

TRANSCRIPT WITH COMMENTARY

Amber G.: An prospective graduate student Amber Introductory Interview

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the March 31 introductory interview with Amber that is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/mOa_M7JZrhs.

In green are comments about and explanations of the Descriptive Experience Sampling process.

These interviews will serve as training for a graduate student, Cody Kaneshiro. Masterclass conversations took place within a few hours of each interview, and will be available on YouTube.

If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt

Amber = Amber G.

- 0:00 RTH: So, we have *thought* that we might engage in some descriptive experience sampling here with you as a participant. And you're a volunteer, and...and our goal maybe is we'll put this up on my website. But the, sort of the rules of the, the engagement there are, is that we'll do a couple of them before we...put 'em up there so that you can have the right to say, well, I changed my mind. I don't think that's a good idea. [Amber: Okay.] And, uh, and, and you should have the right to change your mind after you've *done* it. Or at least after you've done part of it. As a way of, protecting your interests, or whatever. [Amber: Okay, yeah.] And, and so I'm gonna give you a beeper, and I'm gonna tell you how to, how to do it. You know, something about it already, you.
- 0:51 Amber: Yeah, it like random, has the earbud...things like that.
- 0:55 RTH: And you've seen some of the...stuff, that's already up on the website.
- 0:59 Amber: Yeah. There was like, I saw a bunch of stuff like the app and all that stuff. And then, um, not to like, let it just beep forever, because then it'll go into like a different mode. There's and then, then the battery might die. Its kind of a finicky parts about it.
- 1:13 RTH: All right. It's not, it's not that finicky, but. [Amber: Okay.] But, so. I guess, is there any, anything that we should be talking about before, we give you the beeper?
- 1:26 Amber: Like what?
- 1:26 Russ comments: Amber speculates about what she will find in her DES sampling

- 1:26 RTH: So what, what do you expect to find? Let's start there. Just, I don't have any particular rules for this engagement, but what do you, what do you expect to find about, what do you think, what do you think are the characteristics of your inner experience?
- 1:44 Amber: Okay. I think that I experience a lot of sounds and tone and like tempo, um, like that clock. I've been really fixated on the sound of that clock. Or the sound of like, in this building. I notice that footsteps are louder in here. I don't know if it's just the way the floor is built. Um, it was like this weird kind of thumping noise. Uh, that was one of the things that I was thinking about. That and maybe like, the weight of things. I don't know if that really counts, but like when I pick something up, I notice that something...it's different. Like you could give me two keyboards and I'll notice that it's different cuz of the weight. [RTH: Okay.] Or the sound of the keys or something like that. I don't know if that counts.
- 2:24 RTH: So, so some sensory aspects of the world--auditory, sensory aspects, heft, whatever [Amber: Mm hmm.]--sensory aspects.
- 2:31 Amber: Yeah. More of those things rather than I think visual details. Like, if somebody...were to like cut their hair or change their, the color of their hair slightly, I don't think I would notice that. But I would not--realize something is different. I don't think I'd be able to pick up on that the way I can pick up on the, like the timbre of the clock or the sound of the footsteps in the room. Like I can tell who's walking by the sound.
- 2:56 RTH: Okay. And, and any other characteristics other than sensory that you expect to find?
- 3:02 Amber: Um,
- 3:03 RTH: Doesn't matter. I'm just sort of curious.
- 3:05 Amber: Yeah, no I...
- 3:05 RTH: I think if we put these up there, people will be interested in...
- 3:08 Amber: ...what I'm expecting before...
- 3:10 RTH: What she, what she expected before she did it.
- 3:11 Amber: Yeah. Um...I think another one might be inner monologue. I hate to say that, but I think so. Because I feel like I talk to myself a lot. Like sometimes when I'm even doing work, I'm talking to myself out loud.
- 3:25 RTH: Okay.
- 3:25 Amber: So I feel like that might be one of the things, but...I think that's it. Maybe some visualization. Sometimes when people are telling me a story, I'm trying to form an image of what's happening. And then if somebody else is asking me, then I'm trying to put that image into words. Or that's what I think is going on. But that's, I think that's the main things that I'm thinking right now.

3:25 Using the beeper

3:53 RTH: Okay. All right. So, let me give you a, let me give you the beeper. This is, [slides beeper across table] that is a beeper. And if you turn it on, you can turn the thumb wheel on the top.

4:06 Amber: Do I just, do I press the button?

4:07 RTH: Turn... That's part, nope the black wheel there.

4:10 Amber: Oh, okay.

