

TRANSCRIPT WITH COMMENTARY

Joe Jebelli: A Science Author

Interview 5: Sampling day 5

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the March 22 interview with Joe that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/Dnqn5UPxoV4>. In green are comments about and explanations of the Descriptive Experience Sampling process. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt

CK = Cody Kaneshiro

Joe = Joe Jebelli

0:10 CK: This is our fifth time doing it, right?

Joe: Day 5.

RTH: Any issues with the beeper or the procedure?

Joe: No, it still, yeah, it works just fine, yeah.

RTH: Alright. Good. Let's, ... Number 1.

SAMPLE 5.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

0:28 Joe: So, number 1, so I was in a coffee shop doing some work and the beep went off as I was looking up at the ceiling, and I was picturing trees in Regent's Park. Yeah, so I wasn't actually seeing the ceiling. What I was actually seeing was the park and trees.

RTH: So your eyeballs are aimed upwards?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: Would you say your eyeballs were aimed at the ceiling or just aimed upwards?

Joe: They were aimed, yeah, more upwards, but my head was a bit up as well.

RTH: Okay, then what you're seeing, what you're experiencing is the trees at Regent's Park?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: And what do you see?

Joe: I see a road with the park either side of it, and like a series of trees going down alongside the road.

RTH: Is the center of your interest the trees rather than the road? Or would it be just as good to say, “Well, I see Regent’s Park” or “I see the road through Regent’s Park,” “I see the trees at Regent’s Park,” or “I see the Regent’s Park scene”? Or is it about the trees?

1:57 Joe: No, it’s not just about the trees, it’s about the road as well and the park. That’s where, that’s where I would go into Regent’s Park normally. So it was the whole scene, it wasn’t just about the trees. It was very much there was the road and the park either side, and the trees.

RTH: Okay, so I’m seeing sort of the entryway into Regent’s Park?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: And is it about the entryway, or is this, as far as you’re concerned, just about a – this is I’m somehow conveying Regent’s Park to myself?

Joe: No, it was more about the conveying of Regent’s Park.

RTH: Is the scene in color? Black and white?

2:42 Joe: It was color.

RTH: And in motion, or is this like a still view?

Joe: It was still.

RTH: Okay. Borders, or does it seem to just disappear off to the sides?

Joe: Yeah, no borders, it just disappears off to the sides.

RTH: So is it fair to say then that in my experience, is this innerly seeing of Regent’s Park and that’s it? I’m not seeing the ceiling where eyes are aimed at, I’m not hearing the coffee shop even though there’s no doubt clatter and talking and whatever that goes on in coffee shops?

Joe: No, it was just the seeing of Regent’s Park. It was quite potent. I was, I mean, yeah, not that this is – I mean this is separate to the beep but I was working and I was trying to think about what the trees were in Regent’s Park. And I think that’s why I was looking up and then I was picturing it, and it was there, but the beep caught in flight the image of the park as I was looking up.

RTH: Okay. Is what you’re working on related to the trees in Regent’s Park?

4:01 Joe: Yeah, so I was writing a sentence and I wanted to talk about, I wanted to say what the trees in the park were, and then I suddenly realized, *well hang on, I don't know what the trees are*. My knowledge of like tree species is basically zero, [laughs] so I looked up and pictured the park and I was trying to get a sense of what they were. But yeah, that was all leading up to the moment of the beep.

4:36 RTH: So it seems, it sounds like it's fair to say I'm visualizing what I am attempting to write about or...?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: Then I think I'm good. Cody, you got any...

CK: I think I'm good as well for this beep.

RTH: Number 2.

SAMPLE 5.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

5:00 Joe: Right. So, number 2 is I'm walking along a street near my apartment and the beep went off as I was looking to the left, and I noticed the number 37 on a sign. It was on, like, well, it was on a small white gate that led into a house, and I just noticed it cuz... i=Ut was just the number 37, it was gold written against a black circle which was against a small white gate, and the beep went off. The moment of the beep was me noticing that number and the small white gate that it was on.

CK: And so, by noticing, how does that go exactly?

Joe: My attention was hovering on it for what felt like – it felt like a few seconds. Uh, it caught my gaze, my attention momentarily.

