

## TRANSCRIPT WITH COMMENTARY

*Joe Jebelli: A Science Author*

**Interview 6: Sampling day 6**

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the April 5 interview with Joe that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/xlUPlwPnCdM>. 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

0:01 RTH: So anything we should be talking about before we look at beeps?

Joe: No, I don't think so. I was wondering, I was thinking the other day the if the beeper would keep working if we need new batteries, but I don't think it does, does it?

RTH: No, the batteries go for a long time.

Joe: Yeah. So no, nothing else.

RTH: Okay. So this is going to be day five?

Joe: Five, yeah.

RTH: And I see Cody has joined us so I think I'm ready.

Joe: Hi, Cody.

CK: Good afternoon. With the time difference; I'm sorry about that. I had Murphy's Law running my end so everything getting set up took longer than I thought. So thanks for being patient.

RTH: We are ready.

### SAMPLE 6.1 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

0:57 Joe: Okay. So beep 1: I was in a coffee shop and I was filling out this form online and the beep went off as I was thinking about, I was thinking about my flat's heating and keeping my cats warm. And as I was thinking that, there was an image in my head of my cats in the corridor of my flat. Because the form I was filling out (just for some background) was for a cat sitter and the question was about special requests, and I was thinking about the heating needs to be on for them sometimes,

because it gets really cold. So I was, when the beep went off, I was thinking about my cats in the flat, but the thinking was an image of them in the corridor at night.

RTH: And what exactly do you see?

Joe: So I saw, so my corridor, it was night time, there was a bit of light from, I think it looked like moonlight and the cats were just sitting in the corridor.

RTH: More than one cat?

Joe: Yeah, just both, both cats just sitting in the corridor.

RTH: Okay. And is this in color or black and white or motion or –

Joe: Yeah, that's a good question; I'm not 100% sure about that. I feel like it was in color but it wasn't like a bright color; it wasn't like the colors were that prominent.

RTH: So night time, black and white, except it's really in color but there's no color to be seen?

2:48 Joe: Yeah, something like that.

RTH: Okay. And is there, at the moment of this beep, any kind of a thought process about cat sitters, or heat, or whatever, or is it, at this moment, as far as my experience is concerned, I'm just seeing the cats?

Joe: Yeah, I was just seeing the cats. I was... I was sort of... The experience was just seeing the cats in the corridor at night. I was thinking they were cold, as well, because I was,... I'm not sure; this might have come a little bit after the moment of the beep, to be honest. Because I basically had an image in my head of the cats being in the flat without me, in the middle of the night, being cold [laughs]. Because I'm trying to arrange this sitter because we're going away, and I was just worried that they would be, yeah, cold [laughs].

RTH: Okay. So I see cats in the hallway, maybe I see cold cats in the hallway, and that's hard to tell whether that's right at the beep. Is that better?

Joe: Yeah, the worry about them being cold, I'm not sure really if that was the moment of the beep. The moment of the beep was more the imagery.

RTH: Okay, then I think I'm good.

CK: Me too.

RTH: Number 2?

## SAMPLE 6.2 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

4:20 Joe: So number 2 was I was in my flat and I could hear what sounded like a loud leaf blower outside, and so, I went over to the window to try to see what it was. And the beep went off as I was looking out the window to the left, trying to see it but I couldn't see it.

CK: And so at the moment of the beep, what, if anything, was in your experience?

Joe: I could see my neighbor's garden and the trees that kind of block the view of their garden. I could see like a few other houses around. Yeah, that's all I could see, and I could hear what sounded like a very loud leaf blower. Yeah. But that was basically, that was basically everything in my experience at the time.

5:32 CK: And so is there any way to say what's most prominent or central to my experience at the moment? Is this mostly about the leaf blower, hearing and/or seeing it? Or the seeing, just looking out my window or –

Joe: There was a strong sense of kind of searching, like I was *trying* to see what it was. It wasn't annoying me or there wasn't really an emotional aspect to it, but I was, I wanted to know what it was because it was really loud. So I was, I was just staring with the intention of trying to see it and I couldn't see it. So there was an intent there.

