

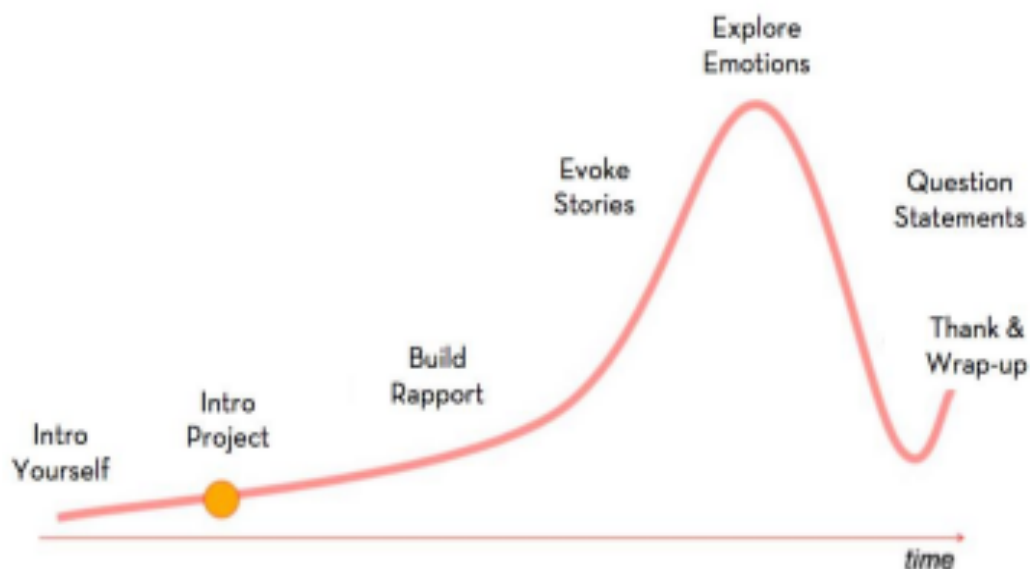
## Interviewing

(adapted from Luma Institute and Stanford d.school)

A feature of Carnegie's approach to improvement is its placement of users at the center. This encourages us to take a student's or teacher's perspective, for example, as a starting point and to try to see and solve problems from their perspective.

**Interviewing** is a technique for gathering information through direct dialogue.

**Empathy interviews** gather information about users' needs, concerns, and desires. The interviews uncover what users think and feel about a particular process, service, or product.



### Conducting an Interview

- 1) Identify a topic for investigation.
- 2) Prepare your questions and recording equipment.
- 3) Determine your criteria for selecting interviewees.
- 4) Identify the people you will interview.
- 5) Set a time and place to meet them.
- 6) Introduce yourself and the purpose. Obtain consent.
- 7) Start with easy questions, then draw out specifics.
- 8) Listen carefully and take good notes.
- 9) Thank each participant.

### Helpful hints

- **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 align 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.

Learning from a single empathy interview of an individual can be organized into an Empathy Map. Learning from across multiple interviews can also be organized in categories, with care to continue to surface individual user voices and unique experiences.