

Responding to Learners' High Emotional Response During an Educational Encounter

BCH Academy Seminar

June 6, 2022

Jennifer Arnold, MD, MSc, FAAP

Where the world comes for answers



Boston
Children's
Hospital

Simulator
Program



Disclosures

- The speaker(s) do not have any financial relationships to disclose.

Objectives

- Describe different high emotional responses in educational sessions
- Apply strategies to manage 'difficult' responses
- Use a debriefing tool to support faculty development



3

Where the world comes for answers



**Boston
Children's
Hospital**

Simulator
Program



Let's Put On Our Educator Hats

Where the world comes for answers



**Boston
Children's
Hospital**

Simulator
Program



Ground rules



- Everyone has a valuable contribution
- Give others the chance to speak
- Respect other people's point of view
- Confidentiality

• ***Anything you would add to this list?***

Everyone here is intelligent, capable,
does their best, and wants to improve



Center for Medical Simulation

Emotions in Healthcare

- Humans are emotional beings
- We work & learn in highly emotionally charged settings
- Emotions are an inseparable & in-built component of medical education & ongoing clinical practice
 - Positive emotions such as compassion/empathy enhance patient care
 - Negative emotions such as irritability, fatigue, depression can impede performance & lead to burnout
- Emotions influence what learners learn and how readily they can transfer learning to new situations

Schattner, A; Acad Med, 2017

7

Where the world comes for answers



Emotion and the Educator

- Support educational experiences that focus on a non-judgmental consideration of learners' and patients' emotional reactions
- Normalize problematic emotions that learners may experience and therefore tend to ignore, suppress or express in unconscious ways
 - Example: discussing emotions in small groups, learners can see that others experience similar emotions under similar experiences
- Guide learners to be able to recognize their emotions in high stress situations
- Help learners identify which emotions will best support their professional role to promote the wellbeing and health of their patients
- Role-model so learners can build upon, react against and be inspired by their emotional reactions and practice the differential expression of a range of emotions that they can then extend to actual patient care

8

Shapiro J, 2012

Where the world comes for answers



High Emotions During Educational Sessions

- Can threaten the educational experience by creating a psychologically unsafe learning environment and/or diverting conversation away from important learning objectives
- General approach to prepare for and manage these situations:
 1. Adequate preparation
 2. Establishing a clear purpose
 3. Importance of practice for educators
 4. Managing emotions
 5. Having empathy
 6. Active listening
 7. Timely feedback and follow-up

