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# “I need to make sense of my birth experience”: A descriptive qualitative study of postnatal women’s opinions, and expectations about postnatal debriefing

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Evidence shows that women feel valued and satisfied after discussing their birth experiences. However, uncertainties persist surrounding the concept of postnatal debriefing practice.

**Aim:** To explore the opinions and expectations of women relating to postnatal debriefing and their experiences when the postnatal debriefing is not presented.

**Method:** A descriptive qualitative study of 20 postnatal women was conducted using in-depth semi-structured interviews from April–May 2023. Thematic analysis was applied to the data collected in interviews.

**Results:** Analysis of interview data generated three main themes and nine sub-themes. Women wanted to *make sense of their birth experience*. They expressed their opinions on the *components of postnatal debriefing*. They advocated for *all women to be offered* this practice by known *healthcare professionals who interact with them*. They *do not want to only talk* about their birth experience but also *meet their needs*. Women agree that *expectations related to birth* determine the need for the practice. They hoped for *psychological adaptation* by relieving their distress and gaining a sense of closure. The discussion process was expected to *prevent reflection of trauma to the future* and *provide transition to the postnatal period*.

**Conclusion:** The present study explored women perceptions and expectations of postnatal debriefing. Healthcare professionals should behave sensitively to women’s expectations and needs in relation to their birth experience. Further research is warranted to clarify the components and effects of postnatal debriefing practice to develop consolidated guidance.