



Australasian

birthtrauma

Association

Support from our Facebook Community

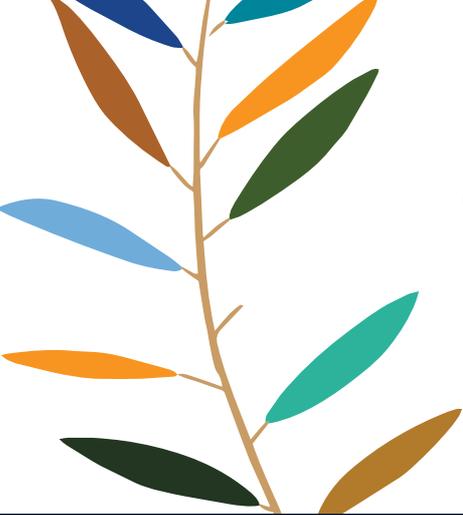
"I'm a counsellor working specifically with birth trauma. I always suggest to the mothers I work with to work on their healing before speaking to the hospital again. It's not often that a debrief with a hospital is validating to a person's experience. If anything it generally causes more pain and confusion as there is no recognition of the women's experience nor acceptance of their role in it. The events recorded sometimes don't match the women's recollection of events, which in itself can be overwhelming. Have a think about what you hope it will achieve and what outcome you'd be seeking."

"I would encourage you to think carefully about your goals and aims of this meeting. It can be extremely useful to help you gain valuable knowledge & insight, especially if you have memory loss around some or all of your event. Write down your goals & discuss them with your mental health clinician first; are they realistic? Achievable? Timely? What do you need to feel they will be met? How will you feel if you don't get your desired outcome? Where will you go from there? Hospitals & the medical model are not particularly good at recognizing birth trauma & operate under different definitions as to what is a "successful" birth. A hospital debrief is not akin to a psychological trauma informed debrief. Consider also a discussion with the social worker after, especially if you are feeling heightened or triggered."

THE ABTA'S FAMILY GUIDE TO DEBRIEFING

Find more resources, support and guidance visit

FAMILY SUPPORT



THE ABTA FAMILY GUIDE TO DEBRIEFING

Healing from birth-related trauma can come in many forms, understanding what happened during your birth can play an important part in your healing.

This guide explains what might be involved in a birth debrief, how to prepare for a debrief appointment and understanding whether it might be right for you.

WHAT IS BIRTH-RELATED TRAUMA?

A woman or birthing person's experience of interactions and/or events related to childbirth that cause overwhelming distressing emotions and reactions, leading to short and/or long-term negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.

Fathers and non-birthing parents can experience birth trauma, too.

Birth-related trauma can be physiological and/or physical. For many people it can be both. Each has a variety of signs and symptoms and the two can very much be intertwined, making the identification and management complex.

With our guidance and support we hope you are able to recognise these signs and begin the journey with your loved one in the management and support you both require.

What is a birth debrief?

Birth debriefs are appointments designed to support you in sharing and understanding your birth experience, explore any grief from unexpected birth outcomes and discuss any thoughts or feelings that are arising as a result of your birthing and early parenting experience.

It could mean any of the following;

- an Informal chat
- a more formal review of your birth notes with your hospital or care provider.

Before requesting a birth debrief you may want to request your birth notes

Birth Notes are medical records that record and explain in medical terms what happened during labour and what action was taken. Depending on your hospital and what you have requested, these might be mailed to you or you may need to view them at an appointment with hospital staff.

Visit our ThinkNatal Resources for additional support birthtrauma.org.au/thinknatal

Retrieving birth notes

1. Contact your healthcare provider to ask about their process.
2. Your notes may help you understand what has happened and heal emotionally.

It is important to know:

3. You do not own your notes.
4. There may be a charge for requesting your notes

Requesting a debrief

The process of setting up a debrief will differ depending on where you gave birth.

Contact your healthcare provider to ask about their process.

An appointment will be arranged between you and healthcare representatives from the place you gave birth. Your debrief meeting will usually be with midwives or obstetricians.

Once you have a time and date for your birth debrief meeting, take some time to prepare.

Information shared is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between you and your healthcare professional/s. To find more resources, support and guidance visit our website.

THE ABTA FAMILY GUIDE TO DEBRIEFING

Guidance from the ABTA community

How to prepare for a birth debrief

- Write down your birth story in your own words, you may want to encourage your partner to write down their own version of events or add anything to your story that you may not recall
- Write down specific questions you would like to ask at the meeting
- Think about what you would like to get out of having a birth debrief and what resolutions (if any) you would like.

Some examples:

- Explanation of birth notes
- To be heard and validated by care providers
- For care providers to answer your questions (get clarification on what happened and why)
- Request an amendment to your hospital notes
- Request an apology

Guidance for the debrief meeting

- Take a support person with you
- Bring your own notes and story to the meeting
- Focus on 'I statements' and be specific e.g. rather than 'you didn't listen to me' try 'I didn't feel listened to when X was happening'

It's important to know

Re-visiting the hospital can be anxiety provoking or triggering. Many women, birthing people (and partners) who may have experienced birth-related trauma will feel very upset or even panicky by being back in the place where they gave birth.

Be prepared to feel strong feelings but try not to let them prevent you from being heard and understood at your debriefing appointment. If the feelings are too strong it is absolutely fine to cancel the appointment. You may want to delay it and make a new appointment at a later date or you may want to cancel until you feel you can re-enter the hospital and feel safe.

Hospital notes are generally clinical documents and won't recognise or encompass how you felt during your birth the hospital notes and the perspectives of the care providers

Create a table, the left hand column could be headed 'what happened' and a second column could be titled 'how I felt'.

Use the left-hand column to list everything you remember happening in your birth (which can include labour and post natally), as much as you remember. It doesn't matter if you can't remember exactly. Then use the right-hand column to begin to think about how you felt at each of these stages.

If you are unsure about how you felt, try asking yourself; was I scared? Did I feel safe? Did I feel supported? Helpless? Was afraid for my life or for my baby?

*How to Heal a Bad Birth' book
- Melissa Bruijn and Debby
Gould*

involved might differ from your perspective or recollection. You may wish to seek a debrief or talk to another person about your birth experience that isn't from your hospital, such as a private midwife. Peer support can be incredibly helpful as this can provide an opportunity to connect with another person who 'gets it', and they may be able to assist you in finding a health professional that can support your unique set of needs.

Find out more:

birthtrauma.org.au/peer2peer-meets-support-groups/

A debrief is just one part of moving towards healing. It might not give you all the closure, resolution and validation that you are hoping for but it may be a step towards the safety and validation that you deserve.

Information shared is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between you and your healthcare professional/s.
To find more resources, support and guidance visit our website.