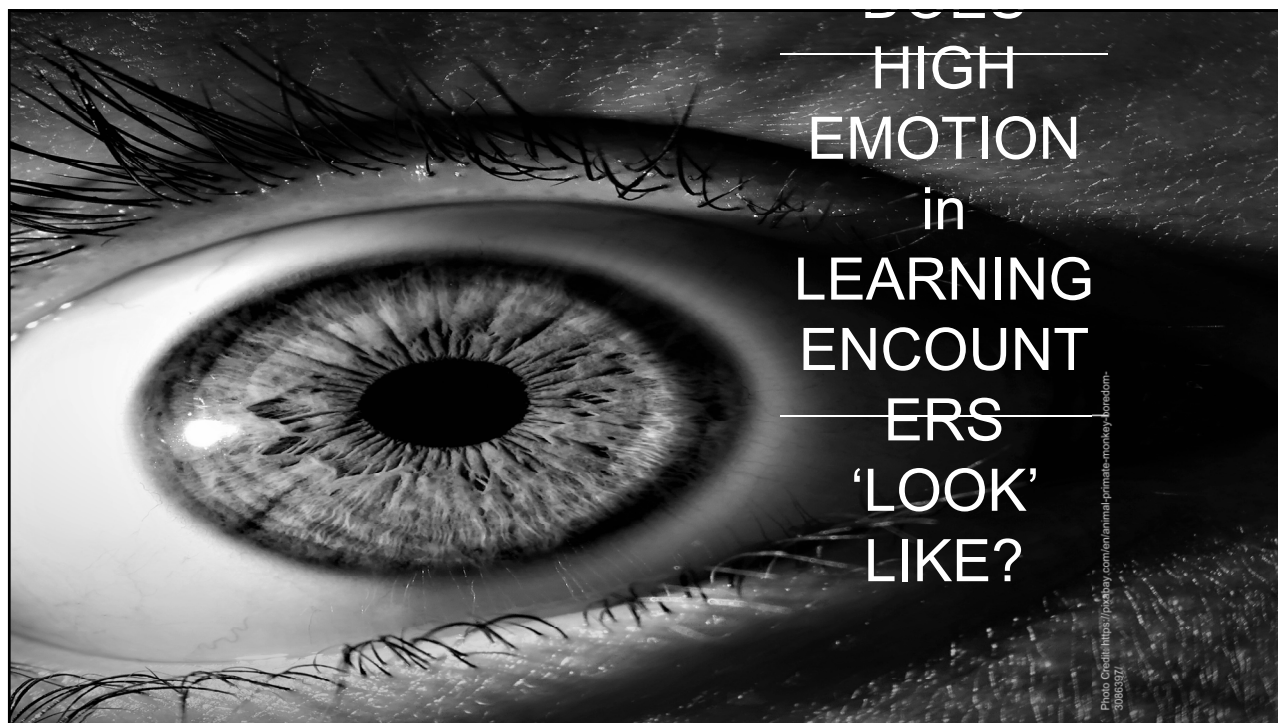
9

Where the world comes for answers



Boston
Children's
Hospital

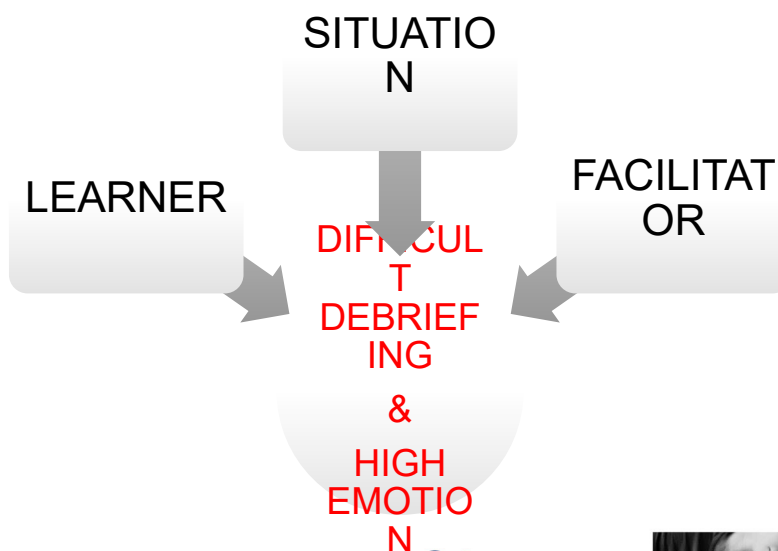
Simulator
Program







Factors of High Emotions in Educational Sessions



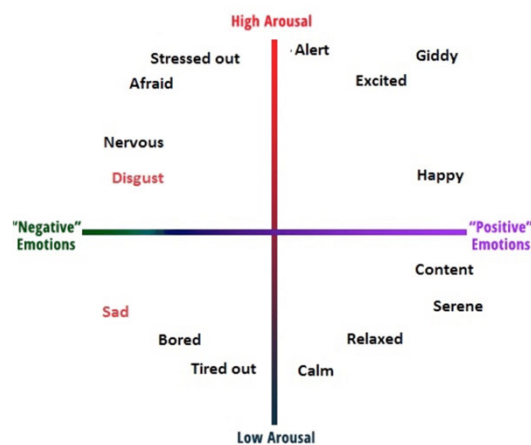
15

Where the world comes for answers


 Boston Children's Hospital
 Simulator Program


Valence & Arousal

- Valence: positive or negative emotion
- Arousal: how calming or exciting the emotional event is
- High arousal emotional events are better recalled and remembered
- Both positive and negative emotional events are remembered well, but may be higher tendency for negative



16

Where the world comes for answers


 Boston Children's Hospital
 Simulator Program


Our Experience with High Emotion During Educational Encounters

- Please take 2 minutes to reflect and write down a situation in which you as an educator, encountered a learner who demonstrated high emotion?
 - What was the emotion you saw?
 - How did you react in the moment?
 - What was the situation?
 - How did you manage the situation at that time?



