

GLAD TO BE HERE DEBRIEF



THE GLAD TO BE HERE DEBRIEF is a results-oriented process and mindset that makes higher performance possible. This high-impact, after-action review of both successes and failures leads to incremental improvement. It relies on self-analysis and accountability in a safe group environment to identify and fix performance gaps.

Research shows that teams with well-understood group norms perform at a level beyond their apparent talents. The Glad To Be Here Debrief plays an active role in defining shared values and group dynamics. It also fosters a mindset of self-accountability and builds the kind of safe environment that increases openness, accountability and gratitude. This process delivers results while transforming the culture of the teams that implement it.

INTRODUCTION OF GLAD TO BE HERE DEBRIEF BY JOHN FOLEY

When I first walked into the Blue Angels debrief, I was simply blown away. I'd been through countless debriefs in the Navy, but I could immediately tell the Blues debrief was going to be different. As it progressed, some of the comments struck me as insignificant. I soon learned, however, that small things are the differentiator at the elite level. Achieving excellence is a progression of incremental improvement and change.

The other thing that astounded me was that people weren't afraid to be vulnerable. I'll never forget the humility of the pilots and the things they were willing to bring up. With the support of the team, there is strength in vulnerability. I had flown jets off aircraft carriers on thousands of sorties and in all kinds of exercises, and nobody ever got to that level of emotional honesty in a debrief.

The process gave pilots the opportunity to make contracts that inspired them to continue to improve after every performance. And the trust and camaraderie that these meetings created allowed them to improve the small things on the next flight.

Glad To Be Here Debrief is different from typical after-action reviews because it builds a mindset that can change more than the results of future projects. It can change the very culture of teams that use it.

THE EVOLUTION AND APPLICATION OF GLAD TO BE HERE DEBRIEF FOR JOHN

The debrief process really helped me develop my ideas about what makes a great high performance team. When I worked in Silicon Valley, I constantly fell back on what I'd learned while flying with the Blues to elevate my performance and inspire the teams I worked with. As all the pieces started coming together, the debrief stood out because it represented this dual approach to high performance where the mindset is just as important as the process. They complement one another to multiply the results of your actions.

"At the end of the day, the team you build is the company you build."

— Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon.com

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This process and mindset combination helps teams execute on immediate tactical objectives while simultaneously making progress on higher-level business objectives. How do we build chemistry and maintain consistency? How do we react to change together? How can we be sure that everyone's views are laid out on the table in an open environment focused on gratitude and continuous improvement?

I learned quickly in the business world that debriefs have a reputation synonymous with spreading blame or wasting time. The key difference from my experience with the Blues was that our debriefs applied to both successes and failures. The focus is on improvement.

The debrief is the center of improvement, which is why it's the last piece in the cycle of the Diamond Performance Framework. It resets a team's performance, setting it up to elevate belief levels and head back into the action. If you make this a part of your regular systems – and during the process of looking to the past and planning for the future, you actually engage with the dynamics of debrief – then you will build something that has the power to affect the entire organization.

BUSINESS IMPACT

Business productivity relies more on team than individual performances. Several variables are required to maximize team performance, but very few leaders think about the environment in which these variables need to exist. Communication, unified focus on common objectives, trust, leadership, camaraderie – these are all elements of a highly functional team environment. At a deep level, the Glad To Be Here Debrief is tied to all of these elements and leads to desired outcomes such as accountability and improved performance.

An organization's performance improvement depends heavily on leaders, managers and employees learning to see potential and opportunities in themselves and in others. This can be promoted by creating the right environment for after-action reviews. The right environment produces honest and open individual performance analysis that is driven by individuals rather than hierarchical feedback. This type of environment results in self and team improvement.

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"Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning."

— Bill Gates

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Studies on the effects of gratitude confirm a correlation between appreciation or thankfulness and performance. When we are grateful, it activates pathways in the mind and changes our perspective. It helps us spot opportunities, both to help others and to realize our individual success. It boosts our potential for creativity and innovation, and it changes our tone and approach to solving problems (1). Teams that function in this manner have a tremendous effect on morale, communication and performance.

ADOPTION METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is crucial to remember that the Glad To Be Here Debrief is based on the two pillars of process and mindset. They are complementary and essential to each other. There is a reason we call it Glad To Be Here Debrief. It is more than a conventional debrief. It has to be infused with the positive mindset that we call Glad To Be Here. Because of the positive tone and safe environment created by that open state of mind, participants are more inclined to share – without reservation and with honesty and authenticity.

The two pillars – the process (part one) and the safe and positive environment of a mindset (part two) – work together in perfect harmony. Familiarize yourself with the process by starting every debrief with a four-step general safe. The second part (mindset) imbues everything and applies to the general safe, as well as the specifics. The Glad To Be Here mindset creates the safe environment that allows participants to be open and authentic without fear of retribution. The mindset is summarized in five essential dynamics that are easy to remember and implement. They are the moral compass that guides and supports you.

Part One: Process

I. General Safe

- 1 Feeling Statement:** How do you feel about what has transpired?
- 2 Safety and "I'll Fix It":** A safety is called out when you've been operating outside of parameters and need corrective action. Calling out the safety and making the "I'll fix it" statement lets the team know you are aware of what needs to change, are committed to changing, and working to build trust.
- 3 Acknowledgements:** What went well? Give credit and praise to individuals who have done well or someone you want to reinforce. Sharing praise feeds into the Glad To Be Here mindset that defines this engagement.
- 4 Glad To Be Here:** This is a heartfelt statement that reignites your purpose larger than self. It's an acknowledgement of your thankfulness to have the opportunities and challenges that life presents. While emotions vary day to day, the focus on this positive mindset creates an open and safe environment.