RTH: So can I go back to what you said? You said you were looking and you *could* see the trees and you *could* see the houses. Does that mean I *was seeing* those things or does that mean I wasn't really seeing them; I was really waiting to see the leaf blower which I wasn't seeing, and so there was really nothing in my experience at the moment; nothing visual in my experience?

Joe: So I *could* see the trees blocking the garden and some of the houses.

RTH: "Could see" as in "I did see?"

Joe: Yeah, as in I *did* see, yeah.

RTH: Okay, that's what I wanted to know.

Joe: So I did see that but it was almost like I was trying to focus or search beyond that, because whatever it was, it was going on *behind* those trees. So I was, kind of, trying to look through them.

7:33 CK: [Pause] And is my "trying to look through them," is, is that a, is that a visual thing, a seeing thing?

Joe: Yeah, that's a really good question. [Pause] Kind of, but not totally. I feel like there was – because what I was curious about, I could hear, the search wasn't like a totally visual search if that makes sense; I wasn't actively looking through the trees to – there was something about the fact that it was auditory, which made the search feel a bit different in some way, as opposed to looking for something. I don't know, like I was *trying to find* something instead of *looking at* something if that makes sense. It felt, it felt qualitatively different to be trying to find something as opposed to just looking through the trees.

RTH: I'm *hearing through the trees* as well as *looking through the trees*.

Joe: Yeah.

9:10 CK: And you said that you were hearing the leaf blower and that was there. Then you said something about it was very loud; it's not just a low leaf blower or something. Could you say more about how that was in your experience?

Joe: So that was just like an all-encompassing sound. It sounded like it was going on all around me. It sounded almost like a – I don't know, like a sort of, almost like an incredibly loud lawnmower, but I was pretty sure it wasn't a lawnmower, because I don't think they have grass next door. But anyway, I didn't, it didn't – I thought it was a leaf blower because I've heard leaf blowers before, and I know that they're quite loud, so I thought it was that. But the sound itself, the experience of the sound was just a very – it was just, it was just all-encompassing, it was everywhere. It was so loud that it almost didn't – I think that's why I was struggling to find it because it was so loud that it was hard to pinpoint, actually, exactly where it was. It seemed like it was coming from everywhere, even though I could still tell it was coming from the neighbor's garden, beyond the trees. But the sound itself was so loud that it was all around.

10:47 CK: And so, at the moment of beep, is it that I hear a leaf blower that is loud and is hard to pinpoint something, or is it just I hear this noise?

Joe: Um, it's more, I suppose I think it was both. The sound of the leaf blower was very prominent because it was so loud and so all-encompassing, but me looking like at the trees and the neighbor's garden, me trying to find it, that was also quite a prominent feature.

RTH: [Pause] It sounds good to me.

CK: Yeah, sounds good to me.

### SAMPLE 6.3 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

12:40 Joe: Okay, so beep number 3, I want to skip if that's okay?

## SAMPLE 6.4 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

12:45 Joe: So beep number 4, so I was out with my partner and we were walking down this narrow street, looking for an office and she said “This is charming,” about the street, and the beep went off as I was thinking about the word “charming,” and the fact that she had just said that.

And I was thinking about that and looking at the street at the same time, and, kind of, yeah, agreeing without really being aware; it didn’t feel like a really conscious thing, like I agreed, I agreed with what she’d said in my head without consciously saying it to myself if that makes any sense? I was, sort of, looking at the street anew because I was thinking about the word and looking at it and thinking, “Oh yeah, she’s right. It is quite charming.”

12:58 AG: So at the moment of the beep, what’s in your experience?

12:58 Russ comments: The risk of asking “what’s in your experience” after Joe has just described his thinking is that it will suggest that what has just been described doesn’t count, that Joe should describe something *else*.

13:04 Joe: In the experience at the time, just a very narrow street, so there were small, little houses and offices on either side. It’s very narrow; it’s almost like the really narrow, cobbled streets you see, but there wasn’t any cobbled stone. But it was just a very narrow, very old London street and I could see that, not much else because it was so narrow and enclosed, you couldn’t even see much of the sky. So I could just *see* that while I was thinking, “Yeah, it’s charming,” because of what my partner had just said.

