

After Action Review (AAR)



WHAT IS IT?

An After Action Review (AAR) is a psychologically safe, semi-structured, post-job team debrief. Developed by the US Army in the 1970s, AARs build trust, accelerate learning, and distill priceless insights from hands-on experience. AARs are now used widely by military units, emergency fire & rescue teams and by a growing number of high reliability teams worldwide.



DOES IT WORK?

“Organizations can improve individual and team performance by approximately 20% to 25% by using properly conducted debriefs.”

~ A 2012 research study by Tannenbaum & Cerasoli in the Human Factors Journal

HOW TO LEAD AN AAR

Gather the 3-9 front-line experts who just finished a job together. Together, answer these questions.



- 1) What did we set out to do in this job?
- 2) What actually happened in this job?
- 3) How did the job turn out this way?
- 4) What will we keep doing the same way?
- 5) What will we do differently next time?

	COMMON MISTAKE	BEST PRACTICE
1.	Lead AARs only for incidents	Lead 80%+ of AARs for successes
2.	Lead AARs only “as needed”	Lead AARs regularly, ideally weekly or so
3.	Delay leading AARs for 12+ hours	Lead AARs immediately to capture non-verbals
4.	No limit on group size	A group of 3-9 people is ideal
5.	Titled leader leads	Most emotionally intelligent person leads
6.	Leader talks the most	Leader talks the <i>least</i>
7.	More insights = better AARs	One insight per AAR is plenty <i>if you apply it</i>
8.	“Anything you say, can and will...”	Guarantee amnesty & Psychological Safety
9.	Expect results from your first AAR	As with exercise, results come gradually over time
10.	Require others to lead them	Lead by example. Demonstrate before you delegate.

I show leaders practical ways to reduce errors, improve safety, and build trust together.
Clients engage me to lead keynotes, workshops, and event reviews.
To learn more, contact me.