4:10 RTH: Twist that.

4:13 Amber: Okay. [beeper beeps]

4:14 RTH: And it'll come on beeping. So the thing has an onboard speaker, but I'm not gonna want you to use that, but.

4:19 Amber: Right.

4:19 RTH: So the...and that's the volume control. So if you turn that wheel.

4:26 Amber: [beeper volume increases] Oh, okay.

4:27 RTH: So the object is to adjust it so that you get to a comfortable volume.

4:30 Amber: Got it.

4:30 RTH: And by a comfortable volume, I mean one that doesn't *startle* you. [Amber: Yeah.] And, but also one that's not so soft that you think, oh, is that the beep? Is that the beep is that...? Oh yeah! That's the beep.

4:38 Amber: Got it.

4:38 RTH: So we're, and that will change the depending on the environment you're in. So if you're in a noisy place, you're gonna want it louder.

4:45 Amber: Right, right.

4:45 RTH: But if you're in the library or a church or someplace, then you probably want it softer. If...it'll beep for more or less ever until you push the white button, and when you push the white button, it'll stop the beep.

4:55 Amber: [beep stops] Okay.

4:55 RTH: And so now it has decided when it's gonna beep again.

4:59 Amber: Got it.

4:59 RTH: I don't decide when it's gonna beep, you don't decide when it's gonna beep. It decides when it's gonna beep.

5:05 Amber: Okay.

5:05 RTH: But it it's designed to beep within a...within about an hour and with an average of about a half an hour. [Amber: Okay.] So two minutes from now it might beep again or 57 minutes from now it might beep again or 38 minutes from now might it beep again, it's, it...it makes up its mind about that.

5:21 Amber: Okay.

5:21 RTH: You can check to see whether the beeper is working or what the volume is by holding the white button down, push it down and hold it down. Keep holding it down. [beeper makes a square-wave beep] And it's beeping that square wave pattern. The object of that is for you to find out whether it's...whether it's still working.

5:40 Amber: Got it.

5:40 RTH: And so if you've got a question by, you know, did I break the, earphone or whatever, you can push that down. And, and uh...Or if you want to adjust the volume, you move it from one place to another. [Amber: Uh huh.] You can...you can put it into that square wave by holding the white button down. [Amber: Okay.] And then as you said a little bit ago, if it beeps and you don't respond to the beep, it'll beep for a couple minutes and then it'll put itself into the chirp mode [Amber: Right.] (what I call the chirp mode) and that's...that...it sounds like a *chirp*. [Amber: Okay.] And then after 10 or 15 seconds, it says *chirp*. And after 10 or 15 more seconds, it says *chirp* [Amber: Right.] again, and that's just saying, I beeped you didn't respond to me. I'm saving my battery.

6:22 Amber: Got it.

6:24 RTH: [Coughs] To get out of that. You turn it off with the, with the thumb wheel.

6:27 Amber: Oh, so like put it all the way down?

6:28 RTH: All the way off.

6:29 Amber: Okay.

6:29 RTH: So go ahead and turn it off. Turn. I didn't hear it click, so turn it until it clicks. [beeper clicks] There you go. Now that's off.

6:38 Amber: Okay.

6:38 RTH: Now turn it back on. [beep comes on] And now it's making another interval. Well, and now push the button [beep stops] ...and it's making another interval.

6:46 Amber: I see.

6:48 RTH: So if in doubt, turn it off, turn it back on, push the white button and then you're back in business.

6:54 Amber: Okay.

6:54 RTH: You're starting another interval. So, you know, however long, however, it, when on the last interval doesn't, doesn't count anymore.

7:01 Amber: Right.

7:01 RTH: Where the machine is starting, starting fresh.

7:03 Amber: Right. Okay.

7:05 RTH: So I'm gonna give you an earphone. Which...which ear do you think you would wear that in? Doesn't matter to me,

7:10 Amber: I would guess the right...the right.

7:13 RTH: In your...in your right ear?

7:14 Amber: Yeah.

7:14 RTH: So if it's going in your right ear, the hook thing goes behind your ear. So this is gonna go on like this. [assembles the earphone] And this will bend and you can make it sort of comfortable. So. [Slides earphone across table]

7:37 Amber: And then plug this into...

7:38 RTH: Plug that into there, put the other end in your, in your ear and make it comfortable. Some people find it's convenient to run the wire inside your shirt.

7:53 Amber: Okay.

7:53 RTH: Because then that, that sort of holds the wire secure and you don't snag the wire in the door knob or wherever as you live your life.

