



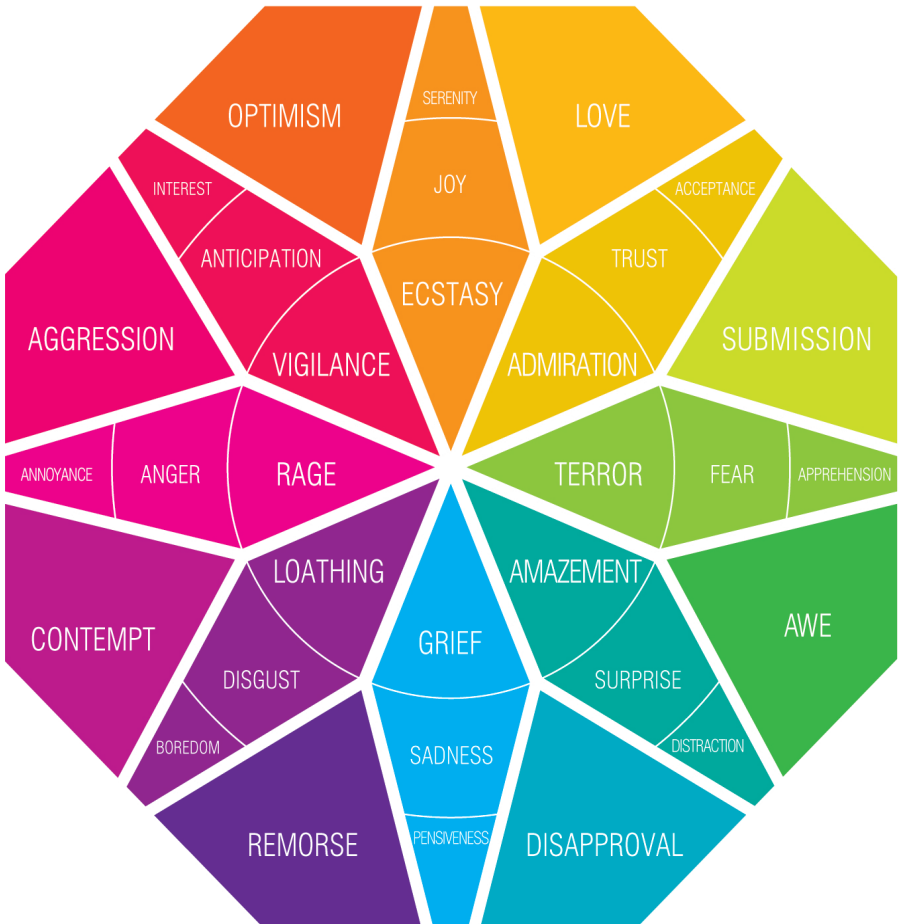
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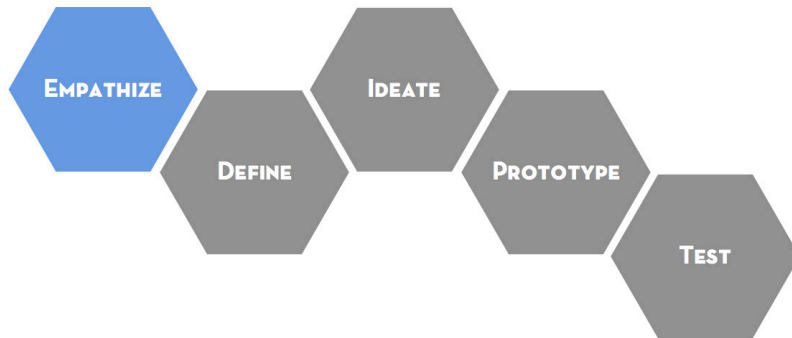
Coach

Coach #

# EMPATHY FIELDGUIDE



# Empathize



Empathy is when you can feel what another person is feeling. Empathy is the foundation of a human-centered design process; by deeply understanding people we are better able to design for them.

To empathize, we:

**Immerse:** Experience what your user experiences.

**Observe:** View users and their behavior in the context of their lives.

**Engage:** Interact with and interview users through both scheduled and short 'intercept' encounters.

Empathize to discover people's expressed and latent needs so that you can meet them through your design solutions.

# Understand People

Through observation and interviews, we can build a picture of our users' motivations based on what they say, do, think, and feel.



You can directly observe what people say and do. The job of the designer is also to infer what they think and feel. This will help you understand the deeper meaning.

