



# EMPATHY INTERVIEW

## What is it?

The empathy interview is an approach to finding out as much as possible about a person's experience as a "user" of a space, a process, an objective or an environment. We want to understand the choices that people make and why they make them. Interviews can be about information gathering or they can be more dialogic and co-creative in action research; your approach depends on what you are aiming to learn and do.

## When is it used?

- As a tool to perform user research
- To understand people's experience as they experience a thing, a space, a context, or a process.

## How it works:

- Use your ethics strategy to guide your approach. Who will you interview, and why? How will you ensure that they consent to your research, and how will you be accountable to them as you work with, translate, and integrate what you learn from them? What questions will you ask, and are these respectful to each interviewee? Are these interviews going to be structured, semi-structured, or responsive to the interests and direction that the interview wants to take? How active/passive will you be in the content of the conversation? Will their responses be anonymous or are they okay with being identified?
- Figure out how you will record their responses. Voice recorders are best, as your notes will be unreliable and incomplete.
- Set up the interview, and consider how to make it as convenient as possible for the interviewee. Consider offering and honoraria to thank them for their time.

- When the interview begins, introduce yourself and the project. Build some rapport with the interview. Keep questions short, clear and concise. Evoking stories, exploring emotions, and probing more deeply into interesting insights might be useful strategies for building empathy and understanding of their experiences. Be sure to thank them, and ask if they have anything remaining to add or check. Reconfirm their consent for you to use their responses, and with what degree of confidentiality.
- Follow-up afterwards as you determine how you might use what they shared to be sure that you captured it accurately, and that they are comfortable with what you have stated or interpreted.

