

Appendix D
Small Deed Big ImpAct of Compassion
Interview Guide*

*Sample questions based on Sarah J. Tracy's (2012) *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*

Go through the below sample questions and select and/or modify them in order to create a guide/set of questions for your project interview. The number of questions you choose is up to you and should be appropriate for the amount of time you have set aside for the interview. However, a general guide is to include approximately three to four questions for the Opening and Closing and approximately seven or eight Generative questions. Sometimes the number of questions you need to use is dependent on the extent to which the person you are interviewing naturally expands on their answers (e.g., someone who is "longwinded" may need fewer questions). Most important is to ask a wide variety of questions so that you get all the information that you need in order to complete your proposal paper and come up with an act of compassion that is truly going to address the experience of suffering. You will include your interview guide as an appendix in your proposal paper.

Opening Questions:

Ideas for starting with something other than "tell me about your [illness]"

- How long have you lived in (insert location)? Where are you from?
- What do you do with your time?
- If you are familiar with the person, take time to catch up, see how they are, etc...

Experience/factual issues...

- Begin a timeline... i.e. at what age did you [realize you were sick]?
- How long has the challenge or struggle been present?
- What is your first memory you have of ...?
- Walk me through the story of your challenge

Generative Questions

Transition

Erin K. Willer, Ph.D.

- What was life like before [your illness]?
- Describe a day in your life

What will allow you to describe what their experience is like?

- What has been your biggest struggle/challenge? (including both emotional and physical)
 - *Sometimes people may answer with just a few words, so you want to have follow up questions such as...*
 - What is the impact on your relationships?
 - What has been the impact on your mental and physical health?
 - What has been the impact on your job/career?
- How did your life change after this [event/diagnosis]?
- *Touching on the hypothetical:* “when you think about [your illness], what emotions run through you?”
 - When thinking about your life in the absence of this event, how is it different?
 - If you could change anything about this experience what would you change?
- What advice would you give to someone with similar issues?
- Tell me about your friends/family/support system
- How is this loss similar/different from other experiences?
- If you could do anything for a day what would you do? (*this will help in thinking of something for the act of compassion*)

Future/prediction

- 10 years from now, how do you think you will talk about this event with your (future) kids or others for whom you care?

Erin K. Willer, Ph.D.

- What's your future look like to you?
- What is your ideal future story?

To get someone to expand on a point...

- *If someone says "it's really painful living with this" (or something along those lines)*
 - Can you tell me a story that demonstrates that pain? Tell me about a time when that pain was evident. Tell me about a time that illustrates how [embarrassing] that was for you.

Getting at the act of compassion...

- What do you wish people knew about this challenge?
- What are the most supportive things people have done for you?
- What are the most annoying or hurtful things that people have done?
- If you could wave a magic wand and not deal with this struggle for one day, what would you do?

Closing Questions

- Is there anything you want my class to know about your challenge?
- What questions would you have/what would you want people to know outside of what you have already shared with me?
- Any other questions that I didn't ask you?
- *Basically, capture anything that hasn't been brought up throughout the course of the interview. You want to give them a final chance to leave you with anything else that you haven't gotten to. In interviewing, what you will often find is they say the most profound things after they think the interview is done.*

Erin K. Willer, Ph.D.

Other Considerations

- If you are interviewing someone who has experienced any sort of trauma/challenge, you want to be mindful that asking them to talk about those experiences might produce a great deal of anxiety for them. Use your empathy to be aware of how your questions are impacting them. If someone becomes significantly upset, please let me know and we can work together to get them support.
- Victim vs. survivor language