# Observation

Technique: What?|How?|Why?

This simple scaffolding allows you to move from concrete observations of a particular scene to thinking about the more abstract emotions and motives that are at play in the situation.

Divide a sheet into three sections:  
What?, How?, and Why?

- 1 **What** is the person you're observing doing in a particular situation? Note the obvious as well as the surprising. Just report the objective facts.
- 2 **How** is he doing it? Does it require effort? Does he appear rushed? Pained? Happy? Is the activity impacting the user in either positive or negative way?
- 3 **Why** is he doing what he's doing, in the way he's doing it? This step usually requires that you make informed guesses regarding motivation and emotions. This step will reveal assumptions that you should ask users about, and often uncovers unexpected realizations.



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## WHAT

- SITTING AT EDGE OF WALKWAY
- LOOKING DOWN AT LAPTOP ON LAP
- EARPHONE IN EARS

## HOW

- SITTING CROSS-LEGGED, BACK UP AGAINST RAIL
- LOOSE PAPERS AND ELECTRONICS ON THE GROUND
- BAG RIGHT NEXT TO BODY
- SEEMS TO BE 'IN THE ZONE' — JUST CONCENTRATING AND WORKING

## WHY

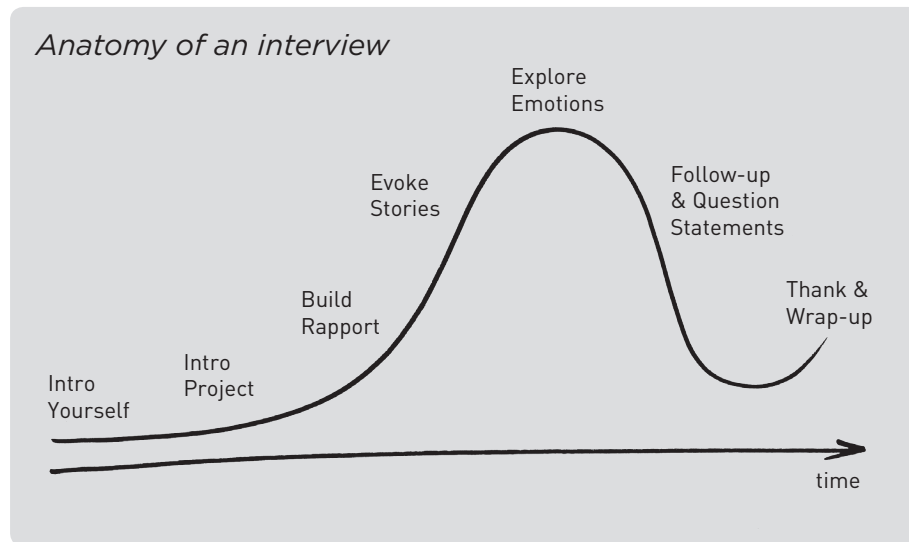
- NEEDS TO FINISH SOME THINGS UP BEFORE GETTING ON FLIGHT
- ONLY AVAILABLE ELECTRICAL OUTLET AROUND, WITHIN EARSHOT OF GATE
- WANTS TO RELAX ON FLIGHT? GET THIS STUFF DONE NOW.

# How to interview? Have a conversation.

Be human.

Seek stories.

Talk about feelings.



Adapted from Michael Barry

## Be human: build rapport

Introduction: introduce yourself and your project in way that is comfortable to you. Try something like: “We’re working on a design project about the \_\_\_\_\_ experience. Could we talk to you for a few minutes?” Exchange names.

“How are you doing today?” (and actually listen).

Build trust: offer something of yourself. Be affirming.

“Tell me a little bit about (your experience today . . . , how you use . . . , what you think about . . .)”

## Seek stories

Evoke **specific** stories to learn about what your interviewee does, and more importantly, thinks and feels. We are **talking about the past and present**, not the future.

“Could you tell me story about a time you \_\_\_\_\_?”

“What was your best/worst/craziest/most memorable experience with (area of focus).”

“What would I find surprising about . . .”

[write your own!]

## Talk about feelings

“Walk me through how you . . . (made that decision, completed that task, got to a place, etc.). What were you thinking at that point?”

“Why do you say that? . . . “Tell me more.”

“How did you feel at that moment, when \_\_\_\_\_ happened?”

[write your own!]

# Interview tips

**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.

**Don't be afraid of silence:** Often if you allow there to be silence, a person will reflect on what they've just said and say something deeper.

