the right moment.
- Find a quiet place that will make the person feel comfortable (avoid communal areas).
- Do some research into mental health support services and helplines in case the person needs additional support.
- Open the conversation with an observation about the person within the workplace.
- Keep your observations as neutral and non-judgmental as possible.
- Let the person know that you will respect their privacy.
- Provide appropriate practical supports.

Practical supports you can provide include:

- listening to your colleague

- brainstorming with your colleague to come up with ways to address the issue

- providing your colleague with resources, such as links to information about managing stress or conflict resolution

- providing information to your colleague about employment assistance programs, internal or external support services

- following up with your colleague after you have spoken with them to see how they are going.

Limitations and professional boundaries

When you are taking action to support a worker who is experiencing stress or issues with their emotional wellbeing, you must be aware of the limitations of your work role, your responsibilities, and your professional abilities and boundaries. This will ensure your actions are appropriate, ethical and aligned with legislation.

For example, if you are not a qualified mental health practitioner and you find out a colleague is dealing with complex mental health issues, you can support them to access appropriate services from a qualified professional. It would be beyond your abilities – and unethical – to provide them with any kind of counselling or therapy.

Maintaining professional boundaries means keeping to the specifications of your job role and organisational policies and procedures. It also means making sure that you maintain appropriate boundaries in your professional relations with your colleagues. For example:

- not offering support outside of work hours (unless that is part of your role and responsibilities)

- using minimal physical contact (if any)

- not giving the same type or level of support to colleagues as you would to friends and family

- not getting intimately involved with colleagues.

Documents that will provide you with information about the limitations of your role, your responsibilities and the boundaries of your profession include:

- your job description

- your organisational policies and procedures

- organisational codes of conduct

- codes of conduct and ethics for your profession.

Effective communication

As a leader or manager, you need to be able to communicate effectively with your colleagues, especially in circumstances where a colleague is experiencing significant issues.

Here are some communication strategies and skills that are useful when responding to a colleague who is experiencing significant issues.

Empathy
• To have empathy is to recognise and acknowledge another person's emotional state, to feel as well as see things from their perspective, and to show appropriate concern. • You could mention specific things that have led you to be concerned, such as signs that the person is anxious while at work or the person's continual lateness to their shifts. Be supportive and caring and try to avoid judgment.

Active and supportive listening
• Listening is one of the most helpful things you can do for someone who is stressed or experiencing issues with their emotional wellbeing. • Be attentive to what the person is saying – maintain eye contact, stay relaxed, be aware of your body language and allow the person to express their views and opinions without judgment. • Do not interrupt or attempt to 'fill pauses' with your own viewpoints or beliefs. • Summarise or rephrase what you hear and ask for confirmation that you have understood correctly.

Open-ended questions
• Open questions cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. They are used to create a conversation; to gain information and details; to gain detailed descriptions of situations; to learn more and to develop relationships. • For example, instead of asking 'Did you talk to Johan about what he said to you?', you could ask, 'What happened after Johan made that comment to you?'

Probing questions
• Probing questions are used to clarify meaning. • You can use probing questions to clarify what the person means but make sure you do it in a respectful and non-judgmental way. For example, instead of saying, 'So, you took Johan's comment about your performance as an attack?', you might say, 'So, are you saying that you found Johan's comment to be overly critical?'

Be aware of different communication styles and needs
• Be aware of cultural, social or medical considerations; for example, in Western society, we expect people to look at us when we are talking. Lack of eye contact can be indicative of shyness or shiftiness. In some cultures, maintaining eye contact can be seen as rude, lewd or hostile. • Eye contact can also be difficult for people who are autistic or have social anxiety.

Offer support
• It is not possible for you to solve the person's problems – and you do not have to have all the answers – but you can listen to them and work with them to try and improve the situation.
• Ask them what you can do to help. Where appropriate, suggest mental health services or encourage them to talk to a doctor.

Source: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/colleagues-employees-and-mental-health-in-the-workplace#signs-that-a-work-colleague-needs-help

Video: Empathy vs Sympathy

In this video, researcher Brene Brown describes the difference between empathy and sympathy: aspirelr.link/yt-empathy-sympathy

Video: Supporting and listening to others

This video features a police officer talking about how to form a connection with a person who is experiencing acute trauma: aspirelr.link/ted-supporting-listening

Dispute resolution

Monitoring the wellbeing of your colleagues may lead you to become aware of conflicts or disputes between employees.

For example, perhaps you have noticed your colleague is acting in a way which indicates she is under a lot of stress. You approach her to sensitively ask about her wellbeing and she informs you that she is having an ongoing argument with another colleague who is constantly 'handballing' his work to her. This is a dispute – that is, it is a situation where one or more people disagree about something, and the matter remains unresolved.

Dispute resolution refers to the processes by which disputes are brought to an end. When best practice dispute resolution procedures are followed, both parties involved in the dispute are given the opportunity to explain what their needs are and how they think these can be addressed. Dispute resolution is more likely to occur if the dispute is dealt with quickly (so it is not left to escalate), as well as fairly and sensitively.

Most organisations have dispute resolution policies and procedures. A dispute resolution policy typically includes information about the definition of a 'dispute' within the organisation as well as the organisation's legal responsibilities. For example, organisations might have legal responsibilities regarding disputes relating to enterprise bargaining under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).

Dispute resolution policies and procedures provide workers with information about what steps to take when there is a conflict or dispute between staff that they cannot resolve themselves. These may differ between organisations; however, most outline the steps that must be followed when a dispute arises.

Here is an example of a dispute resolution policy from the community services sector:

Dispute resolution policy
Purpose and scope The purpose of this dispute resolution policy is to ensure all parties involved have the opportunity to resolve the dispute with as few consequences as possible. The policy is intended to be fair and protect all person's interests and rights. This policy sets out the dispute resolution procedures that should occur if disputes arise within the organisation. The policy applies to all workers, supervisors, volunteers and individuals who use the service.
Obligations and good practice Disputes will be resolved in accordance with the organisation's responsibilities and obligations and with good industry practice, including accordance with: • relevant legislation and regulations, such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) • the code of conduct • the ethical framework • relevant government policy • the requirements of industry and practice standards and principles.
Definition of 'dispute' A dispute exists if: • two or more persons have difficulty working together due to conflict or grievances • the situation affects the persons' ability to work and perform their duties effectively.
Procedure for internal dispute resolution • Attempt informal resolution. If required, a supervisor or manager may mediate the dispute. • Document the dispute if further action is required. Parties must each make an objective statement and sign the statement for accountability. • Consult the supervisor or manager if attempted resolution is unsuccessful.
Procedure for external dispute resolution • An independent, qualified mediator will be appointed. • Parties will cooperate with the mediator, and provide all reasonable requested assistance. • The supervisor will oversee the process. • If the dispute cannot be resolved internally, the relevant government department will be contacted; alternatively the Ombudsman.

Organisation standards and procedures

When taking action to support a worker who is experiencing significant stress or issues with their emotional wellbeing, you will need to meet the standards of your organisation and follow any procedures that are relevant to the situation at hand.

Here are some examples of standards and procedures that you may need to follow when taking action relating to a colleague's stress or emotional wellbeing:

Standard or procedure	Example of when a standard or procedure applies
Supervision/management standards	An organisation requires supervisors to deal with all staff in a sensitive and caring fashion and regularly monitor staff wellbeing via two-way communication.
Privacy and confidentiality procedures	During a performance appraisal, an employee tells their manager that they are going through a divorce. The organisation's code of conduct requires the manager to respect the employee's privacy and not share this information with others.
Workplace health and safety procedures	A man tells his team leader that his recent 'failures' at work have led him to suspect that he is worthless and 'no good to anyone'. The organisation has a 'Suicide Safety Check Procedure' which requires the team leader to ask the man if he is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

For more information about responding to suicidal warning signs see: aspirelr.link/beyond-blue-suicidal-warning-signs

Example
Monitor stress and emotional wellbeing, and take appropriate action

Marta is a team leader at an organisation that provides day services to adults with intellectual disabilities. To help her monitor stress and the emotional wellbeing of her staff, Marta regularly checks in on her team members in informal and formal settings.

Greg works as a social educator and is in Marta's team. Lately, Greg has been arriving late for work. He often looks very tired and has stopped joining the team for their monthly lawn bowls competition.

Marta is nervous about approaching Greg, but it is part of her role as a team leader to monitor stress and wellbeing in her team. She spends some time planning what she is going to say and during their regular one-on-one catch up, Marta says to Greg, "I know how dedicated you are to your role, Greg, and I've noticed you've been late to work most days this week. We've also really been missing you at the lawn bowls competition. Is everything okay at home?"

Greg looks down at his hands and sighs. "You know that anything you share with me in this room is completely confidential," Marta says.

Greg tells Marta that his wife wants a divorce and has asked him to move out of the family home. Greg is staying with his brother, who lives on the opposite side of town. His brother has a newborn baby who is keeping Greg awake at night, which is why he has been arriving late for work.

"I'm so sorry to hear that, Greg," Marta replies. "What can I do to support you while you're going through this?"

Practice Task 1

Question 1

List four impacts of excessive stress.

Question 2

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. High blood pressure is a potential impact of burnout *and* grief and loss.	Yes / No
b. Pessimistic views and rigidity are signs of burnout.	Yes / No
c. Experts agree that a normal response to loss is sadness, shock and denial.	Yes / No
d. Feelings of isolation are one of the potential impacts of workplace violence.	Yes / No

Question 3

List four factors that indicate that a worker is experiencing significant stress.

Question 4

Which of the following types of questions should be used when asking a colleague about their emotional wellbeing? Select all that apply.

❑ Redirecting questions

❑ Recall questions

❑ Probing questions

❑ Open-ended questions

❑ Adjoining questions

Question 5

Describe a situation where an employee will need to follow a specific organisational standard or procedure when providing support to a colleague who is experiencing significant stress.

Question 6

Identify two documents that provide information to a worker about the limitations of their role, their responsibilities and the boundaries of their profession.

Question 7

Describe what information is typically included in an organisation's dispute resolution policy and procedures.

1B Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs

Diversity describes the varying individual differences of the people associated with your organisation.

A workplace that embraces diversity accepts and respects difference, including differences that relate to ethnicity, culture, language, beliefs and abilities.

Acknowledging and accepting workforce diversity can enhance the reputation of an organisation, help to attract and retain employees and promote acceptance of diversity in the broader community.

Some workplaces are more diverse than others, but most are a reflection of the diversity of the broader Australian population.

Here are some examples of common differences within Australian workplaces:

Age	• Depending on the industry, organisations may have a range of people of all ages, from young people just finishing high school to people in their 60s or 70s. Retail and hospitality often have younger staff, such as high school and university students.

Culture and ethnicity	• Culture is sometimes described as a lens through which we view the world.
	• Ethnicity is a person's sense of identity and membership of a group that shares a common racial background, culture, language, traits and/or history.
	• Cultural and ethnic differences can influence employees':
	  – values and beliefs
	  – attitudes and perspectives (e.g. work ethic)
	  – customs and daily life (e.g. prayer, diet)
	  – behaviour and body language (e.g. eye contact, gestures).