AG: Okay, and how was that thinking, how are you experiencing that?

13:54 Joe: Um, yeah, that’s a really good question. It’s really hard to answer. It’s like I say, it wasn’t really a conscious thing. It was more of a feeling, it was like I was having a positive feeling towards the street because of what she said. And that positive feeling was like an agreement with her, I suppose. Yeah, it’s difficult to describe that. I was thinking, afterwards, for what it’s worth, that maybe there was unsymbolized thinking going on but I can’t tell, I don’t know.

14:50 AG: So I’m just trying to figure out, is this experience, the think-y portion of it, is this about *charming*, or is this about the street, or is this about agreeing or something like that? Or is it all three? Or something else?

Joe: It was, kind of, all three, to be honest. I could, I was looking at the street and I was thinking that what she’d said about it being charming was true, but that manifested itself as just like a positive feeling towards what I was looking at. But it’s really hard to describe because I can’t be quite sure if it was a feeling or a cognitive thing, or if it was neither or maybe a bit of both.

15:53 RTH: Joe, in your opening salvo, you seemed to focus on you were thinking about the word *charming*. We haven't yet talked about that.

15:53 Russ comments: Joe's responses for the last several turns have been difficult, labored, full of "I don't know"s and "I'm not sure"s. Noticing that, RTH takes Joe back to the beginning of this sample, where he has also noticed that, in his initial (12:45) turn, Joe has twice said he was thinking about the word "charming," but the interview has not discussed the word. Perhaps that is what is responsible for the difficulties.

16:05 Joe: Yeah. That word was, kind of, hanging in the experience. Like it was, like as I was looking at it and thinking and feeling more positively towards it, I was thinking, very briefly, about the word *charming*. But I don't know if that was – I didn't picture that in my head. But there was something about the way – there was something about the word *charming* that kind of stuck with me, just for a moment.

16:05 Russ comments: Joe seems clear about the fact that the word "charming" was indeed present—RTH's 15:53 question seems on the right track. *How* that word was present is still to be determined.

RTH: In what way did it stick with you?

Joe: It was, sort of, like I was just, I just *thought* about it. It's strange because she'd *said* it and I, it was *almost* like I could *hear* it again in my head, kind of like an echo, but without actually seeing it or hearing the word *charming* in my head.

RTH: In a voice?

Joe: No! It wasn't a voice or even an image; it was just *there*. It's almost like she'd said the word, I mean it was kinda like she'd said the word but I hadn't quite registered it, maybe, and then there was a delay and I was registering it. I don't know if it was that or I was just thinking about it again, but it wasn't – I don't know; this is why I think it might be unsymbolized thinking, in a way, because it was – I couldn't really – it didn't present itself to me in any way that I can really describe. I was just thinking about it.

RTH: And that thinking about is about the *word*? I'm somehow continuing to encounter or whatever, focusing on the *word* "charming."

18:22 Joe: Yeah, and I can't, I don't, I don't actually know if it's the *word itself* or the *meaning of the word* or both. When I thought about it, I couldn't, I couldn't quite tell if the experience was me thinking of the meaning of the word, and therefore agreeing and having that positive outlook, or if I was thinking more about the word itself, and something strange about the word itself.

RTH: So I'm gathering that there's something about the *word itself*, that is present; [Joe: Yeah.] the word *charming*, that is, sort of, separable from the street. Yeah, the street is charming, it's true, but I'm, it's not that I'm just noticing the charmingness of the street; I am somehow involved with the *word* "charming," as well as the charmingness of the street, as well as agreeing with my partner."

Joe: Yeah, exactly.

RTH: It's difficult to see how, how the word is present.

19:39 Joe: Yeah. It's really interesting because it makes me realize that you kind of, in so many experiences, you seem to, there are things that you, sort of, divide up and partition up, that you don't really realize you're doing, or you're not even aware of when you're not studying experience in this way. Yeah, I don't know; it's interesting.

