



Empathy Interviews Guide (SCA)

Activity A4.1: Empathy Interviews



Empathy
is the
secret
weapon

What is an Empathy Interview?

Empathy interviews enable you to understand the views, feelings and experiences of other people by asking open ended questions and listening carefully to their responses.

You can create more effective solutions by gaining a greater understanding of the design challenge from the perspective of others. They become more involved in the design process and together you are more likely to produce solutions that work.

The advantage of an empathy interview is that it generates more in-depth and detailed data about the challenge and the stakeholders, by probing deeper into different views and ideas. Also by interviewing different stakeholders it ensures that people are not marginalised or excluded from decisions and solutions.

Interview Preparation

A) PLANNING AND DESIGN

B) DEVELOPING QUESTIONS

Planning and Design

1. **Identify the stakeholders you would like to interview.**
2. **Reflect on your position as an interviewer.** Extended - You could also consider how power dynamics can impact how the interviewee responds and try to reduce their effect on the interview. See appendix I. Power dynamics.
3. **Decide how to collect and record the data from the interview.** See appendix II. Data collection recording methods.
4. **Organise a time and space to conduct the interview.** Conduct the interview in a place that is safe and comfortable for the interviewee. A space that is familiar to the interviewee will make them feel relaxed and allow them to open up.

Design the Questions

Create an Interview Guide

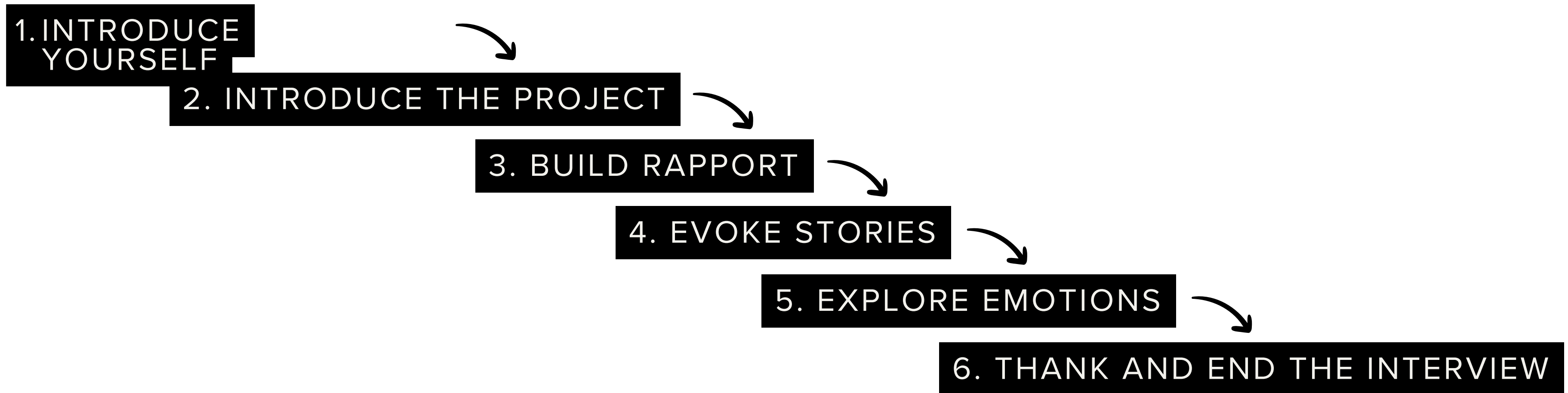
Activity

1. Script an introduction to explain the purpose of the **Empathy Interview** and how the data collected will be used.
2. Formulate around five open-ended questions and order the questions to create a conversational flow. Try to restrict questions to less than ten words.

See Appendix for more information.

An **interview guide** is a list of questions that helps the interviewer know what to ask and in what order. It acts as a guide and does not have to be strictly followed. Questions can be altered and added throughout the course of the interview in response to the natural course of the conversation.

Empathy Interviews - Method



See Appendix for more advice and information.