II. Specifics

After everyone has had the opportunity for general safe, it's time to get into specifics. If the general safe is the spark that ignites the team and sets the mood, then specifics are the engine that drives the plane.

The specifics of the debrief grow from the nature of the subject. Each individual comes prepared with a checklist and shares those specific items. Good specifics cover a large amount of ground in a short amount of time.

"An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly is the ultimate competitive advantage."

— Jack Welch, former chairman and CEO of General Electric

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Part Two: Mindset

The Dynamics of Debrief are core principles that help you establish group norms that elevate team performance and results. When these dynamics become a reality in the debrief, they have the power to permeate the culture of the organization.

1 Respect — Safe Environment

This dynamic is crucial for optimizing communication. In a safe environment, each individual perspective unites to create the clearest picture of what went well and what didn't. Without this dynamic, individuals can withhold information out of fear, which creates blind spots that can inhibit improvement.

2 Humility – Check Your Ego

Individual talent fuels team performance, but letting your ego take over in the debrief will always have a negative effect. When ego, rank and status are left at the door, the debrief becomes an open environment, fueling an atmosphere of psychological safety and openness that is necessary for optimum results.

3 Openness — Lay it on the Table

Even when the previous dynamics are present, it still takes action to get the most out of the debrief. Lay it on the Table is about using the safe environment and speaking without fear of criticism or reprimand.

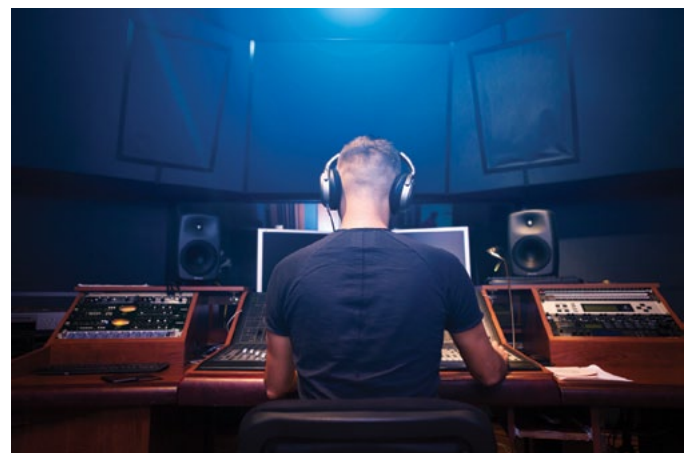
4 Accountability — Own and Fix It

This dynamic is tied to the "Safety and I'll Fix It" statement in the general safe. Taking personal responsibility for our failures creates a feeling of release and inspires greater levels of trust within the team.

5 Glad To Be Here — Gratitude

These four words represent the mindset that makes higher performance possible. Actively sharing gratitude in the debrief changes individual perspective on the task at hand. Gratitude triggers our mind into a state of openness that allows us to spot new opportunities and rejoice in our success (2).

The process gave pilots the opportunity to make contracts that inspired them to continue to improve after every performance. And the trust and camaraderie that these meetings created allowed them to improve the small things on the next flight.



"Happiness is the secret ingredient for successful businesses. If you have a happy company, it will be invincible."

— Richard Branson, founder and CEO of Virgin Group

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OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The first obstacle we usually notice when implementing the Glad To Be Here Debrief has to do with reverting to old habits. Participants find it easy to interrupt each other, and they avoid a certain order in who speaks and for how long. Some tend to dominate the conversation while others shy away from making a positive contribution.

To avoid that damaging reversal, we recommend that one member of the team assume responsibility for leading the Glad To Be Here Debrief. He or she will make sure the team applies the process and mindset by calling each participant to speak, by asking if there are any "Oh, by the way!" comments, and by ensuring everyone has had a chance to be heard. That leader also makes sure the five dynamics are present around the table.

Another common obstacle is related to the size of the Glad To Be Here Debrief. Implementing the steps can lead to lengthy conversations if the team is too large. To overcome that obstacle, make sure you only invite the essential participants of a project to the Glad To Be Here Debrief.

The debrief is the center of improvement, which is why it's the last piece in the cycle of the Diamond Performance Framework. It resets a team's performance, setting it up to elevate belief levels and head back into the action.

Finally, the most obvious and frequent obstacle is when the debrief turns into a critical exercise of blame. This is the very reason we call it Glad To Be Here. Make sure the positive mindset of Glad To Be Here always saturates the conversation. The first antidote to this obstacle is for the leader to be a role model. The leader's willingness to be vulnerable makes it easier for others to adopt the same attitude.

Research shows that when we feel threatened and under attack, our anxiety triggers the amygdala in the brain and shuts off our prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for problem solving (3). In other words, the more negative and blaming you are in a debrief, the less likely you are to resolve the very problem you are trying to avoid. Focus on the good and get the "who" out of the equation. This is how you turn a painful debrief exercise into a positive and Glad To Be Here experience.

SOURCES:

(1) <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12585811>

(2) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-marcia-hootman/gratitude-practice_b_4170267.html

(3) <https://hbr.org/2012/01/positive-intelligence>

ABOUT JOHN FOLEY, INC.

John Foley, Inc. is committed to helping individuals and organizations reach their highest potential by living life to its fullest through the Glad To Be Here mindset.

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