RTH: I think it *is* interesting. *And* I think it's *different* from one person to the next. I think we've had some beeps before (I'd have to go back and look) that are about words. You have an interest in words; not everybody does.

20:26 Joe: Yeah and it's interesting because the past beeps, I noticed that often, I can see the word or it appears in some way, like the word "LIGHT" against a plank of wood. But this one didn't really appear. As you said, it was, kind of, just divided between the scene and what I was thinking about. And it's interesting, as well, because I still can't, still can't quite figure out if it's the meaning of the word or if it's just the word itself, *charming*. And if that had any influence on what I was seeing. Yeah, I don't know.

RTH: But, and... *And* I think the word and the meaning of the word—the meaning—a word and the meaning of a word are not necessarily easily separable. *Sometimes* they're very easily separable, like I'm interested in the sound of the word and I don't really care what it means. The word and the meaning are *sometimes* separable, but sometimes not.

21:39 Joe: Yeah, that's very true. And I read this thing, the other day, about if you think about a word over, and over, and over, and over again, eventually it loses its meaning. And I was thinking *that's kind of true in a way*; if you think about words too much, but then, I don't know why I was – I saw that and I thought "that's interesting." But then, when I've thought about words in past beeps, it's not been just thinking about them over and over again. So it's interesting that – I suppose what I'm trying to say is it's interesting in the way that I think about – sometimes I think about the word and I'm not quite sure if I'm thinking about, as you said, what it means or the word itself, and I can think about that without having to repeat it over and over again in my head. Like it's strange, just on its own.

RTH: Well, when were done with sampling, we'll have to accumulate all the words, all the samples that had to do with words together and then, we might be able to say something like this is how, this is sort of a window into how *Joe* deals with words, and then, we can compare that to other people, for example.

So shall we move on to beep number 4, 5, I guess we're calling it?

#### SAMPLE 6.5 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

23:01 Joe: Yeah, 5. So beep number 5 was: I was looking at a watch on my laptop and my partner likes watches and thinks I should get one. And I was looking at a watch and I was trying to decide if I should get the one with the blue face or the cream face, and I couldn't decide. And the beep went off as I was staring at both watch faces. But I was looking at both of them and I was just thinking they were both quite nice, so I couldn't really decide.

RTH: And in your experience is what?

Joe: My experience was a navy-blue watch face next to a cream watch face; it's the same watch but they just had different faces. And my experience was me looking at the one with the blue, then at the cream, then at the blue, and I was just jumping back and forth, trying to figure out if one was nicer than the other, but I couldn't. I just thought that they were both very nice.

RTH: And is this just I see this watch, and I see that watch, and I see this watch, and I see that watch, and the beep catches me somewhere in there? And sooner or later, I'll have figured out which one I like better? [Joe: Yeah.] Or is this an analytical thing, Well, this has this feature, this has that feature?

Joe: No, it went off as I was just scanning between them and trying to find out which one was nicer, but not really getting anywhere with that decision. Just thinking like, there was thinking they were both nice and also the thinking that I couldn't decide which was nicer.

RTH: And are those thoughts present in your experience at the moment of the beep, or is that context, I can say that, in general, they're both nice and not deciding or deciding.

Joe: I feel like it was, kind of, context. It wasn't like I had that moment of realization at the moment of the beep; that thought was an ongoing thing. But the beep went off as I was still just scanning between them and I had that, that thinking, just going on in the background.

RTH: And in the alternating back and forth, is it from this watch to that watch, or is it this blue to that cream? So are we alternating between watch, watch, watch or blue, cream, blue, cream, blue, cream?

Joe: It was the blue, cream, blue, cream, blue, cream. Because I had already... well, I knew I liked the watch; I was just trying to figure out the color. So I was very much focused on the colors; the image was even zoomed in so that I could see the colors, they were quite prominent and large on either side of the screen.

RTH: So as well as alternating between blue and cream than it is alternating between watch-that-is-blue, watch-that-is-cream?

Joe: That's a really good question. I feel like it was *more* the colors *but* there was still – I'd say, if we were going to put a number on it, there was, at least, 20 to 30% watch, as well, because I was looking at it in context against the rest of the watch.