Disability	• Types of disability include:
	  – intellectual
	  – neurological
	  – physical
	  – psychiatric
	  – sensory.
	• A person with a disability may not experience or view their disability as a disadvantage. The social model of disability suggests that it is the environment that creates challenges for people with disability, rather than disability itself.

Gender and gender identity	• A workplace may have a balanced ratio of male to female staff, while some may have more male or more female staff. • Some people may identify as a different gender to the one they were assigned at birth.
Language	• Although English is the main language in most Australian workplaces, English may not be the first language for many employees. • Some employees whose first language is English may speak another language or multiple languages.

Family make-up	• Employees may be:
	  – living alone
	  – living with friends
	  – living with a spouse or partner with no dependent children
	  – separated from a partner or spouse with no dependent children
	  – a single parent
	  – living with extended family (e.g. children, parents, grandparents).

Nationality	• Some employees might be Australian citizens, some might be permanent residents, and some might be on temporary visas. • Some employees will have dual nationality – for example, a staff member could be an Australian citizen and a citizen of the United Kingdom.

Personality	• Workplaces that employ more than a few people typically include employees with a range of different personal qualities such as:
	  – extroversion
	  – shyness
	  – cheerfulness
	  – reservedness.

Religion	• People may have a specific religion they follow strictly, have beliefs based on their culture or have no religious affiliation.
Sexuality	• Diverse sexualities include heterosexual, gay, lesbian, queer, bisexual, pansexual, asexual and aromantic. • People use different terms to refer to their sexual orientation – for example, a same-sex attracted woman might identify as gay, lesbian, queer or bisexual.

Diverse needs

Identifying and supporting your colleagues' needs can help prevent and reduce workplace stress and enhance emotional wellbeing.

Here are some examples of the diverse needs of employees:

Type of need	Examples of needs
Environmental needs	• Provisions for people with mobility needs such as ramps for people who use wheelchairs and seating beside lifts for people who cannot stand for long periods of time • Availability of quiet spaces, such as small meeting rooms separate from shared workspaces • Access to outdoor areas, such as courtyards and balconies • Prayer rooms
Equipment/resource needs	• Ergonomic furniture, such as standing desks, for people with neck or back pain • Printed information in large print format for people with vision impairments • Anti-blue-light screen protectors
Workplace culture	• Flexible work arrangements for people who have parenting/caring responsibilities or cultural/religious obligations (e.g. fasting) • Work social events that do not explicitly or implicitly encourage alcohol consumption • Ability to opt out of work social events without judgment
Specific supports	• Buddy systems for new staff • Formal mentorship programs for groups who are under-represented in leadership roles • Leave for employees who are undergoing gender transition
Administrative needs	• Information available in languages other than English • HR forms that allow staff to identify as neither male nor female • Ability to verify identity using diverse methods (e.g. for people who do not have a driver's licence or passport)

There are a range of approaches and tools you can use to identify the diverse needs of your colleagues. Here are some examples:

Asking individual colleagues directly about their needs, such as during induction procedures or regular one-on-one supervision with staff
Asking groups of colleagues about their needs, such as during a regular team meeting
Regularly reminding your team that you are open to learning more from them about how to make the workplace inclusive for everyone
Undertaking brainstorming sessions with colleagues to identify how to meet their diverse needs
Providing opportunities for anonymous reporting of issues, such as a feedback box
Undertaking a staff survey or using data from a previous staff survey, such as a staff wellbeing survey
Consulting with employee representative and working groups, such as workplace health and wellbeing committees

When identifying the needs of your colleagues, you need to be sensitive, ethical and respectful. For example, some people will not want to share their specific needs with others – it may be better to ask them during one-on-one conversations.

Always respect people's privacy – if someone shares information with you, do not share it with other people unless you have that person's permission to do so. There is legislation regarding privacy and confidentiality that you will also need to be aware of, as well as organisational policies and procedures. Each state and territory has different laws regarding privacy and confidentiality and there are also Commonwealth Acts that apply to the whole of Australia, such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

Avoid making assumptions about people based on their appearance, accent or circumstances. For example, do not ask a woman in a same-sex relationship how the workplace can be more inclusive for gay women – she may not identify as gay. In most circumstances, it is better to ask about needs generally. For example, you could ask: "What do you think we could do as a team to make the office more inclusive?"

Be sensitive, ethical and respectful when asking people about their needs
Respect people's privacy
Be aware of state/territory and Commonwealth privacy and confidentiality laws
Check and follow organisational policies and procedures regarding privacy and confidentiality
Avoid making assumptions

Practices that acknowledge and accept difference

In a workplace that acknowledges and accepts difference, employees feel:

- respected for who they are and free to be themselves

- a sense of belonging and connection to their colleagues

- as if they are contributing their talents and unique perspective to the workplace

- that they are progressing in their career and have equal access to opportunities and resources.

Here are some examples of practices that can help you to acknowledge and accept difference in your workplace:

Practices that acknowledge and accept difference	Examples of how to implement them
Respect different communication styles	• Understand that different cultures express emotions in different ways – some cultures encourage the sharing of emotions whereas others encourage a more reserved approach. • Learn about and respect different preferences regarding body language, and encourage others to do the same
Promote respect and understanding	• Help to create a team culture that is respectful of difference – acknowledge that each member has strengths and weaknesses. • Provide opportunities for teams to learn more about what diversity means and how to respect difference.
Encourage discussion	• Promote and support an environment that encourages discussion and respect for different viewpoints. • Give staff opportunities to talk about their needs and concerns – do not let one person dominate the conversation, and encourage quieter members of the team to participate.
Support inclusion	• Make sure each team member knows that their contribution to the team is important. • Use inclusive language in everyday communication and encourage others to do the same (e.g. 'Marta uses a wheelchair' instead of 'Marta is confined to a wheelchair'). • Encourage equal representation of people from diverse groups in leadership and management positions.

Practices that acknowledge and accept difference	Examples of how to implement them
Encourage and demonstrate flexibility	• Take on feedback about what is and is not working and try new approaches to management, supervision and communication. • When overseeing the completion of tasks, focus on outcomes rather than process – give people the freedom to complete tasks in the way that works best for them.
Avoid stereotypes	• Avoid making assumptions about a person based on their age, gender, ethnicity and so on. • Understand that there are differences within groups as well as differences between groups – for example, although people of the same religion will have things in common, individuals will have different views, perspectives and beliefs.
Acknowledge and share important events and traditions	• Find out about the traditions and celebrations that are important to team members and incorporate these into your team activities. • Celebrate events that are designed to promote diversity such as Harmony Week.

Diversity and the law

To discriminate means to treat someone differently based on one or more of their attributes, such as gender, race, religion or beliefs.

In Australia, federal laws make it unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of a range of factors including:

	Age
	Sex, pregnancy, gender identity
	Race, colour, ethnic origin or descent
	Disability, physical disfigurement, disorder, illness, disease

	Marital or relationship status
	Sexual orientation
	Religion and political opinion

Here is a list of national legislation relevant to discrimination and other issues surrounding diversity in the workplace. Be aware that states and territories also have their own discrimination laws and may apply federal discrimination laws in different ways.

Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)	The *Age Discrimination Act 2004* states that people must not be treated more or less favourably on the basis of their age.
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)	The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* gives a broad definition of disability and prohibits direct and indirect discrimination based on disability.
	All states and territories have established bodies to deal with disability discrimination issues under the legislation they administer.
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)	The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* underpins Australia's obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Its main objectives are to promote equality before the law for all people and to make discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful.
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)	The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* recognises the need to prohibit, as far as possible, discrimination against people on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding or family responsibilities.
Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)	The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* aims to ensure that people of all backgrounds are treated equally and have the same opportunities. The Act also makes discrimination against people on the basis of their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin unlawful.
	This Act established the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and gave it the functions to protect individuals' rights.

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)	The *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* replaces the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999* (Cth).
	The legislation aims to improve and promote gender equality in the workplace.

For more information about Australian anti-discrimination laws see: aspirelr.link/human-rights-aus-discrimination-laws

Example
Acknowledge, accept and identify diverse needs of colleagues

Lena works as a manager at a service that provides free and low-cost health treatments to homeless people.

Lena has a diverse team, including employees who have experienced homelessness. Her team includes people from various cultural backgrounds, with very diverse skills and abilities from a range of age groups including a team member in her early 20s and one in his late 60s.

To ensure she is acknowledging and accepting differences within her team, Lena encourages her team to ask questions and discuss the things that are working and not working within the team and the organisation.

Some of the ideas her team comes up with sound outlandish but rather than shutting those ideas down, Lena encourages her team to explore those ideas further. In doing so, Lena is demonstrating to her team that everyone's views and perspectives are valid.

Often, an idea that initially appears to be unfeasible leads to a creative solution to a problem that benefits Lena, her team, their clients and the organisation itself.

Practice Task 2

Question 1

List three approaches or tools that can be used to identify the diverse needs of your colleagues.

Question 2

Identify four practices that can be used to acknowledge and accept difference in the workplace.

Question 3

Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Australia has state/territory and Commonwealth laws regarding privacy and confidentiality.	Yes / No
b. The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* makes discrimination against people based on their race illegal.	Yes / No
c. States and territories in Australia apply federal discrimination laws in the same way.	Yes / No
d. According to federal laws, it is illegal to discriminate against someone based on their opinions.	Yes / No

1C

Use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing

Standards provide a framework for service delivery.

A range of national and international standards are relevant to health and community services work. The standards that apply to your organisation depend on the sector in which you work and will reflect the relevant ethical and legal requirements.

Your organisation should have clear and easily accessible descriptions of performance and behavioural expectations for staff. Regular monitoring of how well your team members are performing in relation to these guidelines can help you address risks to the emotional wellbeing of staff.

Organisational standards usually reflect industry standards. The supervisor's role is to monitor the performance of the workers and ensure standards are maintained.

The following list outlines some of the Australian standards that may be relevant to your workplace setting.

Performance standards are put in place to ensure the agency or service provides a high quality of care and the needs of individuals are met.

National standards relevant to health and community care work
• Aged Care Quality Standards
• National Standards for Disability Services
• National Standards for Mental Health Services
• National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

Guiding documents such as policies, protocols and procedures provide a framework for a consistent standard of practice. The responsibility for monitoring how policies and procedures are put into practice usually rests with staff working in supervisory or leadership roles.

Monitor and manage stress and emotional wellbeing

Initial efforts to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing in the workplace have focused on recognising and managing individual personal risk.

This is in line with legal and ethical requirements that recognise the rights of workers to be protected from psychological injury and to receive support for recovery and rehabilitation when injury does occur.

More recent research suggests that the most effective way to approach stress management in the workplace is to take a holistic approach, where organisational factors that can contribute to psychological injury are also addressed. Using management standards can help to monitor an organisation's approach to managing stress and workplace wellbeing.

Monitoring and managing the wellbeing of groups within the organisation can lead to the development and implementation of organisation-wide measures, such as ensuring appropriate and diverse workloads and building a workplace culture that recognises the risks of secondary trauma, making it easier for individuals to talk about and get support for their emotional wellbeing.