CK: So I understand that what's directly present to me is the, at the very least a number, we haven't quite established what else about the other stuff, about the circle or the gate was there. But you said *noticing*, you said *attention*. I don't really quite care about the words but what my interest is, I could imagine noticing and – I'm *visually* noticing this, I'm *seeing* this. Or not, it could be something else too. So *experientially*, my question is: how was that present?

Joe: It was the number 37 and the fact that it was gold, it just sort of *stuck out* to me. And I wasn't thinking anything. Just visually it kind of just kind of *grabbed* me and I didn't ... Yeah, I'm not sure why, not that we need to know why. It wasn't like a bodily thing, or even particularly a mental thing. It was just – I think I was into like the goldness of the number and there was something unusual about it, the gold number against a black circle which was then against the gate. It seemed

somehow different from everything around it, like slightly unusual, so that's why it sort of just held my gaze for a few seconds.

CK: So the question here, I guess, is that I – experientially, is this an “I’m into the *gold* of the number. I’m into the *golden number*. I’m into the *color contrast* of gold on black on white or something like that”?

Joe: It was the golden number and the contrast against the black and the white. It’s difficult for me to know how separate those things are. I suppose, I’m not sure I really know the answer to that question. It was... I was... The main thing in my new experience was the gold number 37 against the black and the white gate, but I was focusing more on the number 37 than the gate it was on. But I was noticing the gate as well, so it was sort of both ga-

RTH: Let me see if I can ask an easier question there, a more straightforward question. Is this more about the number 37 or is it more about the colors, gold, or gold against white, or gold against black against white or whatever?

Joe: I think it was just about, more about the number 37.

RTH: So the 37 as a number?

Joe: The 37, yeah, it was the number 37. It was more about that than the gold, but it was also about the fact that it was gold.

RTH: Okay.

Joe: Yeah, I don’t know why I noticed it.

RTH: So what I’m understanding is that for whatever reason, which we don’t need to understand which is the good news about this situation, but, I’m somehow involved with the number 37 as a *number*. In the realm of numbers, 37 is somehow standing out to me? And at the same time, I’m also interested in the manner in which it comes to me, the colors of it, because of what’s around it and whatever?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: So I’ve got a number interest and a color interest?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: Anything else to say about the number interest?

11:17 Joe: No. No. Again, it’s really difficult, it’s almost a bit frustrating actually because I sort of want to know why I was interested in it, or why it held my attention and

my gaze for longer than I feel like it should have, but I don't know the answer, it just *did*. It was more of just a curious, "Oh, there's 37 and gold and white and black and white."

RTH: Well, I recognize the frustrations of it. I *think*, I think there's probably no answer to the question. Questions of why, I think, always imply, but not usually explicitly state, some kind of a framework. We can speculate about what 37 is for this and that, but the implication will be: well, let's look in the last hour and see where 37 came from, or let's look in the last day and see where 37 came from.

Now, let's think about it from the standpoint of *age* or from the standpoint of whatever, and those standpoints are usually not made explicit but are *integral* to the explanation. So I, for the most part, give up on explanation, I just don't think it's possible.

Joe: Yeah, I –

12:39 RTH: The other thing I would say about it is that the way you find out about the answer is over the long haul if you sample, and then sample some more, and then sample some more, eventually you start to see, "Patterns of what I'm interested in." And then you have something that is really probably worthwhile to try to explain. "I *am* interested in numbers." This could be just like a random event, but it could be a whole lot of sampling of when fixated on numbers for a variety of reasons, then you've got something to explain.

12:39 Russ comments: We have noticed that Joe is sometimes interested in particular words (see the comment at 54:53 in Day 4). Is the interest in the number 37 a part of, or related to, his interest in words? We don't know. That is the kind of thing that might become clear across more and more sampling.

Joe: Yeah, because I thought afterwards, a bit later on, I thought maybe because I'm 37 years old, is that why I was interested in it? But I'm almost 100 per cent certain that's just me retrospectively analyzing it, and it's not that, so, yeah ...

13:33 RTH: I think that's not possible.

13:33 Russ comments: He refers to the impossibility of knowing what is the proper explanation.

Joe: Yeah, I'd agree.

RTH: On to number 3?

SAMPLE 5.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

13:47 Joe: Yeah, number 3. I was at home and I was putting some stuff in the fridge and the beep went off as I was holding, I was holding a bottle of apple juice in my right

hand, and I was trying to basically shove it into a space in the fridge. And I was struggling to get it into the space because there was no space in the fridge. And so I was holding the apple juice in my right hand, and I was holding some other things in my left hand and looking at the fridge, looking at the spaces whilst, whilst also trying to shove stuff in.