17

Where the world comes for answers



Educator's Toolbox



Proactive Strategies

Proactive

Psychological safety & prebriefing



Body language & eye contact

Non-threatening learning space whenever possible

19

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's



Preparing for Educational Encounters

- Create a psychologically safe environment:
 - A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes and interpersonal risk-taking is possible
- State the purpose of the session/debrief/feedback
- Start off with a stance of curiosity
- Review the basic assumption
 - Example: *"Let's spend X minutes discussion Y. Our goal is to improve how we work together and care for our patients. Everyone here is intelligent and wants to improve."*

Edmondson 1999, 2008, 2012 ²⁰

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's Hospital

Simulator Program



Establishing a **Safe Container** for Learning in Simulation

The Role of the Presimulation Briefing

Jenny W. Rudolph, PhD;

Daniel B. Raemer, PhD;

Robert Simon, EdD

Sim Healthcare 9:339–349, 2014

Use Body Language & Eye Contact

- 60% of communication is nonverbal
- Body language that helps promote psychological safety can help diffuse emotional responses
 - Open & inviting posture, eg. leaning forward
 - Deliberately breaking eye contact when speaking and maintaining more eye contact when listening can proactively de-escalate a high emotion situation
- Observe & look for signs of high emotion related to body language



22



Create an Ideal Learning Space

- Try to find and use comfortable and confidential
- Ideally, to promote psychological safety and decrease high emotion:
 - Space for sitting
 - Staying eye level
 - Circular positioning
 - Educator should avoid sitting at “head” of table




23

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's



	DISCOVER Y	GROWTH	MATURITY
	Novice	Routine Experts	
Hallmark			
Decision Making	Rule Driven	Pattern Recognition	
Managing Complexity	Little Capacity	Deliberate	
Knowledge Base	Basic	Good	
Content	Evidence, Methods, Tools	Learners, Emotion, Co-Facilitation	

ADAPTED FROM
DREYFUS 2004

Reactive Strategies

Reactive

Communication Toolbox



Body language & eye contact

Silence & active listening

Directive questioning

Empathy

25

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's



Leverage Body Language & Eye Contact

- Using body language and eye contact in the moment when encountering challenging situations due to high emotion can be helpful:
 - Leaning in and open body language can support empathy and understanding
 - Prolonged, direct eye contact can help get a learner to share if they otherwise have been quiet
 - Redirecting eye contact to others can help defuse an angry or defensive learner



26

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's



Silence & Active Listening

- Allowing for silence can be powerful in moments of high tension and anxiety
- Active listening when learners are sharing emotional responses supports psychological safety and allows for defusing
 - Eg. “What I am hearing you say is... can you share more”



27

Where the world comes for answers



Directive Questioning

- Strategy when learners seem disengaged, distracted, or quiet
- Use of questions that are directed specifically at certain individuals with a group
- Can help uncover thoughts from team members who have not been as vocal
- In situations where high emotion is seen such as upset learner, it can take the learner off the “hot” seat by redirecting the focus of the conversation to others

28

Where the world comes for answers



Empathy



29

Where the world comes for answers



Communication Toolkit

MEDICAL TEACHER
2018, VOL. 40, NO. 7, 703-712
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1468558>



Difficult debriefing situations: A toolbox for simulation educators

V. J. Grant^{a,b} , T. Robinson^b, H. Catena^b, W. Eppich^c and A. Cheng^{a,b}

^aDepartment of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine, Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada; ^bKidSIM Simulation Program, Alberta Children's Hospital, Calgary, Canada; ^cDepartments of Pediatrics and Medical Education, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

ABSTRACT

Background: Simulation-based education (SBE) has emerged as an essential modality for health professions education. One of the central tenants of effective SBE is reflective practice, typically guided by a facilitated debriefing. The debriefing conversation has the possibility of becoming a difficult conversation based on learner and situation-related factors. Difficult debriefing situations may threaten the learning environment, thus requiring an appreciation and understanding of the various ways that learners may react adversely to simulation and debriefing.