APPENDIX

1. POWER DYNAMICS
2. DATA COLLECTION RECORDING METHODS
3. INTRODUCTION TEMPLATE
4. INTERVIEW ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS
5. INTERVIEW QUESTION PHRASEBANK
6. INTERVIEW TIPS
7. INTERVIEW DON'TS

I. POWER DYNAMICS

The identity of the interviewer and the interviewee can affect the data collected. Social, cultural, and physical characteristics produce hierarchies and inequalities that can influence the response of the interview participants. Examples include gender, race, economic status, ability, and age.

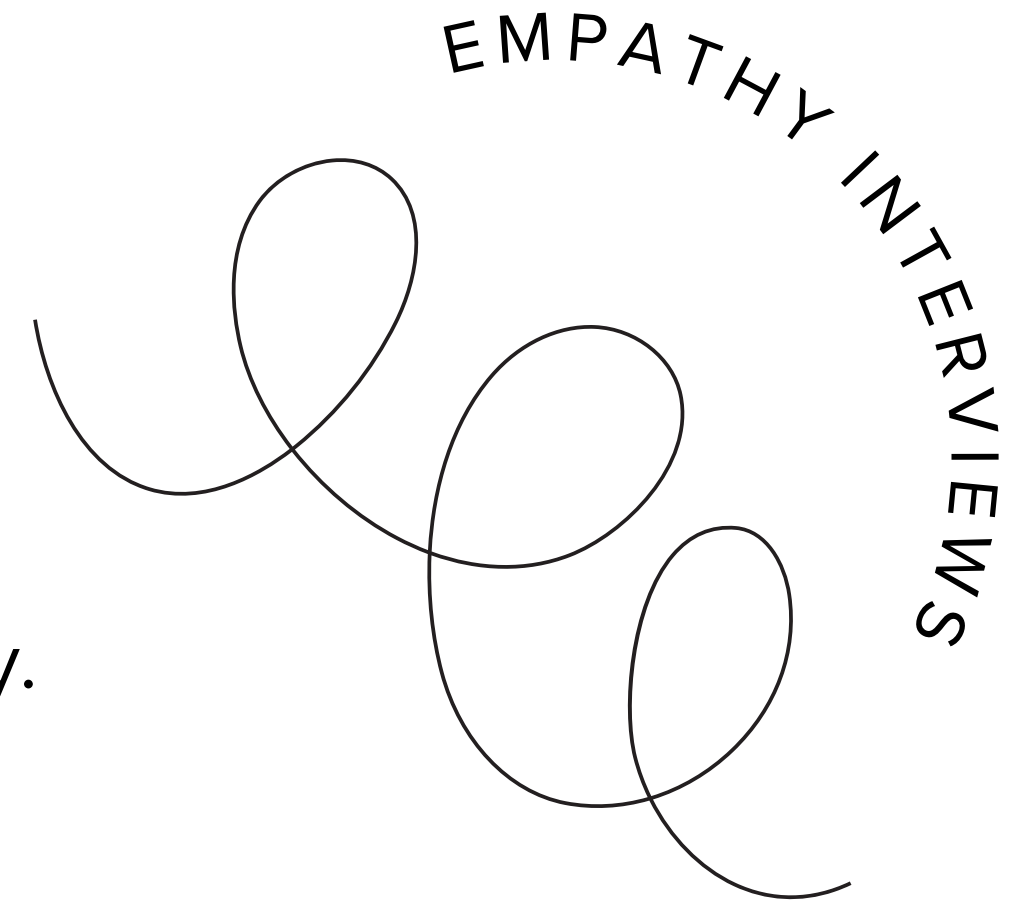


2. DATA COLLECTION RECORDING METHODS

Take notes during the interview using a pen and paper, or record it digitally. Digital recording can be appropriate for more in depth analysis.

If you can, conduct the interview in pairs. Person one is the interviewer and asks the questions, person two is the scribe and writes down notes during the interview (this can be done using a computer, ipad, or pen and paper).

To make the interview data anonymous, remove personal information such as names, from the data collected.



3. INTRODUCTION TEMPLATE

We are conducting research to study in greater detail [explain the topic or challenge you are exploring and where you are from - your school, etc.]. This interview is being conducted to help us understand the feelings, thoughts, behaviours and interests of those connected to this challenge area. I will be following a general set of open-ended questions and I may ask “Why?” or “Tell me more...” questions, so that you have an opportunity to expand on your thoughts and statements. Feel free to decline to answer, or ask me to rephrase a question at any point.

