

### **Where and When to Debrief.**

1. The debrief should always take place in appropriate environment and be on a one-to-one basis initially. The tendency in groups is for there to be peer pressure which may bias or influence response. Inevitably in a group debrief session there will be assertive and passive respondents.
2. Ideally the debrief should take place as soon as possible following the performance. However, the coach should keep in mind the need for the orienteer to have time for self-evaluation and the more fundamental needs of re-hydrating and warming down.
3. It is important to keep a note of the important issues raised during the debrief. This is entirely up to personal preference, and may be purely by memory or it may be from making notes or keeping some form of recording. Whatever method the coach chooses, s/he should restate the important points noted with the performer so that they are working to some common goal and that the information is used as a form of transitional feedback or feed forward.
4. Group debriefing sessions are useful as method of follow-up to points raised after the initial one-to-one debrief. There may also be time to share techniques and performance strategies and are an ideal forum for developing a wider knowledge base for the orienteer.
5. It is good practice to follow up on any feedback either personally or by telephone.

### **Practising to Use the Cognitive Interview (CI)**

Coaching, like any other skill, improves with practice. For some, coaching skills have gradually developed through a process of trial and error, whilst others have gone through a structured coaching programme in order to learn and develop new skills. However, to be effective as a coach it is important to review and modify current coaching practice, as well as develop new skills.

Effective questioning techniques are critical for effective coaching. There will be individual differences in expertise with some coaches feeling quite comfortable using the CI technique whilst others may find it more intimidating. The practices outlined below should act as a starting point for some people and as an opportunity to hone skills for others.

There is a logical sequence to the skills used in the CI and because of this it makes sense to practice them in sequential groups so that the final group represents the complete CI format. There are thirteen fundamental skills to the CI and these logically fit into the following groups.

- Group 1.** Establishing rapport and Active listening.
- Group 2.** Gaining Narrative information through using Open-ended questions, without Interruption and giving Time for reflection and response.
- Group 3.** Probing for detail.
- Group 4.** Focusing concentration and using Imagery to Recreate context.
- Group 5.** Use of questions that are Compatible with level of expertise and knowledge and within the stated Aims or Goals of the performance.
- Group 6.** The complete CI.

The first two groups of skills are fundamental to all basic questioning techniques. Coaches who practice these and become quite skilful should notice an improvement in the amount of useful information that results from their debriefing sessions. Consequently, it seems to be a natural progression to work through the other groups of skills in sequence. The point is, that no matter at what level the coach is working, it is important to have as much practice at the first five groups before attempting the complete CI.

Feedback from practice sessions is critical for developing the appropriate skills in each group. This can easily be achieved in one of two ways; either the coach makes a tape recording of their practice sessions and then evaluates their own performance; or, coaches work in pairs, practising their technique on each other and giving each other constructive feedback about their performance. It is possible to do the same sort of exercise in a group and some coaches may feel more comfortable with this format.

Practising the CI and its component skills will seem quite lengthy at first. However, with experience a coach should be able to use the CI to debrief a performer in an acceptable length of time. Remember that the performance debrief should reflect the pre-defined aims or goals agreed by both the coach and the orienteer.

### **Common Problems Occurring in Practice**

The following list highlights some of the most common problems associated with learning the CI technique.

1. Too many closed questions are used and not enough open questions.
2. There are too many interruptions.
3. Often there is too little time for reflection and thought between questions.
4. Often the build up of images is limited by poor technique, although should be enhanced in orienteering by use of the map as an additional source of information
5. There may little or no compatibility between the wording of the questions and the age and experience of the orienteer.
6. There is no attempt at building a rapport with the orienteer and the coach launches straight into an interrogatory approach to questioning.
7. Probing for detail begins before the coach has established the way that the orienteer has stored their information (as concept or image codes).