Managing emotions, having integrity
Integrity: • Being respectful and honest to employees Managing emotions: • Behaving consistently and calmly around the team • Using a considerate approach • Being thoughtful in managing others and delegating
Managing and communicating existing and future work
Proactive work management: • Monitoring and reviewing existing work • Allowing future prioritisation and planning • Problem-solving • Dealing with problems promptly, rationally and responsibly • Participative/empowering • Listening to, meeting and consulting with the team • Providing direction, autonomy and development opportunities

Managing the individual within the team
Being personally accessible: • Available to talk one-on-one • Sociable • Using a relaxed approach, such as socialising and using humour • Empathetic engagement • Seeking to understand each individual in the team in terms of their health and satisfaction, motivation, point of view and life outside work
Reasoning/managing difficult situations
Managing conflict: • Dealing with conflicts decisively, promptly and objectively • Use of organisational resources • Seeking advice when necessary from HR and work health and safety (WHS) managers

Attend supervision meetings

Supervision meetings are generally provided as part of your performance review and are regularly scheduled throughout the year. Their frequency will depend on your organisation and your industry's standards. You may need to seek supervision for a particular issue, perhaps if the worker you are supervising is dealing with a complex issue that goes beyond your job role and field of experience.

Supervision meetings and performance appraisals help you to review your existing skills and knowledge, identify limitations, set goals and structure a personal improvement plan.

Supervision meetings can help you:
• review your skills
• review your current knowledge
• identify your limitations
• identify your need for further support or training
• plan professional or personal development
• address a specific issue.

Monitoring performance

Performance appraisals deal specifically with an employee's performance over time and their ability to meet specific goals and standards.

Performance appraisal processes provide opportunities for supervisors to monitor issues that might affect the performance or wellbeing of individuals and assist them to find solutions.

Most performance monitoring is conducted through performance appraisals.

The expectations for an individual worker and their role should be addressed as part of the performance management and appraisal process. Supervisors should make sure that expectations for performance – and the criteria by which performance will be measured – are concrete, clearly explained and understood. Clear communication regarding personal performance standards should help to reduce stress for all employees and supervisors.

Here are some points to consider in relation to performance monitoring:

Measuring performance	Performance may be measured against the following: • punctuality, honesty and integrity • appearance • interaction with clients • relationships with colleagues • teamwork • service goals • professional development and advancement.
Performance appraisal as a tool	• A performance appraisal is a tool for measuring a person's performance against selected criteria. • The criteria will be both quantitative and qualitative, meaning they will provide a measure for the quality of performance as well as quantity (for example, meeting specific targets). • Performance issues can be discussed positively and strategies can be developed to improve performance. Ideally, appraisals are a positive experience and provide feedback on progress since the last meeting. • Any non-performance should be discussed separately from performance appraisals in specific counselling sessions.
Aims of performance appraisal	The aims of performance appraisals can be to: • provide open and honest feedback on performance • facilitate discussion between worker and manager about mutual needs • validate quality practices • identify training needs • provide a basis for workplace decisions regarding pay increases, promotion and professional development.
Post-appraisal commitments	Follow-through is imperative for ensuring any performance issues are addressed and progress is made. A manager should document the discussion and ensure the worker receives a copy and signs it. Performance appraisals can be motivational, uplifting and positive experiences when handled well, and allow you to address performance issues in a fair and non-discriminatory way.

Integrating with professional development	Supervision meetings and performance appraisals should be used to identify areas for development. Feedback should be constructive and work both ways, so it is an opportunity for improvement for employee and managers. Goals, and limitations to achieving those goals, should be discussed and actions to achieve the goals agreed to by both supervisor and worker. Such actions might include: • further training • updating knowledge about legislation, standards, policies and procedures • mentoring.

Where staff struggle to meet performance standards, supervisors can assist them to identify and address barriers to achievement as well as skill shortfalls.

Example
Identify and use performance standards to monitor stress and emotional wellbeing

Matt is a manager at a health service in an inner-city suburb. Matt manages a team of five people. One of Matt's responsibilities is to lead each member of his team through the organisation's performance appraisal process. Formal performance appraisal occurs annually with a mid-year 'check-in' to discuss progress.

Matt uses the annual performance appraisal and mid-yearly check-in to monitor the wellbeing of his team. He conducts a conversation about issues relating to workload, stress or challenges within the team.

Matt uses those opportunities to remind his team about the organisation's employee assistance program (EAP) and the other resources and links available on their intranet site.

Addressing poor performance

Addressing performance that does not meet personal and organisational standards is fundamental to monitoring and managing workplace wellbeing.

An employee's poor performance may indicate that they are experiencing significant issues relating to stress or emotional wellbeing. Performance appraisals provide workers with opportunities to discuss those issues and managers to offer supports.

Poor performance that is identified but not addressed promptly has the potential to escalate and threaten workplace morale, productivity, and the emotional wellbeing of the team member themselves as well as others in the workplace.

There can be many reasons for poor performance, as shown here:

Reasons for poor performance
• Confusion about what is expected because goals, standards or policies are not clear or have not been established
• A mismatch between capabilities and the job the worker is required to do
• Lack of knowledge or skills to do the job expected of them
• Lack of personal motivation, low workplace morale and/or poor work environment
• Personal issues, such as family stress, health problems or substance misuse

Source: *Employment Essentials: Managing Performance*. www.industrialrelations.nsw.gov.au

Ethical breaches

A worker may breach workplace ethics knowingly or unknowingly. Here are some examples of ethical breaches in community and health services settings.

Breach of duty of care	According to the requirements of duty of care, staff must take reasonable care to avoid someone being injured. Taking actions that cause someone to be injured or not taking reasonable care to avoid someone being injured can both be breaches of duty of care. In other words, duty of care refers to the actions we do take (acts) and the actions we do not take (omission).
	Duty of care is a legal requirement as well as an ethical responsibility of people who work in health and community services.
Breach of confidentiality	A breach of confidentiality is intentionally or unintentionally collecting, storing or using confidential information in a way that does not adhere to privacy legislation or a service's confidentiality and privacy policy. An example is sharing private information about a person without their consent.
Breach of professional ethics	A breach of professional ethics is behaviour that is contrary to a professional code of conduct, code of ethics, the expressed values of a service or the commonly upheld professional standards in the sector.
Breach of procedure	A breach of procedure is an action or omission that is not aligned with service procedures. An example could be using company cab charges for personal use outside of work hours.

Ethical breaches do not necessarily have legal implications. For example, a breach of organisational procedure may not constitute unlawful conduct. If a breach does have legal implications, however, there will be specific actions that need to be taken.

Legal considerations

All health and community services workers have an obligation to be aware of and apply relevant legislation. If you work in a supervisory role, you have a greater responsibility as you may also have mandatory reporting requirements.

You will need to learn to identify and clearly explain legal responsibilities to staff, monitor how they apply legislative requirements and make sure they are informed about any relevant changes in legislation. Assisting your colleagues to improve their understanding of requirements and how to apply them will help avoid unnecessary stress in your team due to a lack of clarity regarding their responsibilities.

Effective performance management

Many of the factors that contribute to work-related stress and psychological injury are due to poor people-management practices.

Comcare has identified inadequate performance management as one of the risks to workplace wellbeing. It suggests the following for effective performance management.

Requirements for effective performance management	• Make expectations clear
	• Ensure procedures are understood by all staff
	• Use a two-way process, covering:
	  – feedback on performance
	  – areas for improvement
	  – future goals and objectives
	  – training needs.

Expectations of a performance manager	• Be trained to provide effective development-oriented feedback • Give continuous feedback rather than restricting it to performance reviews • Consider using the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) management standard on support as a guide

Management standards

The HSE has designed Management Standards for work-related stress. These professional standards are recommended by the Australian Government's Comcare to guide managers in monitoring emotional wellbeing and planning stress management. The standards cover six areas associated with poor health and wellbeing in the workplace if not properly managed.

Primary areas of workplace stress	
Demands	Workload, work patterns and the work environment
Control	How much say a person has in the way they do their work
Support	Including the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
Relationships	Promoting positive working relationships to avoid conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour
Role	Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
Change	How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

Referring to the HSE Management Standards may help you monitor risks to the wellbeing of your colleagues. These standards define the characteristics or culture of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. Each standard is accompanied by a 'state to be achieved' that highlights good management practice and describes organisational behaviour necessary to achieve the standard.

HSE Management Standards
Demonstrate good practice through a step-by-step risk assessment approach.
Allow assessment of the current situation using surveys and other techniques.
Promote active discussion and work in partnership with employees to help decide on practical improvements that can be made.
Identify the main risk factors for work-related stress.
Help employers focus on the underlying causes of stress and their prevention.
Provide a measurement for organisations to gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

Source: HSE at www.hse.gov.uk

Practice Task 3

Question 1

Identify two national standards relevant to the work undertaken in health and community services.

Question 2

Explain three possible reasons for poor performance in the workplace.

Question 3

Provide two ethical considerations a worker might need to take into account when monitoring their colleagues' wellbeing.

1D

Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance

Critical reflection occurs when a worker analyses and challenges the ideas and beliefs that underpin their thoughts and actions.

Reflective practice is an essential professional skill for all workers in the community services industry. Regular critical reflection and self-assessment allows you to consider what you are doing and how you could improve.

Practising critical reflection and self-evaluation will sharpen your self-awareness and help you improve your effectiveness as a leader or supervisor in your organisation.

Assessing your own performance will help you identify your strengths, weaknesses and learning needs. However, the process can be challenging. It is often difficult to be objective about ourselves.

To be honest and realistic about your performance you need to be self-aware. In other words, you need to have the ability to recognise and understand your emotions and motivations and their effect on others.

You need to set aside adequate time to assess your performance. Find a quiet and private place where you can concentrate without disruption.

Self-assessment strategies

There are a range of strategies you can use to help you assess your own performance. You might be asked to use these strategies as part of a formal performance appraisal process, or you might use them in your own time.

Here are some examples of self-assessment strategies you could use:

The STAR method	The STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method provides a framework for self-assessment. It involves a description of: • a Situation at work • the Task that needed to be completed • the Action that was taken to address the situation • the Result of the action.
Stress Management Competency Indicator Tool	The Stress Management Competency Indicator Tool helps you assess whether you are using practices that have been identified as effective for preventing and reducing stress among your staff.

Self-assessment templates	A range of self-assessment templates are available online. These templates can be used exactly as they are or adapted to meet the specific context that you are working within.

Reflective behaviour

When you are reflecting upon your own performance, you identify what happened and what your role was, including your behaviour, thinking and emotions. This allows you to identify changes you could make to address a similar situation in the future.

Situations or experiences you might reflect upon include:

- a difference of opinion with a colleague

- working with new technology

- supervising a staff member

- motivating your team

- juggling multiple projects.

A self-reflection process can involve the following steps.

> Reflective behaviour involves thinking about and reflecting on a situation or experience.

Self-reflection process	
1	Select a workplace experience, situation or event to reflect on.
2	Describe and unpack the experience.
3	Analyse your experience.
4	Interpret your response or reaction to the experience.
5	Explore the alternatives and rethink how you will respond in the future.
6	Take action with new intent and information.