RTH: I think I'm good.

CK: Me too.

#### SAMPLE 6.6 DISCUSSION STARTS HERE

27:10 Joe: So the last beep, I'd also like to skip if that's all right? [RTH: Okay.] Yeah, and those are all the beeps I got today.

#### DISCUSSION AFTER SAMPLING STARTS HERE

27:25 RTH: Well, we ought to think about where we are here. We contracted with, basically, we were going to do this three or more times and we've done it three or more times. Do we want to do it one more time? Or do we wanna more than that? Basically, I'm asking Joe, what are your interests in –

Joe: Yeah.

27:46 Joe: Yeah, I was trying to figure that out today actually. Um, cuz I definitely feel like, I do feel like we, I've, I've done enough to get a, get a fairly good grasp of the technique and, um, I feel like I definitely feel more, um, more adept at performing d e s Like, I think I, um, you, I think I'm quite good at, um, putting away the, um, um, bracketing the positions and not trying to explain things. Um, but maybe I, I think, I think it might be worth doing it one more time. Okay. If you guys are okay with that. And then, um, and then maybe after that I'll go away with everything I've got and, um, I've already made like a pretty good start on the chapter. Um, and then maybe like, and then maybe in like a few months after that we can like, catch up. I can like, you know, like send you guys the chapter and we can maybe like, uh, decide at that point if maybe we could do more DES, although it might not be necessary. But, um, all,

28:50 RTH: All that sounds good to me.

28:52 Joe: Okay.

28:53 RTH: So shall we go for next, a week from today?

28:53 Russ comments: They compare calendars.

29:18 Joe: Cool. Okay. All right. Yeah. Yeah. So does that sound good with you, Russ? Like doing it one more time again and then just catching up in a few months?

29:26 RTH: Yes. I do think I, that does sound good to me. I, I agree with your characterization of your apprehension and skill or whatever of the, of the process. I do think that you have a, you've, you've done it enough, I think, that you know pretty much what's going on. And one more time we'll seal that and...

29:44 Joe: Yeah, so I mean, it's so interesting cuz I remember the beginning of this, you said that, you know, it's gonna take you, it's gonna take you a few times. And then I've, when I've looked back at our beeps, uh, the first couple of beeps, uh, I can see like a lot of the dialogue is like, you know, you are picking me up on something like, y'know, that's your presuppositions. Or, and I *particularly* the one in the tube where I was thinking, you know, I said about the rattling and the rumbling and you were saying, y'know, "was that your experience or was your experience the black mark and the word *light*?" and it *was* the black mark and the word *light*. And you said at the time, "that's a lot more interesting." And I was thinking, oh yeah! That *is* a lot more interesting. And people don't think about that because they don't, they don't think about their experiences, um, in, in the right way, I suppose. So...

30:28 RTH: There, there is something, there is something intrinsically – I think it is in *intrinsically avoidable* about what turns out to be the most interesting. And I think we had a beep today where I think is an application of that sort of rule, and that that's the beep about the word *charming*. That was, I think, the central part of your experience. It was about the *word*, and yet the original, the initial conversation about that sort of avoided that. You *said* it was about the word, but then the *conversation* got to be about, "well the street was charming, and my wife thought it was charming, and there was agreement about that." There is, and I take that to be something which I don't fully understand, which is something like I think, in that beep, Joe and Amber sort of colluded to avoid the interesting thing. And I think that's interesting.

Joe: Mm. Yeah, that is really interesting.

31:45 RTH: It's like there's a danger in getting at *what people are really like*, something like that. And what's *really* going on with people that's *risky*. And I think Amber was trying to get there, and, but in some way, in some way there's a reluctance to *just go straight at it*.

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: And I think that's an interesting thing in its own right. It's an interesting thing from the standpoint of DES as an exploratory method. Because I'm not being critical particularly of Amber (because everybody who's in that situation does the same thing basically). It's we've got a sense of what's in the center of experience and yet we veer off and we go that way, and we go this other way.