8:02 Amber: Okay. I'll...I'll play around with it.

8:02 RTH: But play around with that. And whatever makes you comfortable.

8:04 Amber: Okay.

8:04 RTH: Now push the white button and hold it down. So you can hear the... So you should be hearing coming through the, your earphone. Now the square wave,

8:14 Amber: Yeah.

8:14 RTH: The same square wave that was on the onboard speaker.

8:16 Amber: Mm hmm

8:16 RTH: But now it's injected into your ear and I can't hear it anymore. So if you're in a classroom, or someplace where...it's only *you* that's getting the beep. So that's part of why I want you to wear the...wear the earphone. So you don't have to worry about what, what somebody else thinks about it.

8:33 Amber: Right.

8:33 RTH: This is, this is between you and the beeper.

8:35 Amber: Okay.

8:35 RTH: Basically.

8:35 Amber: Okay.

8:35 RTH: And, uh, uh...and the other thing is that the, when you inject the sound directly into your ear, it's [snaps fingers] easier to decide when exactly the beep is.

8:50 Amber: Yes.

8:50 RTH: And that's an important part of this process because.

8:52 Amber: Okay.

8:52 RTH: Inner experience, it turns out changes pretty quickly.

8:55 Amber: Mm hmm.

8:55 RTH: And so what your inner experience is at one second is quite a bit different from what it is and the next second.

9:01 Amber: Right. [She adjusts her earphone, which is snagged in her hair.]

9:02 RTH: And, uh, so we want to be pretty precise about when the beginning of the beep actually is.

9:09 Amber: Mm hmm. Sorry.

9:09 Task instructions

9:11 RTH: And your *task* is to...is to pick a time when you think you can wear it for three hours.

9:16 Amber: Okay.

9:16 RTH: I don't particularly care what time, what.

9:19 Amber: Of the day?

9:19 RTH: What period of time, what time of day, whatever. Maybe, maybe after we do it for a while, we'll, we'll have something to say about that.

9:25 Amber: Okay.

9:25 RTH: And I don't actually even care about whether you wear it for three consecutive hours, although it's better if you do.

9:32 Amber: Right.

9:32 RTH: And, uh, uh, and so, and, *and* I want you to go about your everyday life while you're wearing the beeper. So put the beeper in and then forget, forget about it, basically.

9:42 Amber: Okay.

9:42 RTH: And do whatever it is that you were gonna do. And then when the thing *beeps*, what I want you to do is to pay attention to what was going on in your experience right before the beep began.

9:53 Amber: Mm hmm.

9:53 RTH: So if uh, if this is we operate, [uses his notepad and pen to illustrate] this is a timeline and this is time marching on like this and the thing beeps here.

10:04 Amber: Mm hmm.

10:04 RTH: And then you push the button and it stops the beep and time keeps marching on like that, the moment that we're interested in is the moment that's right here, [points with his pen just before the notepad] right...one microsecond, like we call it one microsecond just before the beep begins. It's not really a microsecond, but what we want is.

10:18 Amber: Yeah.

10:18 RTH: Sometimes we call it the last undisturbed moment just before the beep begins.

10:22 Amber: Okay.

10:22 RTH: That's what we're shooting for.

10:23 Amber: Okay.

10:25 RTH: So your task, when it beeps, is to sort of freeze this moment here in your imagination and then push the button and then jot down in a notebook, which I should give you a notebook of [retrieves a notebook]...

10:25 How to take notes about experience

10:40 Amber: So you would want me to specifically write it down rather than...

10:44 RTH: I don't care, actually.

10:45 Amber: Oh, okay.

10:45 RTH: If, if you would, would you prefer to put it on your phone or whatever?

10:48 Amber: Well, I was wondering, like, if I happened to be in a situation where I couldn't get to the pen and book fast enough, like if I could just record it on my phone and then write it down later, like exactly what I said.

10:59 RTH: That'll be fine.

11:00 Amber: Okay.

11:00 RTH: You can do the whole thing auditorily, if you to want, [gestures as if tape recording] record on your phone or, or, or whatever. I don't, I don't really care how you do it.

11:09 Amber: Okay.

11:09 RTH: I don't care about that much about how you do it.

11:11 Amber: Okay.

11:11 RTH: Whatever is convenient for you.

11:13 Amber: Okay.

11:13 RTH: Most people find writing it down.

11:15 Amber: Yeah.

11:15 RTH: Is the most convenient thing to do.