Self-reflection strategies

Here are some examples of strategies you can use for the purposes of self-reflection on your own performance:

Critical reflection
Critical reflection allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to real-life experience and to use this reflection to inform your future actions and practices. Critical reflection is an ongoing process; reading, thinking and reflecting will most likely lead to changes in what and how you think, which will also influence your actions and practices at work.

The Johari Window
The Johari Window is a tool that helps people to improve their self-awareness by clarifying what they know about themselves and how they appear to others.

The SEAL method
Similar to the STAR method but focusing on reflection as well as action, the SEAL (Situation, Effect, Action, Learning) method involves four key steps: • Situation: What happened? • Effect: What impact did it have on you? • Action: What action did you take and why did you take those actions? • Learning: What did you learn from it?

Example
Use self-assessment and reflective behaviour strategies to monitor performance

Jethro is a team leader at a service that specialises in providing mental health supports to families who have experienced natural disasters, such as floods and bushfires.

Jethro sets aside time every second Friday to reflect upon his performance as a team leader. Today, he decides to reflect upon a situation regarding Pat, a member of his team.

Pat is a committed member of the team; however, she often 'butts heads' with another member of the team, Marcus. Marcus is a recent graduate and highly qualified. Jethro has noticed that at times Marcus can be condescending towards other members of the team, especially Pat, even though Pat has decades of experience as a family support worker.

Earlier that week, Pat burst into Jethro's office and slammed the door behind her. "I can't take it anymore!" she screamed. "Either I go, or he does!"

Jethro describes the experience in writing and analyses it by thinking about the emotions he experienced. He realises he felt discomfort and fear when Pat stormed into his office, as he doesn't like confrontation. He reacted by telling Pat to 'calm down' and stop 'making a scene'. This exacerbated Pat's anger, rather than diminishing it.

Eventually, Pat calmed down and she and Jethro were able to have a calm and rational discussion about the situation that triggered her behaviour.

Jethro completes the reflective exercise by considering what he could do differently in the future. Jethro decides that if Pat does the same thing again, he will stand up – so he is at her eye level – and politely ask Pat to sit down. If Pat keeps shouting, Jethro will suggest she gets some fresh air and takes a moment to regroup before they talk further.

Although Jethro recognises that Pat is excellent at her job, and is upset about how Marcus treats her, he also needs to ensure that she respects him and the other members of the team by not shouting and slamming doors.

Stress management techniques

As you undertake self-reflection and reflective behaviour strategies, you may notice signs that you are experiencing excessive stress. For example, perhaps when analysing your own response to situations at work you have noticed that you are getting easily frustrated with others or getting easily overwhelmed or upset.

Simple stress management techniques that benefit everyone include taking care of your physical and mental health by:

- eating healthily

- getting enough rest

- establishing or maintaining an exercise regime

- spending time with loved ones.

Here are some other stress management techniques that you can use and recommend to others:

Limit your overtime	As much as possible, limit the amount of overtime that you do. If overtime is becoming a regular thing for you, discuss your workload with your manager – especially if you are finding it overwhelming or stressful.
Take regular breaks	Take a short break every hour. Leave your workplace during your lunch break, whenever it is possible to do so. Get some fresh air or take a walk – this will help you to refocus.
Try not to take your work home	Try to avoid taking work home; it helps you maintain a healthy work-life balance. If you must take work home, do the work as soon as you can so you can get it out of the way and focus on your life outside of work.

Switch off from your email	Constantly checking your email outside of work hours will make it difficult for you to 'switch off'.
	Try to be strict about not looking at your email outside of work hours and ask your partner, housemate or friend to remind you when it's time to 'switch off'.
Learn how to say no	People who work in health and community services are typically caring people. It can be hard to say 'no' when a colleague asks you for help or your boss asks you do some extra work.
	Do not be afraid to say no. State your reasons for saying no and do not apologise for it. You have the right to set limits on your work.

Source: www.headsup.org.au/your-mental-health/taking-care-of-yourself-and-staying-well/at-work

For more information about stress management at work see: aspirelr.link/heads-up-stress-at-work

Practice Task 4

Question 1

Identify two self-assessment strategies a worker can use to monitor their own performance.

Question 2

Number each step from 1 to 6 in the order you would follow during a self-reflection process on your own performance.

	Explore the alternatives and rethink how you will respond in the future.
	Interpret your response or reaction to the experience.
	Select a workplace experience, situation or event to reflect on.
	Take action with new intent and information.
	Analyse your experience.
	Describe and unpack the experience.

Question 3

Provide two stress management techniques that involve looking after your physical health.

1E

Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback

Effective supervisors regularly seek and act upon feedback about their performance.

It is important to view constructive feedback as an opportunity for improvement, rather than a negative critique of your practice. As you gather feedback, you are learning from others and developing new ways of viewing issues and situations you are experiencing.

Feedback helps you stay motivated, move forward and set goals. Formal methods of seeking feedback include:

- a formal meeting with your supervisor in their office

- the performance appraisal process

- using a **360-degree feedback** tool.

360-degree feedback
A system where anonymous feedback about an individual is gathered from various people they work with in order to provide a well-rounded view of the person.

Informal methods of seeking feedback are more opportunistic than formal methods and can take place in a less formal context – such as a café rather than an office, or the staff kitchen rather than the boardroom. Examples include:

- over coffee, asking a trusted colleague how you could better support team members when they are stressed

- asking a team member how they think a meeting went when they stop by your office

- seeing your manager in the hallway and asking them for their thoughts on a recent task they asked you to undertake.

When you are seeking feedback – especially in a formal way – it may be useful to prepare a list of questions beforehand and give the person you are seeking feedback from the opportunity to read the questions before you meet with them.

Whether you are asking for feedback in a formal or informal way, be specific about what you want feedback on. For example, you might ask, "I would like to get some feedback from you about the session I facilitated last Thursday" rather than, "I'm interested in your thoughts about my performance."

Reacting and responding to and reflecting on feedback

When we get feedback from someone, we usually go through three stages: reaction, response and reflection.

During each of these stages, there are numerous things we can consider that will help to ensure we receive and respond to the feedback appropriately and effectively.

Reaction	• Be aware of how you are feeling about what you are hearing and manage your emotional responses appropriately. • Concentrate on listening to the feedback (rather than responding to it) and, if necessary, ask questions to clarify the other person's perspective. • You may want to take some time out before you respond to the feedback, rather than responding immediately, especially if you have a strong emotional reaction to what you are hearing.
Response	• Be honest with yourself about your performance. • Be open-minded about what the other person has said and avoid defensive responses (e.g. interrupting, arguing over facts). • Ask for specific examples if you need help understanding the feedback (e.g. "What would have been a better way of asking that question?", "What do you think I should do differently next time?")
Reflection	• Remember that the person has taken time out of their day to help you, so make sure you thank the person, even if you do not agree with what they have said.

Source: www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/463728/art_feedback.pdf

Act on feedback

The most appropriate way to act on the feedback you receive will depend upon the feedback itself, as well as the circumstances and context.

There may be situations where you do not need to act on the feedback received. For example, imagine a member of your team tells you they think you did a great job at the last team meeting and there's nothing they think you can improve upon. In this case, the most appropriate action might be to simply keep doing what you are doing and, of course, keep asking for feedback.

In some situations, however, you will receive feedback that you can act upon. You will need to use your own professional judgment – and, in some cases, the input of other colleagues and/or your supervisor – to determine what actions to take in response to the feedback you receive.

Here are some examples of feedback received by workers and the actions that were taken by them in response:

Feedback	Actions
Jun's manager told him he needed to be better prepared for meetings with senior management.	Jun blocked off 30 minutes in his calendar on the day before future meetings with senior management and made a note in the calendar entry reminding him to read the agenda and any associated documents that have been distributed for the meeting.
Rae's colleague told her that the language she uses in her case notes needs to be more concise and direct.	Rae found some resources online about how to write in a concise and direct way. She printed out a document that provided examples of concise and direct language and pinned it beside her desk to remind her of the key points.
One of Noor's team members told her that she had not explained her expectations clearly enough when she asked her team to undertake a recent project.	The next time Noor was planning for her team to undertake a project, she put together a list of dot points about her expectations so she could share these with her team. She also asked her team if they had any questions about what they needed to do and reminded them they could ask her for clarification at any time.

If you have received feedback that you genuinely believe is not accurate, the most appropriate action might be to ask another colleague (or colleagues) for feedback on the same issue and compare the responses. If two trusted colleagues give you the same feedback, you may need to consider the feedback more carefully. If two trusted colleagues give you conflicting feedback, you may need to seek a third opinion.

Make sure that you respect the people who give you feedback – regardless of whether you agree with it or not. Remember to avoid defensive responses and do not 'bad mouth' someone who has given you feedback; this may discourage others from providing you with honest feedback in the future.

Example
Seek and act on formal and informal performance feedback

Oxana is a team leader in an organisation that provides home-based supports to disadvantaged families with young children. Oxana provides regular supervision to all five members of her team.

Luke is one of the newer members of the team. Oxana meets with him one afternoon to check in with him about his workload and how he is getting on with the rest of the team. As is her usual practice, at the end of the meeting Oxana asks Luke if he has any feedback for her. Luke tells Oxana that he has noticed that she 'favours' the male team members and often undermines the women in the team.

Oxana is thrown by Luke's feedback. She has never received feedback like this before. Over coffee with another team leader and trusted colleague, Oxana explains what has happened, being careful not to tell her colleague who the feedback was from, as she doesn't want to breach Luke's confidence.

Oxana's colleague, Deb, tells her that she doesn't agree with the feedback; "I've worked with you for seven years and I have never seen you favouring blokes over women," Deb tells her.

As Deb is a good friend, Oxana thinks she might need a third opinion, so she calls Frieda, an ex-colleague who used to be on Oxana's team. Frieda also disagrees with the feedback Oxana has received. "You and I didn't always see eye to eye," Frieda says to Oxana, "but I never thought you favoured the guys in the team."

Oxana decides that the most appropriate action in this case is to keep asking the members of her team for feedback on a regular basis. If she hears similar feedback in the future, she will discuss the issue further with her supervisor.

Practice Task 5

Question 1

List two formal methods for seeking feedback on your performance in the workplace.

Question 2

Explain how informal methods for seeking feedback are different to formal methods.

Question 3

A worker receives negative feedback from a colleague regarding their performance. Which of the following would be appropriate actions to take in response to this feedback? Tick all that apply.

❑ Make a complaint to HR about the negative feedback

❑ Ask another trusted colleague for feedback on the same issue and compare the responses

❑ Avoid asking the person for feedback in the future

❑ Call a meeting with the colleague so they can explain why the feedback is hurtful

❑ Avoid a defensive response

1F Develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation

The factors that impact on stress, burnout and general wellbeing in the workplace are different for every individual, team and organisation.

While monitoring the stress and wellbeing of your colleagues, you may come across things within your organisation that need to be dealt with, changed or strengthened.

For example, if you have noticed high levels of burnout among your colleagues, this may indicate the need for organisational change, such as:

- a workplace wellness strategy

- more attention by managers to workloads and scheduling

- promotion of work-life balance

- changes to the work environment (e.g. workspace lighting, jobs that allow for greater autonomy)

- educating staff about emotional resilience and harm prevention strategies.