The information gathered from this interview may be used in our research anonymously. Nothing that you say will ever be directly attributed to you at any point beyond this interview. All personally identifiable information will remain confidential and separate from the analysis, synthesis and creation of information included in any materials.

4. INTERVIEW QUESTION PHRASEBANK

Initial Questions

'Tell me about a time when...'
'Tell me about the last time you...'
'What are your worst/best experiences with...?'
How do you feel about...?
'Can you share an example of when you...?'

Follow Up Questions

'Tell me more about...'
'Tell me more about a time/moment when...'
'Why?/What makes you say that?'
'What feeling(s) did you experience in that moment?/How did you feel at that moment?'
'Can you tell me another example of where you felt the same?'
'What were you thinking at that point?'

Rapport Building Questions

'How are you doing today?'
'Where do you come from?'
'Tell me the story of your name'

5. INTERVIEW ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Begin the interview by introducing yourself and ask the interviewee to introduce themselves. Allow the interviewee to ask any questions they have before starting the interview questions.

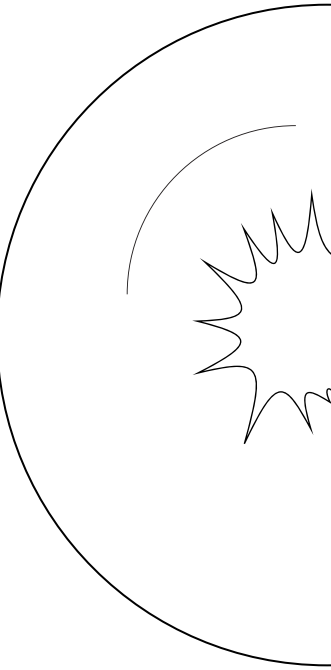
Build a rapport with the interviewee. Start with easy and positive questions to get the interviewee talking. The interview should flow as a conversation, this makes the interviewee feel comfortable and open up. Reassure the interviewee that anything they want to say is helpful/useful.

Use the interview guide to ask questions. Encourage stories and use follow-up questions to gain insight into the interviewees feelings and thoughts.

Take notes during the interview. Important points to note are values, beliefs, emotions, and thoughts expressed by the interviewee. Try to record key quotes word for word or as a paraphrase.

Thank the interviewee and end the interview.

Make any additional notes straight after the interview including any reflections.



6. INTERVIEW TIPS

- Ask open-ended questions that elicit past or present stories, thoughts or feelings.
- Be neutral e.g. 'what do you think about..?' not 'do you think that... is good/bad?'
- Don't suggest or prompt answers to the questions.
- Allow some silences. This can give the interviewee space to reflect and lead them to say something deeper.
- Pay attention to inconsistencies/contradictions that the interviewee makes and clarify these.
- Notice nonverbal cues e.g. body language, tone of voice, mannerisms, facial expressions.
- Respond to what the interviewee says with follow up questions that dig deeper. Explore any interesting conversation that comes up by asking questions outside of the interview guide. Follow up responses that require more explanation.
- Ask questions that inspire an emotional response/thoughtful answer.
- Check-in on the interviewee throughout the interview.
- Be holistic. Respond to how the interviewee is feeling and acting, do not force a response. Give the interviewee the option to stop at any time.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Be present and engaged in the interview.
- Focus on the personal perspective of the interviewee. Ask for real life examples/experiences.
- Be aware of your own body language.

7. INTERVIEW DON'TS

- Don't make questions too broad.
 - Don't disclose your thoughts on a question or issue to the interviewee.
 - Avoid interrupting the interviewee (unless they are talking for a long time about something and you feel you have enough detail - be polite).
 - Don't ask questions you already know the answer to (unless you are unsure).
 - Avoid going off on tangents that are not relevant (unless it is helping to build a rapport or you feel it might be useful to think about the issue from a very different perspective).
 - Don't voice personal experiences, thoughts, or opinions about the issues.
 - Avoid single word answer questions (yes and no questions)
 - Avoid negative body language (folding your arms or focusing on something else).
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