



University of Colorado **Anschutz Medical Campus**

A Coaching Framework for Surgical Recovery

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Every surgeon carries within themselves a small cemetery, where from time to time they go to pray -- a place of bitterness and regret, where they must look for an explanation for their failures.

- Rene Leriche

Personal Reflection on Complications



- IMMEDIATE REACTION
What was your initial response to the event?
- COMING TO TERMS
How did you process and accept the situation?
- SELF-DISCOVERY
What did you learn about your own resilience, capabilities, or limitations?
- FUTURE APPROACH
How will this experience shape your handling of future complications?

A silhouette of a man and a woman sitting and talking in front of a large window with a city skyline view. The woman is on the left, resting her chin on her hand. The man is on the right, gesturing with his hands. A small potted plant sits on a table between them.

Ask. Listen. Connect.

A simple, actionable framework for supporting fellow surgeons.

Ask

Initiating the conversation with empathy and openness.

- DO YOU WANT TO TALK?
- WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU NEED RIGHT NOW?
- HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
- WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF?
- HOW ARE THINGS GOING FOR YOU?

Listen

Active listening to understand and validate.



**LISTEN TO THEIR STORY
WITHOUT INTERRUPTING.**

Allow them to share their full perspective.



**REFLECT AND VALIDATE THEIR
EXPERIENCE.**

Show that you understand and acknowledge their feelings.



FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE.

Identify strengths and opportunities for growth.

Reflect and Validate Techniques

Using language to show understanding and empathy.



- **REFLECTING/ACKNOWLEDGING**

Phrases that demonstrate you are listening and understanding the speaker's message.

- **VALIDATING**

Phrases that affirm the speaker's feelings and reactions as understandable given their perspective.

Reflect and Validate Examples

Putting the techniques into practice.

1

CLARIFYING UNDERSTANDING

'If I'm hearing you correctly, concerns about this complication are causing you to second-guess your decisions. Did I get that right?'

2

ACKNOWLEDGING AMBIVALENCE

'So, on the one hand you are questioning your actions, but on the other you know you did all you could. It sounds like this is weighing heavily on you.'

3

VALIDATING STRUGGLE

'You've been trying hard to make sense of this situation, but it continues to elude you.'

Connect



CHECK-IN AGAIN

Offer to follow up with the individual at a later time.



AVAILABLE FOR DISCUSSION

Express willingness to engage in further conversation and provide support.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Provide relevant resources such as coaching, peer support, or institutional mental health services.

What to Avoid

Pitfalls to steer clear of when offering support



CRITICIZING MEDICAL DECISIONS

Refrain from judging or questioning the medical choices made by others.



ENGAGING IN LEGAL DISCUSSIONS

Do not get involved in conversations that could have legal implications.



GIVING UNSOLICITED ADVICE

Offer support and guidance only when asked; avoid giving advice that wasn't requested.



BREAKING CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintain privacy and do not share sensitive information inappropriately.



MAKING SOMEONE TALK ABOUT AN EVENT

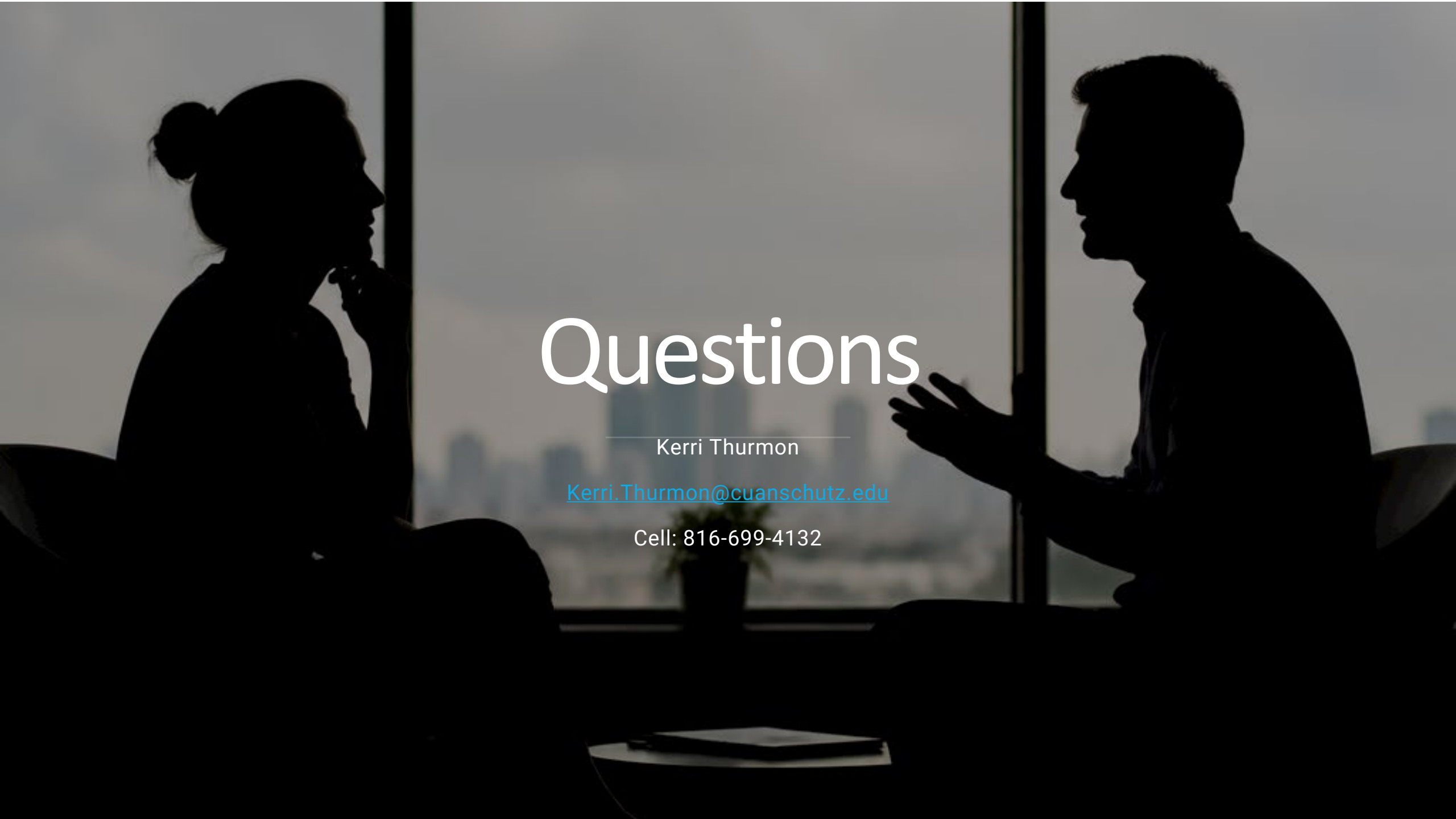
Allow individuals to share their experiences at their own pace and comfort level.

Debriefing the Coach

Self-reflection for the supporter.



- **WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE?**
Reflect on the key takeaways and insights gained.
- **WHAT ASPECTS CAME EASILY?**
Identify the parts of the conversation that felt natural and effective.
- **WHAT ASPECTS WERE CHALLENGING?**
Pinpoint the areas where you encountered difficulty or less confidence.
- **ONE KEY TAKEAWAY FOR FUTURE INTERACTIONS**
Determine the single most important learning to apply going forward.

A silhouette of a man and a woman sitting and talking in front of a large window with a city skyline view. The woman is on the left, resting her chin on her hand, and the man is on the right, gesturing with his hands. The background shows a hazy cityscape with several skyscrapers.

Questions

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