11:17 Amber: I probably wanna write it. I was just thinking, like, in terms of ju--just, that was kind of more of like a specific scenario kind of situation that I was asking for.

11:26 RTH: Yeah. And...[slides notebook across table] I sampled with some people for whom it's a good idea to do, to do it all auditorily. They don't write very well. Or I sampled with a guy who was a, was a potter.

11:38 Amber: Yeah.

11:38 RTH: And so I had to build a deal so that he could...he didn't have to get his hands clean to write something, write something down.

11:45 Amber: Right. Right.

11:46 RTH: But, uh... But as for the most part, I think it doesn't much matter.

11:51 Amber: Okay.

11:51 RTH: What, what *matters* is that you wear the earphone because that's how you get the fast rise time of the signal. So that's important. And that you pay attention to what's going on right before the moment of the beep. *But* I'm also not expecting you to be very good at that.

12:05 Amber: Right.

12:05 RTH: Most people aren't, most people need a couple of days of practice to get this right, but you've watched a few of the interviews, so maybe you've learned something from that, or maybe you haven't, we'll, we'll find out about that.

12:17 Amber: Okay.

12:18 RTH: And...and I'm...I'm not expecting you to be good at it. So on the, on the first day, when the first, when, when we go over the first set of beeps, it's likely that you will be saying things and I'll be asking you questions and you won't know the answer to those questions, and then we'll have to do it again. And you should not take that as a personal failing. And I shouldn't take that as that I didn't give you good enough instructions.

12:42 Amber: Mm hmm.

12:42 New Speaker: Basically, I don't want to tell you what I'm expecting to find for two reasons. One is I don't know what I'm expecting to find.

12:49 Amber: Right.

12:49 RTH: And two, even if I did, I wouldn't want to tell you about that because would rather have it come from you rather than you trying to satisfy what you think I...I'm looking for.

13:03 Amber: Mm hmm.

13:03 When and how long to wear the beeper

13:03 RTH: So what I'd like you to do is to get a half a dozen beeps.

13:08 Amber: In...how much?

13:09 RTH: And that'll take, well, however long a beeper decides but...

13:12 Amber: Okay.

13:12 RTH: Usually that'll take about three hours.

13:14 Amber: Oh wow.

13:14 RTH: On average, half an hour in between beeps. So roughly half...roughly three hours to get six beeps.

13:20 Amber: Okay.

13:20 RTH: If the beeper happens to make short intervals, then it'll be shorter than that. If the beeper happens to make long intervals, that will be longer than that. If you don't get exactly six beeps, that probably won't matter, either. Six is a, is a good number for, how many we can talk about before we get tired of talking about 'em. And, uh, but, but there's nothing magic about six. Six is the convenient number.

13:47 Amber: Okay.

13:52 RTH: And that I think is sort of enough about the instructions, unless you've got questions.

14:00 Amber: Um, not right now. I don't think

14:02 RTH: If you have questions, you can feel free to call me or email me or whatever. And, uh, uh, and I'll be happy to answer those questions. Or we can just figure that out on the first day, do it the best you can. And then we'll like talk about it as we go.

14:19 Amber: Okay. So, um, oh, I just thought of one, what is like the interval between, I think, I believe on the videos, it was like a week, or was it the next day? So, I was a little confused with, yeah.

14:32 RTH: What I want us to do is to figure out when we're gonna meet next. So when, when we're about these, talk about these beeps.

14:38 Amber: Okay.

14:38 RTH: And then I want you to get the beeps in the 24 hours just before that.

14:42 Amber: Got it.

14:43 RTH: So if we were to decide, for example, to meet next Thursday, then I would want you to wear the beeper either on Wednesday or Thursday morning.

14:51 Amber: Okay.

14:52 RTH: If we were to decide to meet next *Monday*, then I'd want you to wear the beeper on Sunday or Monday morning or something like that.

14:58 Amber: Okay.

15:01 RTH: Basically what I found is that the fresher the beeps, the better, the...

15:05 Amber: Right.

15:06 RTH: And, and it usually doesn't much matter to, like, I think you can sleep on beep one time. But if you sleep on it, two times people have...

15:13 Amber: Oh, I see.

15:13 RTH: People have a hard time remembering. [Amber: Okay.] So, sometime within one waking cycle bef--between...before we meet the next time.

15:26 Amber: Okay. That makes sense. Okay. So I would, in theory, be wearing it all the time. Got it.

15:32 RTH: If you want to wear it to practice, what, how you're gonna deal with the...

15:35 Amber: With the...experience?

