INTERVIEW FOR EMPATHY

Explore
Emotions

Evoke
Stories

Question
Statements

Build
Rapport

Thank &
Wrap-up

Intro
Yourself

Intro
Project
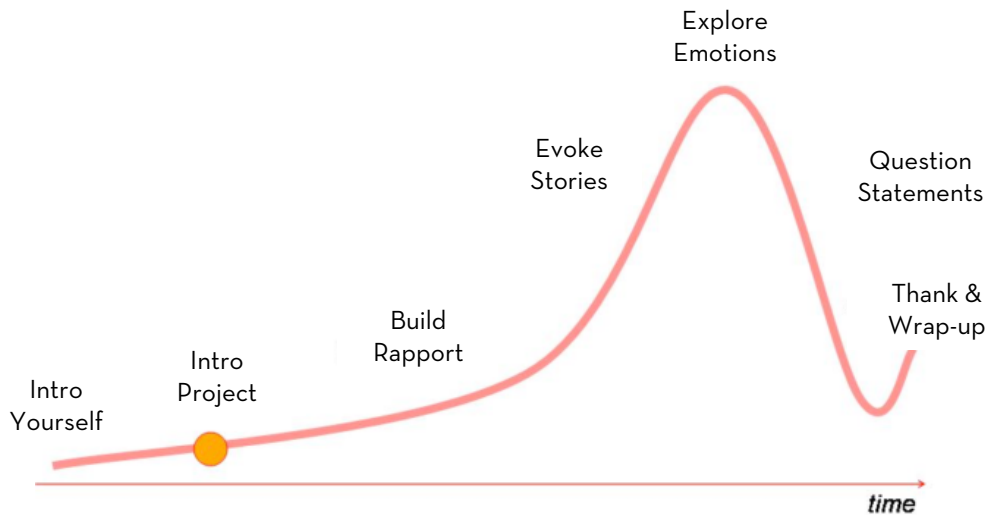
time

WHY interview

You want to understand a person's thoughts, emotions, and motivations, so that you can determine how to innovate for him or her. By understanding the choices that person makes and the behaviors that person engages in, you can identify their needs, and design to meet those needs.

HOW to interview

Ask why. Even when you think you know the answer, ask people why they do or say things. The answers will sometimes surprise you. A conversation started from one question should go on as long as it needs to.
Never say "usually" when asking a question. Instead, ask about a specific instance or occurrence, such as "tell me about the last time you ____"
Encourage stories. Whether or not the stories people tell are true, they reveal how they think about the world. Ask questions that get people telling stories.
Look for inconsistencies. Sometimes what people say and what they do are different. These inconsistencies often hide interesting insights.
Pay attention to nonverbal cues. Be aware of body language and emotions.
Don't be afraid of silence. Interviewers often feel the need to ask another question when there is a pause. If you allow for silence, a person can reflect on what they've just said and may reveal something deeper.
Don't suggest answers to your questions. Even if they pause before answering, don't help them by suggesting an answer. This can unintentionally get people to say things that agree with your expectations.
Ask questions neutrally. "What do you think about buying gifts for your spouse?" is a better question than "Don't you think shopping is great?" because the first question doesn't imply that there is a right answer.
Don't ask binary questions. Binary questions can be answered in a word; you want to host a conversation built upon stories.
Make sure you're prepared to capture. Always interview in pairs. If this is not possible, you should use a voice recorder—it is impossible to properly engage a user and take detailed notes at the same time.