RTH: So is my experience of what I *see* or what I *do* or both?

Joe: So the center of the experience was *seeing*, seeing the shelves of the fridge. I was looking at them and I was trying to push the apple juice into the gap. But the apple juice and the other items in my hand were in the periphery of my experience. The center of the experience was the layers of the fridge. And I wasn't thinking anything, I was just looking at them.

RTH: And looking at them with the intention of finding a space? Or not even that, just looking at them?

Joe: No, yeah, not even that, just looking at them.

15:33 RTH: I see not only the shelf on which I am manipulating or whatever, but I see other shelves as well?

15:41 Joe: Yeah. It wasn't a cognitive thing in the way like I would have expected it to be, like it wasn't like I was actively thinking, *Oh, maybe it can go here or here or here*. It wasn't like that. It was just I was just seeing all the shelves and holding the apple juice to try and get it into a space.

15:41 Russ comments: This is a good example of why immediate retrospection is necessary for understanding inner experience. Had we asked Joe a minute after the beep what had been in his experience, he would very likely have given a cognitive explanation, as seems naturally expected. The only way to discover something that runs counter to expectations is to examine it immediately.

RTH: And, and is the holding and trying to get in experienced or is that coming out of my body, so I'm on autopilot, and really what my experience as the seeing?

Joe: Yeah, the holding of the apple juice and the trying to shove it in, that is kind of on autopilot, whereas the experience itself is me just seeing the shelves at the back of the fridge.

RTH: Okay. Did you say the shelves *and* the back of the fridge?

Joe: Yeah, there was a light at the very back of the fridge as well which was also quite a prominent feature of the experience.

16:45 RTH: More prominent than the items on the shelf, would you say?

Joe: About the same, I'd say.

RTH: So I'm seeing the items on the shelf *and* I am seeing the light that was in the back of the fridge, [Joe: Yeah.] and on autopilot I'm trying to stuff a bottle of apple juice in there somewhere?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: But mostly it's a visual taking in?

Joe: Yeah. Um... Yeah, it was a very visual thing. I mean I was kind of aware that I was holding a few things in my left hand and I was holding the apple juice in my right hand trying to shove it in, but they weren't really that present in the experience. It was much more I was just focused on the shelves, and the sort of, there were three of them and then a light at the back.

RTH: When you say the shelves, do you mean the shelves themselves, the metal or plastic, whatever they are? Or the –

Joe: No, it was more just like I was focused on the spaces in between the shelves as opposed to the actual physical shelves themselves.

RTH: So the geometry of the shelves?

Joe: Yeah. Yeah, it wasn't the material itself, it was more the fact that there are – yeah, like you said, the geometry, there are three –

RTH: This layer and that layer and this layer or whatever?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: Okay. What I've got from this is that I'm *in the act* of trying to put my apple juice away, but in my experience, my experience is actually quite parallel to but *not* directly involved in that act. For example, I see the light, the light doesn't have anything to do with the shoving of the apple juice. *And* I see the geometry of the shelves and that really doesn't have anything to do with the act either. I'm noticing what's falling, falling on my retina. And if it's falling on my retina no doubt because I'm trying to put the juice away. But I'm not looking for a space to put the apple juice away. Is that a fair characterization?

19:28 Joe: Yeah, I feel like that's a very faithful representation of it. It's quite an interesting one actually when I think back on it and when I look at my notes because, as you said, I was just trying to put apple juice away but that was completely peripheral to the actual experience I was having. Yeah, it's kind of interesting.

19:28 See the comment at 15:41. What Joe finds interesting about this sample requires that the reflection occurs within seconds of the beep.

RTH: It is interesting. And, and,.. What I would say just as sort of an aside to somebody who is interested in these kinds of things, it does I think point out why I have such a negative view of armchair introspection. Because I think you would *never* have got to this kind of an experience. If you had set yourself the task of, *Oh, what's it like for me to put apple juice into the refrigerator?* it would *never* have been, "Well, I'm going to look at the light in the back of the refrigerator and see the geometry of the shelves." It would have been something about, "I'm looking for space," or, "I'm trying to decide whether I should move this or that," or whatever. And that isn't what this experience was about.

Joe: Yeah.