15:35 RTH: With the earphone and, and whatever, you should feel free to do that. There's...there are few, there are few rules that matter, other, other than wearing the ear, other than wearing the earphone, and what the target is.

15:54 Amber: Right.

15:54 RTH: So other questions,

15:57 Questions about beeper practice

15:58 Amber: Um, I guess, yeah, like I was thinking of like, just trying to practice with it, today at least, just to kind of like get used to...

16:07 RTH: Fine with me.

16:08 Amber: Yeah. Hearing it and maybe going off and seeing how, that works, that interval hasn't gone off yet, but I don't think we've been here too long. So that's probably why. Um, yeah, when I do practice with it, should I write anything down or should I just let it go and then turn it off? Like, what should I do about that?

16:29 RTH: I don't have a theory about that.

16:30 Amber: Okay.

16:30 RTH: Or preference about that.

16:32 Amber: Okay.

16:32 RTH: I, I guess I would mildly prefer if you're gonna play around with it. If, if you're gonna practice doing it, you might as well write it down.

16:39 Amber: Okay.

16:39 RTH: But if your ob--it depends on what the object of your practice is. If the object of your practice is to figure out how the beep sounds and what to do with the wire and whatever, then it probably doesn't matter what you do.

16:50 Amber: Okay. Okay that makes sense

16:53 RTH: But...well...I think I th--I wouldn't want to say that I'm cavalier about, about the instructions, but I think people are different and, uh,

17:07 Amber: Yeah. Understandable.

17:09 RTH: And what I want, what I want us to do is to have, is to sincere or genuinely, or whatever you wanna call it, be interested in what your inner experience is like.

17:09 Russ comments: Most psychological investigations are quite concerned about consistency in investigations. Typically, for example, investigators video-record instructions so that they can be confident that all participants are instructed in exactly the same way. RTH thinks that approach is misguided. Different people hear exactly the same things (including instructions) in very different ways, so there is little virtue in trying to standardize instructions. Instead, what is desirable is to structure a situation where participants can genuinely acquire the desired abilities. That requires an iterative approach: participants receive the (first draft) of instructions and act on them. Then the investigator observes what the participant actually does, and participant and investigator jointly discuss whether they are likely to be adequately approaching the goal. Then the process is repeated, again with investigator and participant engaging in a joint effort toward adequacy. In short, the acquisition of skill is not about the adequacy of the initial instructions; it is about building respect for what needs to be done to apprehend experience with fidelity.

Some would say that RTH's effort here is to build rapport. RTH actually cares very little about rapport. Rapport, here, would be a characteristic of the relationship between Amber and RTH; RTH is not particularly interested in that relationship. RTH is interested in the relationships between Amber and her inner experience, and between RTH and his apprehension of Amber's inner experience. So RTH here is *not* telling Amber what to do; he is expressing pretty genuinely his own relationship with Amber's inner experience: he wants to apprehend her experience in as high fidelity as he can. He hopes that Amber will develop a genuine appreciation for her own apprehension of her

own inner experience, and that that genuineness will lead her genuinely to try to apprehend her own experience with fidelity, and then perhaps to tell RTH about it.

Some would say that RTH is manipulating Amber (much as all psychological investigations manipulate their participants). RTH thinks that he is not manipulating Amber. He is trying genuinely to tell her something about his own interests, skills, and so on. He has explicitly and implicitly conveyed that Amber is a free agent, that she is free and should feel free to participate or decline to participate, and so on.

RTH has substantial skill, experience, and understanding of what generally works and doesn't work—Amber should use the earphone, for example. But even that is understood as open to exception—there may well be good reason for Amber as a particular individual to deviate from that practice. If there is some principled reason for such difference, RTH will be happy to explore it.

17:18 Amber: Mm hmm.

17:18 RTH: And do whatever it is that it takes to do that. And if it turns out that a lot of practice is a good idea for *you*, then a lot of practice, we should do a lot of practice. And if...if tape recording, the, your experiences is a good idea for *you*, then we gotta tape record it and we'll, and we'll work that out as we go.

17:37 Amber: Okay.

17:37 RTH: As, as we go.

17:39 Amber: Okay. Yeah. I think I just kind of would like to see how it goes if I'm like, if I happen to be sitting by myself and then also if I happen to be sitting in like, like a meeting or if I'm doing something else with like maybe other people how yeah. This way...my processes, but I think, yeah, I think that would, would be it.

17:56 RTH: Okay. Right

17:56 Amber: Figuring out writing...for me.