You will need to put into place a plan that enables you to identify areas of need within your organisation. Without a plan, you may overlook common emerging themes relating to stress and wellbeing in your workplace.

The needs that you identify within your organisation might be based on what is currently occurring within the workplace, or what could potentially occur in the future.

For example, perhaps you have noticed higher levels of stress among your colleagues which have not yet led to high rates of burnout. However, you know that some of your colleagues are at risk of burnout and if something is not done soon, burnout could become a problem. This might also justify the need for organisational change.

Organisational changes could involve new strategies or initiatives for:

- employees, such as staff training

- managers, such as role modelling work-life balance

- the organisation as a whole, such as changes to organisational policies and procedures.

Gallup has a list of strategies for managers, leaders and employees to prevent and fight burnout, as well as tips for altering organisational systems, structures and workspaces to reduce stress: aspirelr.link/gallup-burnout

Your colleagues will probably be your main source of information about areas of need within your organisation. However, other sources of information may be useful when identifying or clarifying needs:

- Staff surveys might indicate decreasing levels of job satisfaction among workers.
- Staff turnover rates might indicate poorer rates of retention.
- Exit interviews might highlight specific problems relating to employee stress and wellbeing.

Keep in mind specific risks for people in health and community services such as burnout and violence in the workplace.

Planning

The plan you make for identifying areas of need within your organisation could be as simple as keeping note of issues that you have identified while monitoring your colleagues' stress and wellbeing. You could do this in a journal or a spreadsheet.

Remember to respect your colleagues' privacy and confidentiality when recording information; if they are sharing sensitive information, you will need to ensure that it is kept in a secure location, such as a password-protected file or a private journal.

If you are leading a team, you might plan to have a monthly check-in with staff to identify areas of need. In that case, you will need to plan those check-in meetings in advance and make sure you are prepared to lead the discussion.

Example
Plan to identify and develop proposals to support areas of need within the organisation

Tariq is a team leader at a health service. He is using an app in his work phone to record current and potential areas of need within his organisation. Areas of need are brought to his attention by his colleagues and team members. He records basic information such as themes he has noticed or emerging issues that may escalate.

Tariq protects the information that he records by not including the names of the people who have spoken to him. His work phone is also protected by a password.

One theme that he has identified is increasing rates of stress among his colleagues. He plans to keep an eye on that issue specifically and may need to develop a proposal to address the issue.

Develop proposals to support areas of need in the organisation

When you have identified areas of need within your organisation, it is time to develop a proposal to support those needs.

A proposal needs to include evidence which demonstrates the need for change, such as common themes identified in exit interviews or data relating to staff turnover. It also needs to include possible solutions to the issue/s you have identified.

When developing possible solutions, you will need to consult with those parties who are affected by the issue, such as employees, as well as other relevant stakeholders. Workers' 'on the ground' experience of the issue will provide you with a powerful insight into which solutions are likely to work and which will most likely be ineffective.

Consulting with others is especially important when developing solutions to prevent violence and aggression in the workplace. The proposal should be developed in consultation with workers as well as health and safety representatives.

Proposals are typically presented in written format, although they are sometimes supplemented by an oral presentation. A written proposal typically incorporates the following elements.

Elements of a written proposal	
Section 1	A description of the need, including: • causes of the issue • effects of the issue on employees • benefits of addressing the need • consequences if the issue is not addressed
Section 2	Evidence that supports the need, such as: • themes identified from exit interviews • data relating to staff turnover • data indicating an increase in threatening behaviour by clients
Section 3	Proposed solutions, which might include a description of the: • steps involved in implementing solutions • potential costs of each solution • potential drawbacks of each solution • research about the proposed solution
Section 4	Recommended solution, which might include: • how the solution was decided upon (e.g. who else was involved, findings of research) • how the solution will be evaluated

Your organisation may have specific guidelines for writing proposals. For example, you may need to use a specific template. It is important to follow those guidelines when preparing your proposal.

Practice Task 6

Question 1

Identify two sources of information that you can use to identify areas of need within your organisation.

Question 2

Which of the following pieces of information should be included in the first section of a proposal to address areas of need? Select all that apply.

❑ Causes of the issue

❑ Effects of the issue on employees

❑ Benefits of addressing the need

❑ Recommendations for addressing the need

❑ Consequences if the issue is not addressed

Summary

- Issues in the workplace can have a significant influence on employees' mental health and wellbeing.

- It is important for employees in leadership roles, including supervisors and managers, to recognise signs that a colleague is experiencing significant stress or issues relating to their emotional wellbeing.

- A supportive leader or manager demonstrates empathy for others and an interest in their individual needs.

- Acknowledging and accepting diversity promotes inclusion and has benefits for employees, managers and organisations.

- Team leaders, supervisors and managers need to understand and follow legislative and ethical standards, including legislation relating to discrimination.

- It is important for workers in leadership and management positions to regularly seek feedback on their performance.

- Strategies to address areas of need in an organisation should be drafted in consultation with employees and other relevant stakeholders.
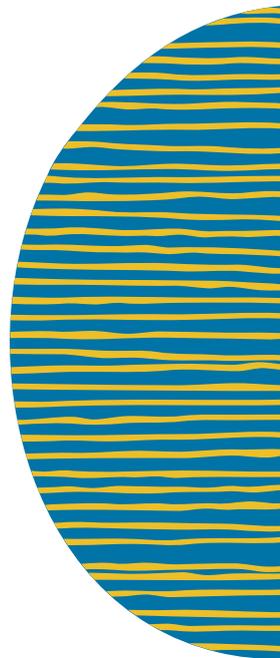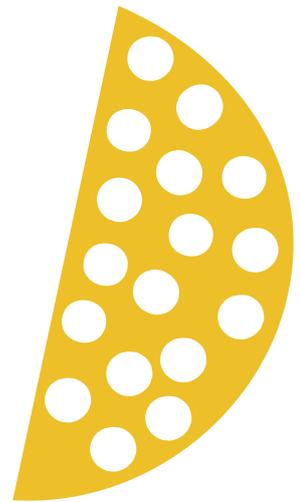
Learning Checkpoint 1

Monitor welfare of colleagues

Part A

1. A manager notices that one of her staff is behaving in a way that is out of character. Which of the following behaviours by the staff member indicate that they are experiencing significant stress? Tick all that apply.

   ❑ The staff member is getting frustrated with their colleagues.

   ❑ The staff member is spending a lot of time chatting with their colleagues.

   ❑ The staff member is regularly arriving late to work.

   ❑ The staff member is having difficulties managing multiple tasks.

   ❑ The staff member seems to be concealing their emotions.

2. When responding to a colleague who is experiencing significant stress, describe what 'active and supportive listening' involves.

3. Which of the following are common impacts of grief and loss? Tick all that apply.

   ❑ Denial

   ❑ Chronic fatigue

   ❑ Numbness

   ❑ Shock

   ❑ Anger

4. Explain what it means to 'maintain professional boundaries' when supporting a colleague who is experiencing significant stress or issues relating to their emotional wellbeing.

5. Describe two examples of organisational standards or procedures which a worker may need to follow when responding to a client who is experiencing significant stress.

6. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Excessive stress in the workplace can lead to fertility problems.	Yes / No
b. One of the impacts of burnout is a pessimistic attitude.	Yes / No
c. Verbal threats are a form of workplace violence.	Yes / No
d. Burnout and excessive stress lead to the same types of behaviour in a worker.	Yes / No
e. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination based on disability.	Yes / No
f. The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* aims to promote gender equality in the workplace.	Yes / No
g. Dispute resolution policies typically include a definition of a 'dispute' within an organisation.	Yes / No
h. Organisational dispute resolution procedures are standard across all organisations.	Yes / No

7. Identify three impacts of violence in the workplace.

8. Describe two reflective behaviour strategies that a worker can use to monitor their own performance.

9. Which of the following does the STAR strategy for monitoring performance stand for? Tick the correct response.

❑ Situation, Task, Action, Return

❑ Source, Task, Action, Result

❑ Situation, Test, Action, Return

❑ Source, Task, Assess, Result

❑ Situation, Task, Action, Result

10. List two stress management techniques a worker can use during work hours.

11. Describe one method for seeking informal performance feedback and one method for seeking formal performance feedback.

12. List the four elements that are typically included in a written proposal to address an organisational need.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Wanda is a social worker and a newly appointed manager at an organisation that provides a range of support services for families in a disadvantaged regional area.

Wanda leads a diverse team of seven staff, including a mix of men and women ranging in age from 27 to 61, two people who are migrants to Australia from non-English-speaking countries, as well as a staff member with a hearing impairment.

Although Wanda knows some basic information about her team, she would like to know more about their diverse needs.

1. Describe three ways Wanda could identify her team's diverse needs.

2. Identify a plan Wanda could put in place to help her identify current and potential areas of need within the organisation.

3. Describe two practices that Wanda can use to acknowledge and accept the differences within her team.

4. Explain how Wanda could use performance appraisal to monitor the wellbeing of individual team members.

5. Identify three things Wanda could do to ensure she reacts and responds to the feedback appropriately and effectively.

6. A member of Wanda's team has told her that he has been diagnosed with a complex mental health issue and is struggling to keep up with his work.

Given that Wanda is not a trained mental health professional, and given her work role and responsibilities do not encompass mental health support, what is the best thing Wanda could do to support this team member?

Topic 2: Conduct structured debriefings following an incident

2A Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing

2B Conduct debriefing in a safe environment that encourages discussion, exploration and reflection

2C Identify and respond to indicators of risk

2D Document and report outcomes of debriefing

2E Identify and respond to colleagues needing additional support
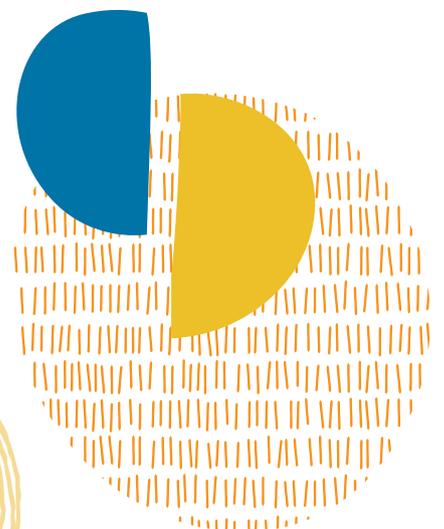
2A Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing

To minimise the effects of distressing events and the possibility of prolonged trauma among staff, many organisations offer carefully structured debriefing sessions.

After a distressing or upsetting experience, some people 'switch off' from their emotions. For example, they might try to keep busy to avoid thinking about what has happened. By avoiding thinking about the event, they are also not able to reflect on the emotions that have arisen as a result. **Debriefing** is important in this respect. Debriefing can help a person find perspective on the incident.

Debriefing sessions are usually group sessions offered soon after a critical incident. They should be planned, prepared and conducted in line with organisational standards and procedures.

The potential impacts of critical incidents at work include recurrent thoughts about the event, a sense of uneasiness or anxiety, mood changes, restlessness and disturbed sleep.

Structured debriefing uses a structured approach and is the most appropriate model for facilitators who are not qualified mental health professionals.

There are a range of different types of debriefing, including educational and operational debriefing. The type of debriefing used to encourage people to explore emotions and experiences is called psychological debriefing.