Aim: This article provides a review of the various phenotypes of difficult debriefing situations and a toolbox of proactive and reactive strategies to help guide the simulation educator to manage these situations, with the ultimate goal of achieving learning objectives.

30

Where the world comes for answers





Difficult Debriefing Tool			
Strategy	Definitions	Purpose	Sample Phrases
Name the Dynamic	Introducing a 'hot topic' by naming it	Focusing discussion, addressing hot topic	"You seem to be [insert emotion]... what's on your mind?" "It seems like the key issue here is [insert hot topic], and that is causing some [insert emotion]..."
Validation	Recognition that behaviors, feelings or thoughts are understandable	Reaffirming importance of learner perspective	"You're totally right, I agree that [insert perspective here]..." "I agree ... in this situation [insert perspective here] is/can be [insert emotion here]..."
Normalization	Relating behaviors, feelings or attitudes to a societal norm	Build trust, calm fear, defuse emotions	"The feelings you've expressed are common in this situation..." "Your feelings are normal in this situation... In fact, I had a situation once when [insert relevant story here]..."
Generalization	Application of a concept in a different context	Enable learner to see broader relevance	"Have you ever had a situation when [insert concept here] was applicable to [insert related context here]..." "Sometimes [insert concept here] can be applied to a different context, such as [insert context here] ... what do you think?"
Paraphrasing	Restating something in your own words	Clarify and/or confirm understanding	"What I'm hearing you say is [insert paraphrase here]..." "So what [insert name here] is saying is [insert paraphrase here]..."
Broadening	Widening discussion to involve others	Engaging other learners to share perspectives	"I'm wondering what others think of [insert topic here]..." "I'd love it other others could share their perspective related to [insert topic here]..."
Previewing	Introducing a new topic of discussion	Guide and refocus topic of discussion	"At this point, I'm wondering if we can switch gears and talk about [insert topic here] because [insert rationale here]" ...
<p><i>Silence should be purposefully used between strategies.</i> <i>Periods of silence allow for active listening, reading learner body language, and to help determine if learners are "ready to learn"</i></p>			

GRANT ET AL, 2018

High Emotion EXERCISE

- What high emotion did you see in that scenario?
- What strategies were utilized or not utilized by the educator to help support the learner and diffuse high emotion?
- What worked well? What would you do differently?