**Look for inconsistencies:** Sometimes what people say and what they do (or say later) are different. Gracefully probe these contradictions.

**Be aware of nonverbal cues:** Consider body language and emotions.

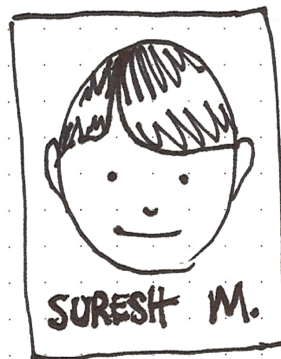
**Stay on the same path of a question:** Respond to what your interviewee offers and follow up to go deeper. Use simple queries to get him to say more:

"Oh, why do you say that?"

"What were you feeling at that point?"

## ASK "WHY?"

"What is the reason for that?"



9 Y.O. WAITING AT BAG CLAIM  
FOR HIS AUNTIE SHILPA

Q: WHERE TRAVELLING?

A: AKRON → SFO TO VISIT  
FAMILY, FIRST TIME FLYING  
ALONE, FAMILY NO WHERE  
IN SIGHT (BITES LIP, WORRIED?)

▶ PLANE SWITCHED TERMINALS, CAN'T FIND FAMILY  
NO CHANGE FOR PAY PHONES.

Q: WORRIED?

A: YES! FLYING WAS FINE "STEWARDESS WAS AWESOME!"  
BUT "IN THE AIRPORT, I FEEL LIKE I'M IN  
A BLENDER!" TOO MANY THINGS WHIZ BY  
TOO FAST "I FEEL EMBARRASSED NOT KNOWING  
WHAT TO DO"

Q: WHY EMBARRASSED?

A: "EVERYONE'S ANGRY, IT'S LIKE A FIGHT AND  
I DON'T WANT TO SHOW WEAKNESS"

Q: WHAT WAS SO DIFFERENT ON THE PLANE FROM  
THE AIRPORT?

A: ALWAYS SOMEONE TO HELP YOU ON THE PLANE  
→ THEY ASK IF YOU NEED HELP.

IN SFO, "NO ONE WANTS TO HELP YOU"

"YOU'RE ALWAYS IN THE WAY"

# Product as a Probe

Use your product\* as a probe to understand your (potential) customer better. Your goal isn't just to find out what she likes or doesn't about the offering; it is to understand what matters to this person, gain insight into how she thinks, and gain rapport with her so you can go into deeper topics.

Do this:

## 1. Prepare

Arrange a follow-along with a customer experiencing your product, or bring your product to someone to experience it.

## 2. Observe

Observe that person using your product. Use your What-How-Why observation technique. You might ask her to “think out loud” — to share in real-time what she is doing and what she is thinking about. But concentrate on the experience, not an interview.

**WHAT IS THE PERSON DOING?**  
(what are the observable facts?)

**HOW IS THE PERSON DOING THAT?**  
(what emotions and techniques are present?)

**WHY IS THE PERSON DOING THAT? IN THAT WAY?**  
(what inferences can we draw?)

## 3. Interview

**a. Talk about the product:** After completion of the experience talk about how that was, what they noticed, and how they felt.

*[“Tell me what you were thinking as you . . .”]*

**b. Talk about the person:** Build on the initial answers to dig deeper and get to **stories**. Ask open-ended questions. Move the conversation away from the product to the person's life and **emotions**.

*[“How did you feel when you . . .?”]*

*[“Could you tell me about last/best/worst time you . . .?”]*

\* “Product” can be any offering: physical or digital object, service, experience, etc. In fact, it doesn't even have to be an offering; it can be anything for them to interact with.

# Extreme Users

Extreme users are people who are **extreme in some aspect related to your project**. Because extreme users' behaviors and feelings are amplified, they help you notice nuances and develop insights. Engage with extreme users to discover remarkable insights that help you understand the larger population.

The extremes could be behavioral or situational (but generally not just demographic). For example, for an air travel challenge, extremes might include:

- A family with young children flying
- Someone who is scared of flying
- Someone who uses the wheelchair services
- A foreigner who doesn't speak the local language
- Someone who commutes by plane
- Someone with a short connection time
- Someone with oversized or precious baggage



CC photo: flickr/chloester

Do this:

## 1. Who are your extreme users?

On the next spread:

- List 3-5 **behavioral** aspects or **situational** issues of your users. Use the issues that came up in “Product as a Probe” as possible aspects to explore. (“He talked about losing his way. How could we find people who get really lost?”)
- For each aspect think of people who are increasingly extreme in that aspect. This could be behavioral (scared of flying) or situational (person traveling in a huge group).

