

CISM - Helpful Tips for the Defusing Process for Supervisors

The Introductory Remarks for Defusing

These remarks will help a CISM team (this team may consist of supervisor(s) as well as trained CISM debriefers if supervisor prefers support in this process) assigned to do a defusing to begin the process. It is not necessary to state each of the items below separately, but cover them generally to help set the tone, expectations, etc. Although it is okay to have a list (see Defusing Guide) of suggested discussion points available for glancing at, the CISM team members who are conducting a defusing should be very familiar with the introductory remarks and they should state them without having to resort to notes. Each team member should introduce him or herself and then the necessary introductory remarks should be delivered to the participants in the defusing.

(Your own wording and personal style should be used when you are conducting a real defusing.)

- Hello, my name is _____ and I am a member of the _____ CISM Team. My partner(s) in this defusing will introduce themselves now. We will work together to guide you through this brief conversation about the distressing event you just experienced.
- Each of you has a little different view of the event and we want you to feel comfortable discussing your own experiences of the situation. Everyone's view counts. We are not here to criticize or critique the situation or your performance. So, we are asking that you do not criticize your colleagues. If things happened during the operations that need to be corrected, they can be addressed in a different process than this one.
- Our team is not part of any investigative procedure. No reports of our discussion here will be made. Things that you tell us are not repeated outside of this group. The only information given to supervisors or administrators relates only to suggestions for things they might do to help your group.
- We simply want to give everyone an opportunity to say what each person believes is important about the situation. Then we will give you some useful information and guidelines to help you recover from this experience.
- No one has to talk although we encourage your active participation because something you might say could be helpful to others in the group.
- There is no specific order to this defusing discussion. We do *not* go around the room. If you wish to add something to the discussion, just speak up when you wish to do so. We would just ask that, out of courtesy, you allow someone, who is already speaking, to finish his or her comment before you begin speaking.
- We know that sometimes in situations like the one you just went through operational procedures are not always perfect. We are not here to judge problems and mistakes. They happen. We are more interested in how you are doing as a human being who just went through a difficult or distressing experience.
- We do not need excessive details about the event. A broad, thumbnail sketch of the situation would be most helpful at this time. Our intention is to have a positive, helpful discussion that provides good information and ultimately benefits each of you.

- In many defusing processes, we have found that one comment sometimes can clarify the experience for other participants in the group.
- This meeting is about enhancing your unit's cohesion. It is also helpful in restoring your group to its normal level of performance.
- Talking about the experience often puts things in perspective and that helps to restore the group members to normal work functions. Many times people learn something in these group defusings that helps them in future experiences.
- Our team holds what you say in this defusing in confidence. We ask that each of you commit yourself to do the same. Please do not discuss other people's reactions outside of this session. Every member of this defusing should respect the right to privacy that everyone in the group has. Trust is important and we need everyone to trust that what they say will not be discussed outside of this group. You may speak about your reactions to the incident as much as you choose, but please do not discuss other people's reactions to the traumatic event. No note taking is permitted.
- A defusing is a *guided conversation*. It is not psychotherapy nor is it a substitute for psychotherapy.
- The defusing process will not take very long. Typically, these meetings take about 30 to 40 minutes. We are not in a rush, however, so take as much time as you need to discuss the event.
- Our team will be here for a while once the defusing ends. Feel free to approach us if you would like to talk to us outside of the group.
- If we need to get together again later, we are certainly willing to do that. If needed there are several other support services that can help take the edge off this event.
- It will help our team to provide you with the most useful information toward the end of this meeting if you can give us an overview of what you went through during the incident.
- We do not need a lot of detail, but we may ask a few questions so we are clear about the main aspects of the situation.
- Sometimes it helps to know who got involved first and who came in next.
- If someone can give us a thumbnail sketch of the situation we would appreciate it.
- Since we are not going around the room we will need someone to start.
- Okay, let's begin. Can someone please give us a brief overview of the situation and tell us what happened.