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: I think that... I don't know why that is. I'm pretty sure it *is*, but I don't know *why it is*.

32:49 Joe: Yeah. I was thinking that – I mean, because I remember you said as well at one point that sometimes when people describe their experiences they get pigeonholed by the – they're thinking about the physics of the real world. And, as you said, perception doesn't operate using the physics of the real world. So when people describe it, they're, they can sometimes mistakenly use the physics of the real world. But I wonder if, as you've just said, like I wonder if even during the experience itself there's – like I was saying –there was something about the word *charming*, but was there something about the, the physics of the real world trying to push me away from that, or as well as in the description, it's ... Again, it's a human tendency just to *try and make sense of something* when actually we should be *exploring* that thing more and put aside the physics of the real world, if that makes sense.

32:49 Russ comments: I think it is broader than mistaking the physical for the experiential. It is mistaking *anything theoretical or general* for the experiential.

33:45 RTH: I do think that makes sense. I would see it – if I had to explain what it is, it's that the actual experiential *nub of Joe*, or whomever, is very, very close to the sexuality / sensuality core. And we have learned – maybe for a good reason – to be skittish about going directly at that. We're *shy* about discovering what people are really down deep, or not – it's not really down deep, it's at the surface, but it's connected to what's down deep, and we're shy about going in that direction, and maybe for good reason.

34:35 Joe: Mm. Yeah. That's really interesting. Yeah. Yeah, that's really interesting. Gosh. Yeah. I'll have to think about that and think of some questions to follow up on that with our next chat, because I feel like that, I feel like you're definitely hitting at the heart of something really quite profound there about human nature and about experiential nature. I mean maybe, I don't know. Yeah, maybe it is something to do with how we've evolved, or our societies, or a bit of both, or – I don't know, but there's – yeah, that's a huge topic.

RTH: Yeah, I think it is a huge topic, but it plays out at the street level, I guess you would say. At the beep level.

Joe: Mm. Yeah.

35:33 RTH: And so from my perspective, and I've tried to teach people how to do descriptive experience sampling, and I tell them it's easy: you just have to go at the experience. *But I have trouble getting people to do that.* It's like ... And I've been doing it, maybe it's because I've been doing it for 50 years and I've figured out how to do it, and – or maybe it's just my way, maybe it's just my idiosyncratic nature of what experience is, it's why I know how to do it. But it is not... But it's worse than *it's just not easy*, it is that there seems to be like a motivation *to go away from it*, and that's ...

Joe: Yeah, that's really – yeah, the shyness is definitely – as you said, that's definitely like a big part of it and a really interesting part of it. Yeah. I'm going to think about that a lot, Russ. And I'm also going to think of some questions about it, because I feel like that that's something that would be really interesting to explore actually in the chapter, like – as you said, like the shyness and why people on the street level day to day are reluctant to explore that or to think about that. So yeah, it'd be great if we could chat about that more actually in the future.

RTH: Well, if we can figure it out, I'd be happy to. I'd be happy to chat about it.

Joe: Yeah, love to.

RTH: Because I do think that you could say that the science of psychology – or neuroscience or whatever – is *designed to avoid* talking about what's really personal.

Joe: Yeah.

RTH: Everything that organized psychology does is a way of avoiding finding out that Joe was thinking about the word.

Joe: Mm. Yeah. It's very true, isn't it?

RTH: And you've got all kinds of major analytical methods, and those multimillion-dollar magnets or whatever, and they're all *motivated* because *they would like to know what's going on with Joe*. But they also are motivated by failing to ask him in a direct way what's going on with Joe.

Joe: Yeah, definitely. It's ... Yeah.

37:43 RTH: So there is a ...

Joe: It's like a fundamental flaw I suppose.

RTH: ...a hugely, fundamental, important conversation to be had about that.

Joe: Yeah, absolutely. Okay.

RTH: All right. We'll take one more step in that direction on the 12th.

Joe: Lovely. Thank you all. Thank you all so much again. And yeah, I'll see you in a week.

AG: Thank you.

CK: See you then, Joe.

Joe: Bye guys.