20:42 RTH: The same is true for the previous beep, too, so your armchair introspection probably wouldn't have got you to an interest in the gold-ness in the 37-ness of the...

Joe: Yeah. I don't know if missing the forest for the trees is, I suppose, almost the right metaphor but not quite, sort of focusing too much. Yeah, like you said, the armchair introspection is *way* too restrictive for this sort of thing.

RTH: Yeah, it's either missing the forest for the trees or missing the trees for the forest. I think it could be either way.

Joe: Yeah, very true. Hmm, Okay.

RTH: All right, on to number 4?

CK: Yeah. Beep 4.

SAMPLE 5.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

21:33 Joe: Yeah. Number 4 was I was sat on my sofa, I was watching the news and I was having my lunch. And the beep went off as I bit into a sandwich, well ... Actually, I was biting into a piece of lettuce that was poking *out* of the sandwich, and the beep went off as I was biting into that, and the thing that was present to me was a kind of wetness and a coldness and a crunch of wet, cold lettuce. I was very aware of that as the beep went off.

CK: And [pause] and so the center part of your experience, a wet, cold crunch thing, so just that sensation, doubtless it was from lettuce but the lettuce-ness has sort of out of that? Or is it more fair to call I'm feeling, or somehow a wet, cold lettuce is in my experience?

Joe: I was just very aware that – well, that, at that precise moment I just had all of the sensations of biting into wet, cold lettuce. That was my entire experience at the moment, if that makes sense. I didn't really *see* much of what was going on either because I was leaning over the sandwich and didn't, I don't actually know if I had my eyes open or closed at the time. I was just, it was *as* I was biting into the lettuce basically.

But it was kind of an intentional thing because I was going for the bit that was poking out on one side, so it wasn't like I was eating a sandwich and I happened to have bitten into a bit of lettuce and then the beep went off as I was chewing the lettuce. It was more that I was *aiming* at this piece of lettuce and I bit into it and started chewing, and that, the experience of the wetness and the coldness and the crispness of the lettuce, that was going on as the beep went off.

24:32 CK: Alright. Is that *aiming for* the lettuce part of my experience as well? Or is that sort of context?

Joe: That was kind of context, that was just before, that wasn't caught in flight by the beep.

CK: I have set this task up for myself and then I have gone for that piece, and when the beep goes off I'm into the ...

Joe: Into the lettuce, yeah.

CK: ...the lettuce, yeah, or whatever.

Joe: Yeah.

24:55 CK: And is it possible to say ... Is this about, is this about my sensing of this ...? I guess what I'm trying to say is, is this about something like my lips or my teeth or my mouth or whatever feeling these sensations? Or is it about the object, I guess, no doubt the lettuce but –

24:55 Russ comments: CK has asked a difficult question, but I don't think he has made it clear enough for Joe to understand it. CK understands that the sensations are coming from Joe's mouth—the cold and crunch receptors (whatever those things are) are in Joe's mouth. CK's question is whether Joe's *experience* is aimed at his *teeth* (and lips and mouth) as being cooled and crunched by the lettuce, or whether Joe's experience is aimed at the *lettuce*, as being crunched by Joe's teeth. Put into words, the distinction is *I feel cold teeth* vs. *I feel cold lettuce*. Those are very different experiences, but CK has not made the distinction clear. Therefore I think Joe's response, whatever it is, should be understood as a talking-past CK unless his response independently makes clear that he grasps the distinction.

25:23 Joe: Yeah, the first thing. It was very much like an oral thing. The center of the experience was very much in my mouth and around my mouth, all of the

sensations. The experience was all of those sensations essentially, that was the center, I guess.

25:23

Russ comments: (See the comment at 24:55.) I'm no mind reader, but my understanding is that Joe has not grasped the distinction, so that even though he chooses the first option, he should *not* be understood as clearly endorsing the notion that *I feel my teeth*.

RTH: Can I ask, am I experiencing the wetness *and* I'm experiencing the coldness *and* I'm experiencing the crunch as sort of three separate strands? Or am I experiencing a cold, wet crunch?

Joe: That's a really good question. I feel like there was some separation. The wetness and the coldness were more together, but the crunch, the sensation of the crunch was separate than the wetness and the coldness.

RTH: Is the crunch a mechanical thing? I feel my teeth going through the lettuce, or I feel the crunch? Or I hear the crunch?