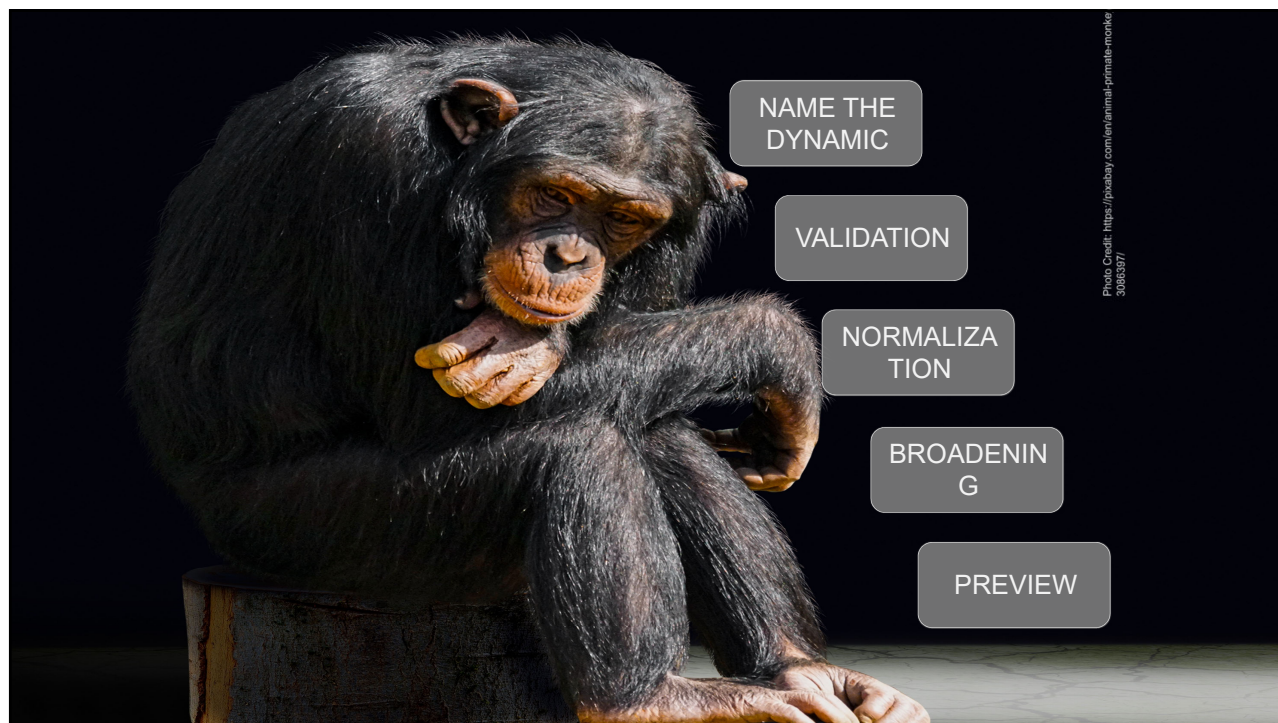
33

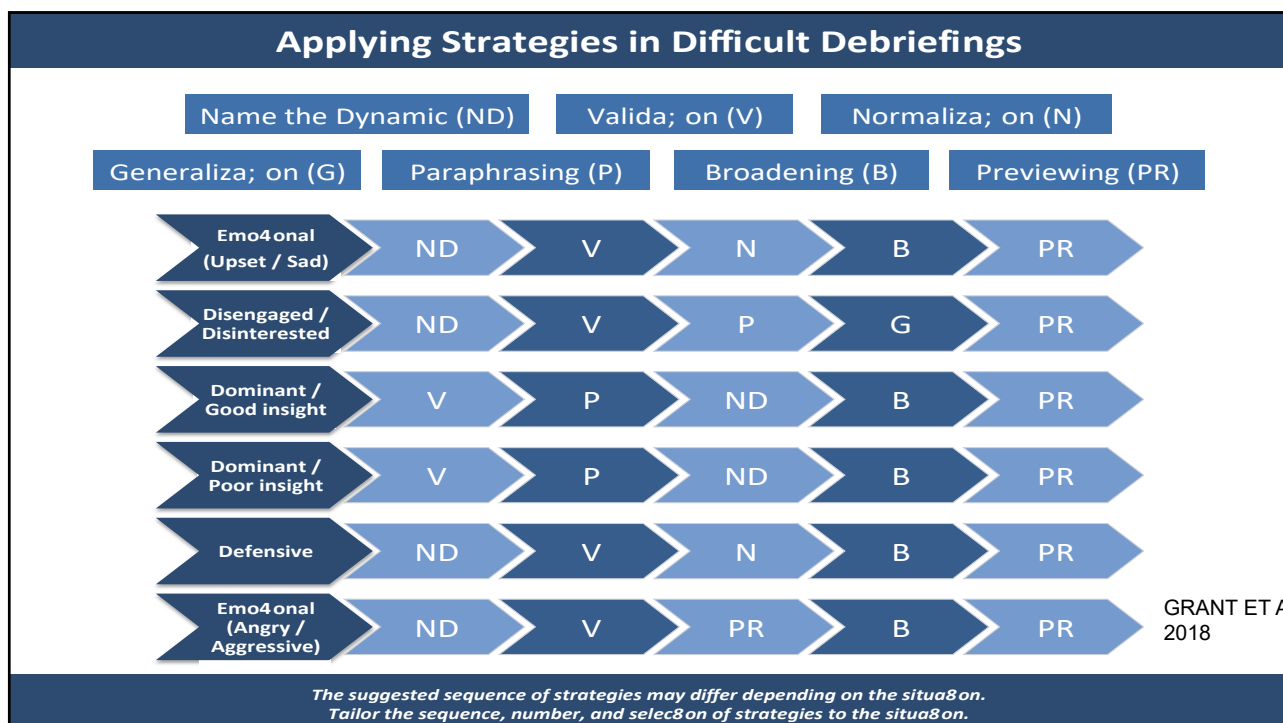
Where the world comes for answers



Boston
Children's
Hospital

Simulator
Program





High Emotion EXERCISE

- Let's try again
- What strategies were utilized by the educator to help support the learner and diffuse high emotion?
- What worked well, what would you do differently?



37

Where the world comes for answers



Boston
Children's
Hospital

Simulator
Program



Break Out Session- 15 min

- Opportunity to explore how we might respond to high emotions in our educational encounters
- Reflect and discuss in break out
- Share in larger group



38

Where the world comes for answers



Boston
Children's
Hospital

Simulator
Program



Large Group Reflection



39

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's



Follow Up

- Anytime we observe high emotional reactions during an educational encounter, it is wise to follow up
- Sometimes, high emotions cannot be resolved during the educational encounter
- Seek permission to follow-up with the learner
