

# EMPATHY INTERVIEWS

**improvement  
for equity**  
*by  
Design*

# SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING ROOT CAUSES

## TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page(s)</b>
<b>Agenda</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Empathy Interview Norms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Empathy Interview Fishbowl Observation Notecatcher</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Empathy Interview: Preparing Questions</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Empathy Interview: Predict &amp; Plan</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Empathy Interview Notecatcher</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Empathy Interview Reflection</b>	<b>9</b>

# SESSION 1: UNDERSTANDING ROOT CAUSES AGENDA



Time	Topic	Purpose
<b>30 MIN</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	To get oriented to the day and connect with one another
<b>30 MIN</b>	<b>Empathy Interview Purpose and Practice</b>	To understand why empathy interviews are an important tool for equitable improvement and how to conduct them effectively
<b>30 MIN</b>	<b>Empathy Interview Preparation</b>	To prepare ourselves to ask questions and listen in a way that will deepen our understanding of our problem
<b>30 MIN</b>	<b>Empathy Interviews with Students</b>	To learn more about our problem and practice an empathy interview with an opportunity for feedback
<b>15 MIN</b>	<b>Process Empathy Interviews</b>	To share our learnings, and debrief the process to build our capacity with the protocol
<b>15 MIN</b>	<b>Break</b>	To stretch our legs and give our eyes a break!
<b>50 MIN</b>	<b>Fishbone Diagram Protocol</b>	To arrive at a deeper understanding of the problem before jumping to solutions
<b>10 MIN</b>	<b>Next Steps and Feedback Form</b>	To get a sense of where we're going next, and to help us improve this workshop

# EMPATHY INTERVIEW NORMS



**Goal:** To gain a deeper understanding of a user's experience of the issue you are working on.

Norms	Notes
Start with a question that creates comfort.	
Seek to understand, not to confirm.	
Ask once, clearly.	
Ask questions that elicit stories and feelings.	
Follow up. "Tell me more..." "What was that like for you?"	

# EMPATHY INTERVIEW OBSERVATION



**Goal:** To gain a deeper understanding of a user's experience of the issue you are working on.

Norms	Notes
Start with a question that creates comfort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When was a moment when you saw the interviewer upholding this norm?</li><li>• What would be</li></ul>
Seek to understand, not to confirm.	
Ask once, clearly.	
Ask questions that elicit stories and feelings.	
Follow up. "Tell me more..." "What was that like for you?"	

# EMPATHY INTERVIEW

## PREPARING QUESTIONS



### Preparing Interview Questions (15 minutes)

What questions could you ask a student/practitioner/stakeholder to understand their experience of your group's problem/issue, and the factors contributing to it?

- *Question Selection/Brainstorm* (3 min): Individually, review the questions below. Adapt these or generate a few questions of your own.
- *Share & Organize* (5-10 min): As a group, identify/organize your top 5-6 questions. Will they help you understand what makes X challenging, or when students experience success (i.e. the root causes you need to address)?

#### **Consider these possible Empathy Interview Questions (ones in bold highly recommended!):**

- What is **one word** you would use to describe how you feel about X?
- Tell me about a **time when you felt successful** in X...
  - What happened? What made this a success? (What did you do? What did others do?)
- Tell me about a **time when you X was hard**...
  - What happened? How did that feel? Why was that hard? What do you wish would have happened?
- What advice would you give another student/person about X?
- What advice would you give to me about X?
- What do you wish others knew about X?
- Suppose you could have **three wishes** to make X the best it could be. What would they be, and why?
- What do you wonder about X, or wish you knew?
- Draw me a picture of what you think about when you hear X... (then "Tell me about what you drew.")

#### **Your questions:**

# EMPATHY INTERVIEW

## PREDICT & PLAN



### **Predict & Plan**

#### **15 minutes**

*Individual reflection* (5 min): Think and/or write about the questions below.

What do you think you will hear in your interview?

What biases do you have that might influence the way that you listen in this interview? Consider your relationship with the challenge you are looking to better understand, and the assumptions you are bringing.

What commitments can you make to help you stay in a space of expansive listening during the interview?

*Breakout Sharing* (10 min): Each person shares their reflections, closing with one commitment they are making to support their listening during the interview.

# EMPATHY INTERVIEW

## CONDUCT INTERVIEW



**Goal:** To gain a deeper understanding of a user’s experience of the issue you are working on.

### **Norms for Empathy Interviews:**

- Start with a question that creates comfort
- Seek to understand, not confirm
- Ask once, clearly
- Ask questions that elicit stories and feelings
- PROBE: “Tell me more...” “What was that like for you?”

### **Conduct Interview**

*Your notes:*



# EMPATHY INTERVIEW REFLECTION



## Individual Reflection (10 min)

### **Content:**

What did we **hear**?

What are we learning about the **root causes** that contribute to the problem?

What was something from the interview that affirmed an assumption you had?

What was something from the interview that challenged an assumption you had?

What else do you wonder after this interview? How can you learn more about this?

### **Process:**

Are there **questions we wish we would have asked**?

Are there **questions that were particularly fruitful**?

Did we **probe** effectively?

## Breakout Sharing (15 min)

Each person shares their reflections. Give each speaker equal uninterrupted talk time to allow for deep listening and deep reflective sharing.