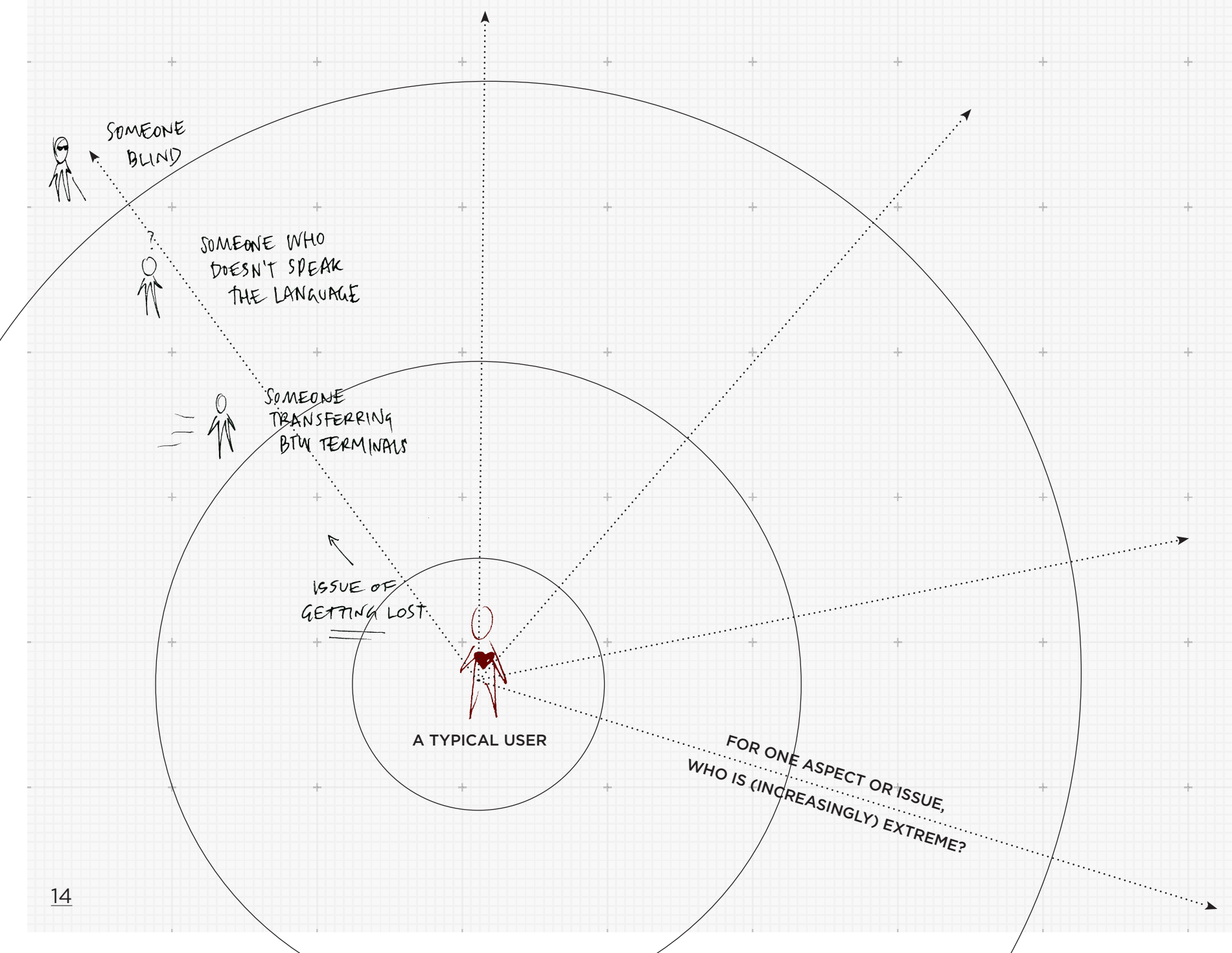
## 2. Seek out those extreme users

Go to where you might find those extreme users (the international terminal), or arrange an interview via your network (friend of a friend who always flies standby).

## 3. Interview those extreme users

Use your empathy interviewing technique to deeply understand this person.

# Extreme-o-meter







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