Psychological debriefing typically involves four components.

Debriefing
A voluntary discussion intended to help a person (or group of people) bring perspective to an abnormal event.

People who work in the community services sector can experience incidents and situations that are overwhelming, frightening, upsetting and potentially dangerous.

Components of psychological debriefing
1. Educating individuals about stress reactions and how to cope with them.
2. Assuring participants that stress reactions are normal.
3. Helping affected persons to process and share their emotions.
4. Providing information about, and opportunity for, further intervention if needed.

Psychological debriefing (referred to simply as debriefing from now on) is *not* counselling; however, it can help to ensure that normal stress reactions do not turn into long-term mental health difficulties.

Here are some examples of when debriefing in the workplace might be required:

Debriefing might be required in the following circumstances
• A worker (or multiple workers) has been threatened or assaulted while working
• An employee has been seriously injured at work
• A client or colleague has died
• An extreme climatic event such as a bushfire or flood has occurred
• Unforeseen workplace changes have occurred, such as mass redundancies

Debriefing sessions can be conducted by managers or supervisors within an organisation or by an external provider. External providers who offer debriefing services are typically specialist health professionals. Another model that can be used is the 'peer-to-peer' debriefing model. In this model, debriefing is provided by trained peers (i.e. employees themselves) who are supervised by people with more experience in debriefing.

The debriefing techniques used depend upon the group dynamics, the training and experience of the person running the session, and the impacts of the event or situation upon the participants. Debriefing is not counselling but it does allow people to reflect on an event; this sets the path for recovery.

Though debriefing may be a standard procedure after a critical incident, it should not be compulsory. People should feel free to attend or not attend a session at their will.

Scheduling debriefing

Debriefing should be scheduled as soon as possible after an event but is typically not undertaken until three to seven days after a critical incident, allowing the affected staff time to 'take in' what has happened.

Three typical strategies for managing a critical incident, along with the timing of each strategy, are outlined below. In some situations, other forms of support in addition to these strategies will be required.

Timing	Stage
Immediately after the incident	**Demobilisation** Demobilisation is designed to help staff calm down after a critical incident and meet their immediate needs. It should be undertaken by a person not immediately affected by the incident. Demobilisation takes place before the people involved in the incident have dispersed (e.g. before they have finished their shift). Strategies for demobilisation include: • summarising the incident and clarifying uncertainty • inviting questions and discussing issues of concern • showing care and support (e.g. psychological first aid) • drawing up a plan of action, based on the needs of the employees involved • making short-term arrangements to address work responsibilities • providing information on defusing and debriefing.
Within 12 hours of the incident	**Defusing** Defusing is designed to bring the employees' experience of an incident to a conclusion, stabilise their responses, and provide them with immediate personal support. Defusing should also provide people with the opportunity to express any immediate concerns. Defusing should be undertaken by a trained staff member. Strategies for defusing include: • reviewing the event • answering questions and responding to concerns • encouraging people to talk about the event • identifying needs • offering advice, information and handouts on referrals and supports • arranging debriefing.
Within 3–7 days of the incident	**Debriefing** Debriefing assists in mitigating stressful experiences and dealing with normal reactions. Trained debriefers assist employees to explore and understand issues relating to the incident including: • the sequence of events • the causes and consequences of the incident • each person's experience of the incident • memories triggered by the incident • typical psychological reactions to critical incidents • methods to manage responses to an incident.

Source: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/workplace-safety-coping-with-a-critical-incident#critical-incident-stress-management

When a colleague has had a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, a qualified professional will need to be involved; the skills required to deal with a significant level of trauma go well beyond debriefing.

Some people who witness or directly experience distressing or disturbing events develop PTSD or critical incident stress. These people need treatment from professional mental health specialists.

You can read more about PTSD at: aspirelr.link/beyond-blue-ptsd

Example
Plan, prepare and conduct debriefing

Hanh is a manager at a community-based health and welfare service that provides a range of supports to recently arrived migrants and refugees.

Hanh is out for lunch one afternoon when a client enters the reception area holding a knife and threatening to kill himself. He walks down the hallway shouting and waving the knife around and enters an office down the hall where some of Hanh's colleagues are working. The man collapses on the floor and within minutes, the police arrive and take him away.

Immediately after the incident, Hanh and a senior manager who was at another site talk to all five staff affected by the incident before they leave the office, summarising the event, inviting questions and providing information on next steps.

That evening, Hanh and the senior manager call all five staff members who were affected to ask them if they have any questions or concerns, along with information about support services. They let the staff members know that there will be a debriefing session in two days.

Policies, procedures and standards

Health and community services organisations should have policies, standards and procedures that outline how to prepare, plan and conduct debriefing.

For example, an organisation's debriefing policy might include the following.

Information included in a debriefing policy
The circumstances where debriefing is required
When debriefing should occur
Who should provide debriefing
How to provide debriefing (phone, face-to-face, individual or group)
The purpose, benefits and potential outcomes of debriefing sessions
How to make referrals if further support is required during or after debriefing

Here are some examples of information that might be included in organisational standards, policies, procedures and resources relating to debriefing and managing critical incidents in the workplace:

Standards	• The training that employees need to run a debriefing session
	• Ethical standards regarding the debriefing process
	• Information and links to relevant state/territory or national standards, such as the:
	  – National Standards for Mental Health Services
	  – National Standards for Disability Services

Procedures	• The procedures for arranging debriefing for staff • The procedures for arranging additional support, such as further counselling after debriefing • The procedures that need to be followed by all staff after a critical incident has occurred • The steps that must be undertaken by senior staff after a critical incident occurs (e.g. contacting next of kin) • The procedures for reporting the incident (e.g. completion of a safety risk form, inputting information to a database)
Policies	• As far as practicable, debriefing must occur within 72 hours of the incident. • Debriefing is led by a relevant and trained staff member (or staff members). • New staff are briefed on critical incident procedures during induction. • Emergency management plans are reviewed annually and/or following a critical incident.

Resources	• A manual or handbook for staff who are responsible for facilitating debriefing sessions
	• An online or hard copy list of internal and external support services for employees that can be used during and after debriefing (e.g. employee assistance programs, counselling services, helplines)
	• An infographic that summarises crisis procedures or defines emergency codes (e.g. 'code brown', 'code black')
	• A poster that outlines what staff should do in the event of a critical incident

Organisational procedures and policies relating to critical incidents and debriefing should be reviewed regularly as a part of continuous improvement, and may be required as part of work health and safety legislation requirements.

Reviews of policies and procedures as well as risk assessments are also often undertaken after a critical incident has occurred to determine whether they need to be revised or adapted. Resources should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are up to date.

> The WA government's Department of Commerce has developed a Code of Practice that can be used to help employers and employees identify and deal with violence, aggression and bullying in the workplace. It is available at: aspirelr.link/commerce-workplace-codes

Best practice interventions

Best practice interventions can be used when managing a critical incident in the workplace.

Identifying 'best practice' interventions is not necessarily a straightforward exercise as people have different views about the meaning of 'rigorous' research and 'valid' evidence. Furthermore, an intervention which is effective in one setting (e.g. a major metropolitan city) may not be effective in another (e.g. a rural community).

Nevertheless, here are some examples of crisis interventions and structured debriefing interventions that research has consistently shown to be effective in at least some settings.

Best practice interventions
Interventions which are the most effective according to valid evidence and the findings of rigorous research.

Crisis intervention techniques
Psychological first aid Psychological first aid is defined by the Red Cross as a 'humane supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support'. It is an approach that is used to assist people after an emergency, disaster or traumatic event. Psychological first aid is *not* debriefing, *not* counselling and *not* something that only professionals can do. It typically does not involve a detailed discussion of the event that caused the distress. The five basic elements of psychological first aid are to promote: • safety • calm • connectedness • self- and group-efficacy • hope. Psychological first aid is currently viewed as best practice psychosocial support after a collective trauma event.
Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families are models used to teach adults (both professionals and carers) how to help children cope with stress in constructive ways. Through these models, adults learn how to: • prevent crises from occurring • de-escalate potential crises • safely manage crisis situations • constructively handle stressful situations • support children to improve their coping strategies.

Sources: www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-migration/documents/emergency-services/psychological-first-aid-an-australian-guide.pdf; www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-migration/documents/emergency-services/arc-cte-guidelines-2019-web-version.pdf

Structured debriefing techniques
Demobilisation and defusing Demobilisation and defusing are forms of structured debriefing. Both techniques are shorter and less formal versions of debriefing. Demobilising occurs immediately after a critical incident and typically lasts for 10–15 minutes. Defusing is an extension of demobilisation and typically lasts for one hour.

Structured debriefing techniques
Critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) CISD is designed to provide survivors of trauma with a safe space to share their reactions and emotions following a critical incident. CISD is typically undertaken within a group format 24–72 hours after the critical incident. CISD usually involves seven phases: 1. Assess the incident (introduction). 2. Identify safety and security issues (fact phase). 3. Allow for ventilation of thoughts, emotions and feelings (thought phase). 4. Share emotional reactions (reaction phase). 5. Review symptoms and impacts (symptom phase). 6. Bring closure (teaching phase). 7. Assist with the re-entry process (re-entry phase).

Sources: www.choosingtherapy.com/critical-incident-stress-debriefing/; https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/stress/the-7-steps-of-critical-incident-stress-debriefing-and-how-they-support-trauma-recovery/

Video: Psychological first aid

This video provides a basic introduction to psychological first aid:

aspirelr.link/yt-psych-first-aid

The Red Cross has produced a guideline for providing psychological first aid to people following disasters in Australia. You can access it here:

aspirelr.link/red-cross-psych-first-aid

Practice Task 7

Question 1

Identify two standards that an employee might need to meet when planning and preparing debriefing after a critical incident.

Question 2

Describe two procedures that an employee might need to follow when conducting debriefing after a critical incident.

Question 3

List one example of each of the following:

- Organisational policies related to debriefing

- Organisational resources related to debriefing.

Question 4

Once a critical incident has occurred, describe when debriefing for employees should be *scheduled* and when it should be *conducted*.

Question 5

Which of the following statements about 'best practice' debriefing interventions are correct? Tick all that apply.

☐ Best practice interventions are the most effective interventions.

☐ Interventions are deemed 'best practice' according to the findings of rigorous research.

☐ Identifying best practice interventions is a straightforward exercise.

☐ People have different views about the meaning of 'rigorous research'.

☐ Best practice interventions are the least expensive interventions.

Question 6

List two crisis intervention techniques.

Question 7

Number each phase from 1 to 7 in the order you would follow when undertaking CISD.

	Thought phase
	Reaction phase
	Introduction
	Re-entry phase
	Symptom phase
	Fact phase
	Teaching phase

2B

Conduct debriefing in a safe environment that encourages discussion, exploration and reflection

The facilitators of group debriefings play an important role when it comes to establishing a safe environment that encourages open discussion, exploration and reflection.

Facilitators of debriefings should have the skills required to create an atmosphere of trust and demonstrate empathy. They also need communication and leadership skills to guide discussion and ensure every person feels included and can participate.

A safe environment encourages participants to engage in the debriefing session, share information and speak up about their feelings, emotions and experiences.