 - Discuss the method for follow-up (e.g. formal meeting, informal coffee chat) & timeframe
- Consider offering resources to support the learner

40

Where the world comes for answers

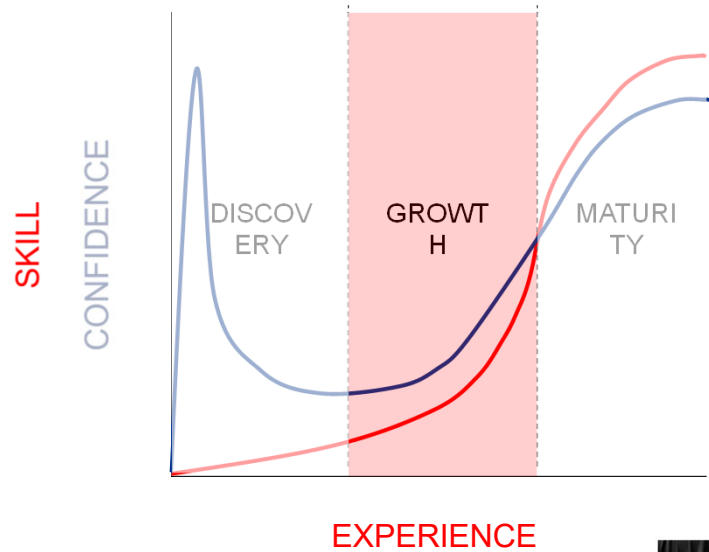


Boston
Children's
Hospital

Simulator
Program



Practice: Each of us have our own curve



41

Where the world comes for answers



Boston Children's Hospital
Simulator Program



Discovery

**FACULTY
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY**

Foundational
Training

Additional
Training

Scripts and
Tools

Mentorship &
Expert

Feedback
Peer
Coaching

Varying
Context

Growth

Maturity

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

42

Where the world comes for answers




Boston Children's Hospital
Simulator Program



EMBRACE YOUR DISCOMFORT

Photo Credit: <https://pixabay.com/en/candle-light-candlelight-flame-3508564/>

**THE MOST DIFFICULT
THING ABOUT
DIFFICULT
DEBRIEFINGS IS
PERCEIVING THEM AS
OPPORTUNITIES,
RATHER THAN AS
 DIFFICULT
CONVERSATIONS**

@docchenger

Thank You

45

Where the world comes for answers



Boston
Children's
Hospital

Simulator
Program