Joe: It was more hearing the crunch. Yeah, it was definitely more hearing it, because it was a very *small* piece of lettuce, I didn't feel it that much. It was more just quite a loud crunch.

RTH: It was a loud crunch?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: Okay. So, my experience, as I gathering it down, is a sort of a two and a half or two-ish-stranded thing. One about the cold/wet maybe separate but probably together, and then the other about hearing the crunch?

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: And the rest of it we could say, I' eating my sandwich and I'm going for the lettuce that's sticking out of the edge, or whatever. But that's mostly context, my experience is of the cold/wet, and the crunch.

Joe: Yeah, it was a very, like a sensory thing. Everything else was context, I guess.

RTH: Okay. I think I'm good.

CK: Me too.

RTH: Number 5.

SAMPLE 5.5 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

28:16 Joe: Yeah. Number 5, I don't want to disclose, if that's all right.

28:22 RTH: Alright. Number 6?

SAMPLE 5.6 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

28:23 Joe: And the same is actually true for number 6, unfortunately. So, yeah, that's... I've just got the four beeps today.

RTH: Okay, sounds good to me. So shall we do this again?

Joe: Yeah. If you guys are happy to do it again?

CK: Sure.

28:47 RTH: When would be good?

28:47 Russ comments: They compare calendars.

30:28 RTH: Works for me.

30:30 Joe: Great.

30:32 RTH: And do you have any comment, comments, questions before we wrap it up for today?

DISCUSSION AFTER SAMPLING

30:37 Joe: No, I suppose I just wanna say that I think, um, I feel like, I dunno if this is the right thing to say, but I feel like I'm getting *better* at this. Like I feel like I'm, I'm, I'm able to notice things and articulate it in a way that I wasn't before. Cuz I remember at the very beginning when we did like the first and second session, there was a lot of like bracketing of suppositions and explanations and things. Um, but yeah, I just, yeah, I just, I just wanna say thank you, cuz I feel like, I feel like the, um, as you said, it's like an iterative training, um, process to it. And I'm now really starting to kind of appreciate that, because I'm, yeah, I'm, I'm sort of noticing how to, how to do it, if that makes sense, without, without influencing me thinking about how to do it. [laughs]

31:26 RTH: I, I do think it's a complicated thing and I do think, I do think it there it's difficult to master without doing it. So it, I think, yeah, it comes back now, comes down to the, what we were talking about armchair introspection earlier on. Yeah. And your experiences are largely sensory awareness, maybe four for four today, if I'm recalling correctly. [It's really three for four; the first sample was an inner seeing.] So you're interested in the sensory aspects of the environment, for whatever

reason. And I would say that most people (maybe not most people, but many people, maybe most people, I don't, I don't really make that much of a distinction about that cuz I don't have random samples or whatever) but, uh, maybe most people who have sensory awareness take a while to sort of *accept* that that's what's actually going on in their experience and...

32:15 Joe: Mm.

32:16 RTH: ...and when they *accept* it, then it's, it gets to be easier to describe what's going on in their experience.

32:21 Joe: Yeah.

32:22 RTH: If they, if they *rule out* (which I think a lot of people do for whatever reason), if they rule out sensory, sensory stuff as being not important, or not there, or whatever, then describing experience is difficult.

32:35 Joe: Yeah. And it's this, it's like, and I, I, it's like, just as you know, I'm think I'm in terms of like sent, like the, the images I have now, like before, I think at the beginning of doing all of this, I remember I was trying to explain the physics of things like, oh, I couldn't have, *couldn't* have seen this because I saw something else behind it. And then you were saying, you know, don't, don't explain it based on the physics of the real world. Just explain the, the *perception* and the experience you're having. So now, like for instance, that first beep, I was then very aware that I wasn't actually seeing the coffee shop or the ceiling. I was just seeing the park basically. [RTH: Right.] Whereas before I think I would've tried to explain it with the physics of the real world somehow.

33:15 RTH: Right. And that's, and that's a challenge if that's not what your experience is, because then you're fighting against yourself.

33:22 Joe: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, okay.

33:25 RTH: Alrighty.

33:26 Joe: Thanks so much guys.

33:28 RTH: You're welcome. We will see you on, uh, two weeks from today.

33:31 Joe: Yep. See you soon. Take care. Bye.

33:33 CK: See you then, Joe.

33:34 RTH: Bye.