Here are some of the ways facilitators can create a safe environment for debriefing that encourages open discussion, as well as exploration of emotions and experiences:

> Effective debriefing requires participants to feel safe.

Make sure the venue for debriefing is private and away from distractions and intrusions.

Use a circular seating formation – this encourages discussion.

Clarify expectations of participants and facilitators.

Clarify guidelines regarding privacy and confidentiality.

Use inclusive language that demonstrates respect for diversity, including people with disabilities, diverse gender identities and cultural differences, for example:
- 'people with disabilities' rather than 'disabled people'
- 'parental leave' instead of 'maternity' or 'paternity leave'
- 'First Nations Australians' instead of 'Australian Indigenous peoples'.

Demonstrate empathy – for example, mirroring participants' body language.

Use active listening techniques.

Pause to listen – resist the urge to interrupt.

Be inclusive by inviting input, managing turn taking and expressing appreciation when participants contribute (e.g. 'thanks for that').

Use validation (e.g. use affirmative statements such as 'uh-huh' or 'okay' when people are talking) and paraphrasing (i.e. express the meaning of what someone has said but in different words) to show you understand what they are saying.

Normalise participants' responses, thoughts and feelings.
Be mindful of timing – make sure sessions end on time.
Diffuse participants displaying: • contempt (e.g. eye rolling, sarcasm) • belligerence (e.g. 'Don't interrupt me!') • domineering behaviour (e.g. patronising people) • defensive behaviour (e.g. folded arms) • judgment/blame.

Source: Kolbe et al (2019) https://thedebriefingacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Kolbe_PsychSafety_BMJSTEL_2020.pdf

Discussion of emotional issues may be difficult for some people, especially when they are asked to communicate in ways that they are not used to in a work context.

Reflection strategies allow participants to think and take time to understand the incident in their own time. This might involve assigning homework tasks to participants, such as questions they can ask themselves about their thoughts on the incident. The facilitator can follow up on a one-on-one basis to check on their progress and offer further support as required.

When the debriefing is over, you can also reinforce the psychological safety of participants in the following ways:

Express appreciation (e.g. thanking people for their participation and willingness to share)
Invite feedback
Offer support
Remind participants of expectations regarding confidentiality

Any techniques you use to create a safe environment need to be appropriate for the participants, context and situation. For example, some participants might feel uncomfortable with direct eye contact because of cultural expectations.

Using questions

Open-ended questions
Questions that broaden discussion and encourage people to participate in a dialogue. These questions are useful for learning about people's attitudes, thoughts and feelings. They cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Closed-ended questions
Questions that are specific and direct and require a specific and direct answer. These questions are useful for gathering information and clarifying situations. They can typically be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Asking questions can help facilitate discussion in debriefing and encourage participants to acknowledge and explore their concerns.

There are two basic types of questions: **open-ended** and **closed-ended**.

Here are some examples:

Open-ended questions	Closed-ended questions
"How were you feeling?"	"Were you afraid?"
"What could you hear and see?"	"Could you hear or see anything?"
"What did you learn from that experience?"	"Did you learn anything?"

Open-ended questions are useful to ask in debriefing because they encourage exploration. Try to accompany questions with body language that conveys that you are paying attention and have positive regard for the person. You can do this by, for example, leaning forward or making eye contact with the person.

Use caution when asking questions in a harsh way such as 'why?!' or 'how come?!' This can be perceived as domineering or aggressive.

Closed-ended questions are useful for clarification (e.g. "So, you're saying that you felt afraid? Have I got that right?") and are useful in debriefing because they can encourage people to clarify their feelings and concerns. Closed-ended questions should be used carefully, however, as they can come across as 'test-like' or interrogatory.

Here are some examples of questions that could be used when conducting a debriefing session:

- What do you know about what happened?
- How do you feel about the events that happened?
- What emotional impact did it have on you?
- What was your emotional state at the time of the incident?
- What would you like to see happen next?
- What ongoing support do you feel would be useful?

> ## Example
> ### Conduct debriefing in a safe environment that encourages discussion, exploration and reflection
>
> Gloria is facilitating a debriefing session with a group of her colleagues who witnessed a client having a heart attack in their organisation's reception area. The client was taken to hospital and is recovering well but the event was still distressing for the staff involved.
>
> Gloria uses active listening techniques when her colleagues talk and avoids interrupting them. She uses simple words to validate each person who is talking and thanks participants for their contributions. She also asks open-ended questions to encourage discussion and uses closed-ended questions sparingly, primarily to elaborate further discussion.

Practice Task 8

Question 1

Explain how the facilitator of a debriefing session can create an inclusive environment to encourage open discussion.

Question 2

Which of the following seating formations encourages discussion during a debriefing? Tick the correct response.

❑ Classroom

❑ U-shaped

❑ Circular

❑ Pairs

❑ Grid-shaped

Question 3

Explain why it is useful for facilitators to use open-ended questions during debriefing.

2C Identify and respond to indicators of risk

Employers and workers have legal and ethical responsibilities regarding health and safety.

Assessing and reporting risks that can lead to psychological injury or trauma in the workplace is essential.

Anticipating incidents and providing training in strategies for managing behaviours of concern, or for responding appropriately when crises do occur, are important components of risk management.

It is important to understand the difference between a **hazard** and a **risk**.

A hazard is something that can cause harm (e.g. noise, poor work design, bullying, faulty equipment) whereas a risk is the likelihood that a hazard will cause harm.

A hazard can range from high risk (i.e. there is a high risk the hazard will cause harm) to low risk (i.e. there is a low risk the hazard will cause harm).

Here are some examples of potential hazards to both yourself and others in your workplace.

Hazard
A source or a situation with the potential for causing harm, damaging humans, property and/or the environment.

Risk
The probability and consequences of injury, illness or damage resulting from exposure to a hazard.

Hazards to self and others in the work environment	
	Obstructions on the floor
	Protruding objects, sharp or jagged edges
	An unknown person in an authorised area
	Chemical hazards
	Unsafe electrical equipment

Hazards to self and others in the work environment	
😠	Bullying and harassment
🚨	Workplace violence and aggression

Source: www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/hazard_identification.html

Identifying risks in the workplace involves recognising hazards that have the potential to cause harm. Under WHS laws in Australia, work-related hazards that pose a risk to psychological health must be eliminated. If it is not possible to eliminate a hazard, it must be minimised as far as possible.

Identifying and responding to risk

Communicating with others about risk is part of every employee's work health and safety responsibilities. If you identify a risk that has the potential to cause harm, you will need to refer it to an appropriate person within your organisation, such as your supervisor. You should report the risk as soon as possible.

You can identify risks to your colleagues' psychological health by:

- having conversations with your colleagues and supervisors
- observing the workplace to see how work is being carried out
- observing how people interact with each other in your workplace
- reviewing relevant information and data (e.g. staff turnover data, staff surveys).

Your organisation may have additional policies and procedures you need to follow when you identify these types of risks. For example, if you witness a workplace accident, you may be required to fill out an incident report form.

Example

Identify and respond to indicators of risk

Clem is a support worker at an organisation that provides support services to families experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. The office where she works has a secure section that can only be accessed by authorised staff. This level of security is necessary as some of the families coming to the office are escaping domestic and family violence.

Clem notices an unauthorised man in the area who is not wearing the required lanyard. The possibility that the person poses a risk to staff or clients is relatively low, Clem thinks, but the consequences are significant if he does pose a risk.

Clem reports the risk to her supervisor immediately.

Risk assessment

The degree of risk is determined by the likelihood (or probability) that something will go wrong and the consequences (or impact) if something does goes wrong. The higher the likelihood and/or the more severe the consequences, the greater the degree of risk.

Risk assessments can be used to determine the type and scale of risk that is likely to occur and should be conducted frequently in a workplace.

The main principle of risk assessment is to focus on common and serious risks, rather than rare or relatively harmless risks. A common framework used for risk assessment is a hierarchy of control. A hierarchy of control is a step-by-step approach to eliminating or reducing risks. The first step in a hierarchy of control is typically to eliminate the risk. If this cannot be done, the next step is to reduce the risk.

> Assessing risks means understanding the nature of the harm that could be caused by the risk, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening.

These guidelines from Safe Work Australia provide a hierarchy of control for psychosocial hazards: aspirelr.link/swa-hoc-psych-health

Worksafe Victoria has also developed a hierarchy of control for organisations to address work-related stress: aspirelr.link/ws-risk-man-stress

Follow policies and procedures

The same mechanisms for reporting physical hazards and injuries apply to psychological hazards and injuries. Your organisation should also have specific mention of psychological injury, which might occur after a critical incident.

The following table provides the name of the health and safety legislation and the regulator responsible for its implementation in each state and territory, as at the time of publication.

Region	Health and safety legislation	WHS regulator
Australian Capital Territory	*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*	WorkSafe ACT aspirelr.link/worksafe-act
New South Wales	*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*	SafeWork NSW aspirelr.link/safework-nsw
Northern Territory	*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*	NT WorkSafe aspirelr.link/worksafe-nt
Queensland	*Work Health and Safety Act 2011*	Workplace Health and Safety Queensland aspirelr.link/worksafe-qld
South Australia	*Work Health and Safety Act 2012*	SafeWork SA aspirelr.link/safework-sa
Tasmania	*Work Health and Safety Act 2012*	WorkSafe Tasmania aspirelr.link/worksafe-tas
Victoria	*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*	WorkSafe Victoria aspirelr.link/worksafe-vic
Western Australia	*Work Health and Safety Act 2020*	WorkSafe WA aspirelr.link/worksafe-wa

Practice Task 9

Question 1

Describe four potential risks to yourself or to others in the workplace.

Question 2

Explain how the degree of risk in the workplace is determined.

Question 3

Explain the purpose of a risk assessment.

2D Document and report outcomes of debriefing

Organisations have various requirements for reporting upon critical incidents and debriefing.

The information from debriefings can be sensitive and needs to be stored in way that respects and protects the privacy of participants.

Reporting upon the outcomes of debriefing can be useful for an organisation as those reports will typically provide information about the organisation's performance in the aftermath of an incident. Policies and procedures can then be reviewed and updated to reflect the debriefing outcomes.

In some cases, the organisational standard will only require the debriefing facilitator to keep a record of when and where the debriefing took place. This approach is taken to ensure the privacy of participants.

Some organisations will require more information about debriefing. Here are some examples of the type of information that might need to be recorded about the outcome of a debriefing:

When and where the debriefing was conducted
Who participated in the debriefing
Who facilitated the debriefing
A description of the critical incident
A brief summary of the main topics covered in the debriefing
Information on what worked well during and after the critical incident occurred
Information on what could be improved for future critical incidents
The outcomes of the debriefing
Any follow-up actions that need to be undertaken

Your organisation may have a template for reporting upon debriefing activities. The procedure for reporting might also include recording information on a database about who was offered and who accepted an invitation to participate in debriefing.

Other standards and procedures regarding reporting on debriefing include:

- who is responsible for documenting and reporting on debriefing outcomes

- what documents need to be kept

- what information you need to record

- how to store documents.

Once completed, records should be stored in accordance with the organisation's record-keeping guidelines and relevant legislation, such as the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). According to the Privacy Act, organisations must take reasonable steps to protect the personal and sensitive information it stores.

