

Debriefing Facilitation Prompts

(from *The Field Guide To Understanding Human Error*, by Sidney Dekker)

At each juncture in the sequence of events (if that is how you want to structure this part of the accident story), you want to get to know:

- Which cues were observed (what did he or she notice/see or did not notice what he or she had expected to notice?)
- What knowledge was used to deal with the situation? Did participants have any experience with similar situations that was useful in dealing with this one?
- What expectations did participants have about how things were going to develop, and what options did they think they have to influence the course of events?
- How did other influences (operational or organizational) help determine how they interpreted the situation and how they would act?

Here are some questions Gary Klein and his researchers typically ask to find out how the situation looked to people on the inside at each of the critical junctures:

Cues	What were you seeing? What were you focusing on? What were you expecting to happen?
Interpretation	If you had to describe the situation to your colleague at that point, what would you have told?
Errors	What mistakes (for example in interpretation) were likely at this point?
Previous experience/knowledge	Were you reminded of any previous experience? Did this situation fit a standard scenario? Were you trained to deal with this situation? Were there any rules that applied clearly here? Did any other sources of knowledge suggest what to do?
Goals	What were you trying to achieve? Were there multiple goals at the same time? Was there time pressure or other limitations on what you could do?
Taking action	How did you judge you could influence the course of events? Did you discuss or mentally imagine a number of options or did you know straight away what to do?
Outcome	Did the outcome fit your expectation? Did you have to update your assessment of the situation?
Communications	What communication medium(s) did you prefer to use? (phone, chat, email, video conf, etc.?) Did you make use of more than one communication channels at once?
Help	Did you ask anyone for help? What signal brought you to ask for support or assistance? Were you able to contact the people you needed to contact?

Debriefings need not follow such a scripted set of questions, of course, as the relevance of questions depends on the event. Also, the questions can come across to participants as too conceptual to make any sense. You may need to reformulate them in the language of the domain.