Writing the report

Reports on the outcomes of debriefing should be written in a concise and clear way. The language should be factual and objective.

Tips for writing clear and concise documents	
Keep it brief	• Use short sentences. • Cut out unnecessary words (e.g.do not say 'the issue was carefully considered', just say 'the issue was considered').
Use simple, concrete language	• Do not use long words when a shorter word can be used instead (e.g. 'use' instead of 'utilise'). • Be precise – avoid vague terminology such as 'the current circumstances'. • Avoid 'flowery' language (i.e. elaborate and overly descriptive language).

Organisational and legal requirements

Some incidents (referred to as 'notifiable incidents') will need to be reported to the state- or territory-based WHS regulator. WHS regulators include SafeWork NSW, SafeWork SA and WorkSafe ACT.

Notifiable incidents include:

- the death of an employee

- a serious injury or illness such as a serious head or eye injury

- a dangerous incident such as equipment falling from a height or the collapse of a structure.

These WHS reports are formal legal documents and may be used in a court of law as evidence. If you are unsure whether a workplace incident is 'notifiable' you should contact your local state- or territory-based regulator for further information.

Even if an incident is not 'notifiable' many organisations require employees to complete incident reports when an incident or 'near miss' has occurred. Here is an example of an incident report that was completed after a staff member was injured:

INCIDENT REPORT

Time and date of incident: Monday 18 May 2022 at 11.21am.

Incident: A staff member tripped over a step and injured his ankle.

Darius Michaels was carrying a box of photocopy paper in the regional office and tripped over the step outside the storage room. Darius twisted his ankle as a result of the incident. No other injuries were sustained.

Parties involved: Darius Michaels was the only person involved in the incident.

Location of incident: At the entrance to the storage room

Incident type: Tripping

Recommendations:

- Place a 'Beware of the Step' sign on the storage door entrance.
- Send out a memo reminding staff about policies around manual handling.

Example
Document and report outcomes of debriefing

When reporting the outcomes of a debriefing session, Greta understands that she must file the information on the organisation's intranet in a secure folder that only authorised staff can access. The password-protected folder holds several confidential documents that are records of debriefing exercises. The names have been removed, but the time and date of the session is included as well as a brief overview of the outcomes.

Practice Task 10

Question 1

Describe four standards or procedures a worker might need to follow when documenting and reporting upon the outcome of debriefing.

Question 2

Explain why it is important to store debriefing reports in a secure location.

Question 3

Which of the following styles of language should be used in a report on the outcomes of a debriefing? Tick all that apply.

❑ Factual

❑ Concise

❑ Clear

❑ Descriptive

❑ Objective

2E Identify and respond to colleagues needing additional support

Debriefing following an incident is intended to address concerns regarding a specific event.

> Debriefing may not be enough support for some people in some situations.

Sometimes workers who are involved in debriefing will need additional support. In these cases, information about internal options, such as employee assistance programs (EAPs) and external support options will be useful. In some cases, a referral will be required.

It can be difficult to identify a person who is not coping. After a distressing, upsetting or traumatic incident, some people can hide their stress from others. Others might act in a vague manner, avoiding questions about their wellbeing, because they do not want to appear weak.

Everyone deals with stress in different ways. Some people will take longer than others to recover. There are some signs, however, that a person might be struggling and require additional support. These include:

- difficulty concentrating
- hypervigilance
- exaggerated startle responses
- avoiding social activities
- losing interest in normal activities
- irritability.

If you notice signs that indicate a colleague is struggling, you need to act promptly. This does *not* mean you need to immediately organise a referral (unless that is part of your job role or responsibilities). However, it might mean that you need to promptly check on their wellbeing by asking them if they need support.

When you do this, remember to be sensitive when talking to people about your observations and their needs. You may need to think carefully about how and when you approach them. For example, do not start by saying something like, "You seem to be struggling". Rather, say something like, "I've noticed you're not coming to our regular Friday social lunch. We really miss you! Is everything okay?"

Make sure you listen actively, avoid judgmental statements and respect people's privacy. Finally, be aware of relevant organisational guidelines when identifying colleagues who need additional support, such as policies relating to work health and safety.

Additional supports

One common example of an internal support is an employee assistance program (EAP). Many organisations offer EAPs. The purpose of an EAP is to provide employees with confidential online, phone-based and/or face-to-face counselling to support their wellbeing.

EAPs are provided by an external organisation and often operated through an organisation's human resources department. Counselling and conflict resolution services are commonly available through an EAP. The organisation typically funds these services, and the assistance is confidential.

Here are some other examples of internal and external additional support options:

Internal supports	• Leave arrangements (e.g. personal leave, unpaid leave) • Peer support programs • Health and wellbeing programs (e.g. mindfulness programs)
External supports	• Counsellors and psychologists • General practitioners • General telephone helplines, such as Lifeline and Beyond Blue • Specialist telephone helplines, such as 1800 RESPECT for people who have experienced sexual assault and QLife for LGBTQI+ support and referrals • Online counselling services, such as the Beyond Blue webchat • Apps and online modules that provide information and guidance about topics such as managing stress and practising mindfulness

In some cases, it will be enough to simply provide workers with information about these services. In other cases, you might strongly encourage a worker to access a service based upon their level of need and you may even need to refer an employee to a mental health professional or service. This could be an internal referral to an EAP or an external referral to a psychologist or a counselling service.

Situations where a referral may be required include the following:

When to consider a referral
A debriefing has not led to a reduction of stress reactions
New symptoms appear after debriefing
Ongoing high levels of anxiety or distress are evident
A person demonstrates fear of the workplace or inability to function effectively
A colleague experiences continued disruption of home life due to the incident

Your organisation will have guidelines that outline how to make a referral for a staff member. For example, information about who can make a referral and the options for referral.

Example

Identify and respond to colleagues needing additional support

Gloria and her colleagues are coming to the end of their debriefing session. The debriefing was organised for a group of colleagues who witnessed a client having a heart attack in their organisation's reception area.

Gloria provides the participants in the debriefing session with a list of internal and external resources they can draw upon if they feel they need additional support. She reminds the participants to contact her if they have any questions or concerns in the coming weeks.

Three weeks later, Jem, one of the participants in the debriefing session, reports that ever since the client had a heart attack, she has been much more 'on edge' at work. When Gloria asks Jem if her anxiety has become worse over time, Jem replies, "Actually, it has. I just can't seem to shake it."

Gloria reminds Jem that she is not a mental health expert and cannot provide her with counselling or therapy. However, she can arrange a referral to a psychologist or counselling service to provide additional support if Jem would like her to.

Practice Task 11

Question 1

List three signs which may help you identify whether a colleague needs additional support after they have experienced a stressful or distressing incident.

Question 2

Explain the purpose of an employee assistance program (EAP).

Question 3

Identify four external support options for colleagues who need additional support.

Question 4

Which of the following are situations where a referral for a colleague should be considered? Tick all that apply.

❑ The person is developing new symptoms.

❑ The person is demonstrating signs of grief and loss.

❑ The person is continuing to experience high levels of anxiety or distress.

❑ A person demonstrates fear of the workplace.

❑ The person's home life has been disrupted because of the incident.

Summary

- Debriefing sessions must be planned and prepared for in line with organisational protocols.

- Debriefing sessions can be conducted by internal staff or external expert facilitators.

- Debriefing should occur as soon as possible after the event has occurred.

- Facilitators can encourage open discussion in debriefing by asking open-ended questions.

- Debriefing techniques will vary according to the group dynamics, the training and experience of the person running the session, and the impact of the critical incident.

- A risk assessment means that the organisation and the staff can be fully aware of the risks they are undertaking and plan to manage that risk.

- Employee assistance programs (EAPs) provide confidential online, phone-based and/or face-to-face counselling to support employee wellbeing.

- Workers who are experiencing ongoing difficulties relating to a critical incident may require a referral to a mental health specialist.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Conduct structured debriefings following an incident

Part A

1. List the five basic elements of psychological first aid as a best practice crisis intervention.

2. Identify and briefly describe two best practice techniques used for structured debriefing.

3. List three behaviours a facilitator should avoid if they want to create a safe environment for debriefing that encourages open discussion.

4. Explain what is involved when a worker identifies risks to themselves or to others in the workplace.

5. Which of the following are factors a worker needs to consider when assessing the degree of risk posed by a workplace hazard? Tick all that apply.

❑ The qualifications of the affected staff

❑ The likelihood that something will go wrong

❑ The limitations of their role

❑ The cost of the surrounding resources

❑ The consequences if something goes wrong

6. Identify two policies and two resources an organisation might have that relate to crisis procedures.

7. Which of the following statements are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. One of the organisational procedures a worker might need to follow after a critical incident is to complete an incident report.	Yes / No
b. Most organisations have a policy requiring debriefing to be undertaken within 48 hours after an incident has occurred.	Yes / No
c. The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* requires the outcomes of debriefing sessions to be recorded within a specific template.	Yes / No

8. List four pieces of information that may need to be included in a report on the outcome of a debriefing session.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

> ### Case study
>
> Jen is a team leader at a service that provides a range of supports to vulnerable families. Two members of her team were recently involved in a distressing incident involving the death of a child. Although they did not see the child die, they both knew the child, and know the parents well.
>
> Jen is organising debriefing for the two team members and any other members of her team who knew the child or know their parents.

1. Identify when Jen should schedule the structured debriefing session for staff.

2. Identify three things Jen can do to encourage exploration of emotions and experiences during the debriefing session.

3. When Jen is asking the debriefing participants questions, describe what she can do to show the participants that she is paying attention and has positive regard for them.

4. Identify two internal support options that Jen could provide to debriefing participants who need additional support.

5. Four weeks after the debriefing, one of the participants tells Jen that he is having trouble functioning effectively at work ever since the event, and has been too distracted at home to play with his kids.

   Explain what Jen should do in this situation.

6. Describe two examples of organisational standards and procedures that Jen might need to follow when planning, preparing and conducting the debriefing session.

7. Identify a resource Jen might use when planning, preparing or conducting the debriefing session.

Glossary

360-degree feedback

A system where anonymous feedback about an individual is gathered from various people they work with in order to provide a well-rounded view of the person.

Best practice interventions

Interventions which are the most effective according to valid evidence and the findings of rigorous research.

Burnout

A syndrome that is characterised by complete physical and emotional exhaustion and associated with excessive and prolonged stress.

Closed-ended questions

Questions that are specific and direct and require a specific and direct answer. These questions are useful for gathering information and clarifying situations. They can typically be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Debriefing

A voluntary discussion intended to help a person (or group of people) bring perspective to an abnormal event.

Hazard

A source or situation with the potential for causing harm, damaging humans, property and/or the environment.

Open-ended questions

Questions that broaden discussion and encourage people to participate in a dialogue. These questions are useful for learning about people's attitudes, thoughts and feelings. They cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Risk

The probability and consequences of injury, illness or damage resulting from exposure to a hazard.

Stress

A response to pressure or a threat. Stress causes our body to produce hormones that bring about a 'fight, flight or freeze' response.

Workplace violence

Any occasion when an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in the workplace or while they are working.