

Mel May
Mel Interview 0
Instructions for wearing the beeper

Below in black is a word-for-word transcript of the October 5 interview with Mel that is available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/SMp4FpobwZk>. In brown are conversations about the Descriptive Experience Sampling process that took place during the interview. If you have corrections, suggestions, or questions, please post them as YouTube comments.

RTH = Russ Hurlburt

JBK = Julian Bass-Krueger

Mel = Mel May

0:00 Mel: For real!

0:00 JBK: For real! We're starting! We're live! Alright. So you, you got the beeper, Mel?

BEEPER OPERATION

0:07 Mel: So yes I unwrapped a very large package actually, but then have just got the goods. So beeper, the like headphone thing and then this very gorgeous little yellow note pad to go with it as well.

0:26 RTH: Well, you got everything that I put into the box, so that's, that's the object. [Mel: Right.] So let's turn on. Let's, let's turn on the beeper and see what happens. By *turning on* I mean the black wheel, spin the black wheel.

0:34 Mel: Okay. Spin it? Oh yeah... oh it's making like a noise.

0:44 RTH: And, and it's making like a noise and if you push the white button on the top that'll stop the noise. [Mel: Yep, it did.] Okay, so now what, what that, what that means is that you've turned on the beeper and it is it has decided when, when it's going to beep again, which might be sometime between 1 minute from now or 60 minutes from now. It's a random beeper and it makes up its own mind. I don't program it. You don't program it. Whatever. So it it has it has decided when to beep.

1:10 Mel: Okay.

1:17 RTH: And then before we put the earphone in what I want you to do is to push the white button down and *hold* it down, keep holding it down.

1:23 Mel: Sort of the white button. [Mel pushes the button and there's an audible beep.]

1:28 RTH: And you should hear a square wave beep, beeepp. [Mel: Yep.] Okay. So what that, what that (now you can release that), what that does, that's a *test* mode, basically.

So you, you can, if you're, if you've been wearing the beeper and nothing's happened and you want to know whether it's still on, you can push that white button and hold it down at any time [Mel: Okay.] and it'll and it'll announce itself by basically by having that that square wave.

- 1:58 Mel: So that's how I confirm it's still alive.
- 2:03 RTH: *I'm still alive.* That's right! And it, it also gives you the option of using that to adjust the volume. So let's, let's put. Let me see the earphone. Well, how did I send you the earphone. [Mel holds up the earphone] Okay, so like you can unwind it if you if you like, and, and plug in the plug into the spot where it'll go. And I thi-, and it looks like I set the earphone up so that it would go in your left ear. But I don't really care which ear you like if you have a preference. The hook goes behind your ear.
- 2:31 Mel: [inaudible]
- 2:38 RTH: And you can bend that wire that's on the, on the hook so that it feels more or less secure. [Mel: I think I have really small ears.] The object is... sorry?
- 2:43 Mel: I said I think I have quite small ears.
- 2:54 RTH: Well, that's, that's the advantage of having that wire so you can, you can bend it to manage. [Mel: Okay, yeah.] And I would say about the wire for the, for the, for the device: Some people would run the wire down inside your shirt because then your collar will hold the wire up against your neck and you won't snag the wire on a doorknob or whatever as you go. But I don't really care and it's up to you how you want to deal with that. [Mel: Okay.] And then have you plugged the other end into the, into the beeper. [Mel: Yeah.] So let's push the white button down and hold it down again so you can hear that square wave through the beeper, or through the earphone.
- 3:29 Mel: Yeah.
- 3:30 RTH: And, and now while you hold the white button down you can adjust the volume by twisting the black wheel that you turned it on with.
- 3:43 Mel: Oh yeah, that's up.
- 3:46 RTH: And the object is to is to get a get a volume that's loud enough so that there's no question and it's loud enough, but not so that it's so loud that it'll startle you. [Mel: Mhmm.] And that will, and that depends on where you are if you're in a quiet location then it's one volume, and if you're outside or whatever and then you'll need another volume. So that's another function of holding the white button down: you can set the volume to a comfortable level whenever you want whenever you move from one environment to the next you want to adjust the volume.
- 4:19 Mel: What happens when it's, it makes a weird noise sometimes like [sings] do do do do do do?

- 4:27 RTH: So what that means is that you have turned it off, or the beeper thinks it's been turned off and this is ah (and it's actually a flaw or weakness or something in the in the beeper) of the component, the component that's the black wheel of the beeper is ah is touchier than it ought to be. And so if you rock that, if you rock that back and forth, side to side, or get close to the end it, it thinks that you've turned the beeper off and when you turn the beeper off then it then it went in and then it turns itself back on again. So it's like you turn it off for a minute sort of like Julian sending us out into the green room and back [to prepare the recording], sort of like that. But for a microsecond it thinks that it's been turned off and then turned back on and again it comes on beeping. And *if* you're holding down the white button when you turn the thing *on*, then it plays that little song for you. And that little song tells *me* (you don't need to know anything about it) but it tells me... Inside the box there are, are a bunch of dip switches that that tell you whether it's in fixed mode or random mode and how long the intervals are going to be and some other stuff. And, and so it plays that little song that tells me this is what the dip switch settings are. So then I don't have to take it apart to look at it. I can, I can see what's, the, how the, how the, ah the beeper is set up by turning it on while holding the white button down. But you don't need to worry about that. If, if you hear that song, just, just turn, take, take your finger off the white button and it... that song will stop. [Mel: Okay!]
- 5:56 So if the beeper is turned on (and you can tell whether it's turned on by holding down the white button, and if it's giving you the square wave then it's turned on) then it's in the process of making, a making a beep. And that can, and that [Mel: Okay.] the next beep (it's random) and ah and it happens within a few seconds or up to a minute and I have it set so that they're on average it'll be like every half hour. But it could be 1 minute and then another and then 3 minutes and then 1 minute and then 2 minutes in which case you'd get 6 beeps in a coup- y'know 10 minutes or something like that.
- 5:56 Russ comments:
RE "it happens within a few seconds or up to a minute"
RTH misspeaks here. He should have said "it happens within a few seconds or up to ~~a minute~~ an hour."
- 6:23 Mel: Um, okay, um.
- 6:34 RTH: Or it could be that it'll be 59 minutes and then 57 minutes and then 60 minutes and then whatever in which case it might take you 6 hours to get 6 peeps. On *average* it's going to take roughly 3 hours to get 6 beeps.
- 6:45 Mel: Okay.
- 6:47 JBK: Why did I think that—
- 6:48 RTH: [they talk over each other] So there's one more. There's one more thing that the beeper does, and that is that if you were to take the beeper off, out of your ear and set it aside, (you don't need to do it) but if you if you were to do that and, and then go about your business sooner or later the thing is going to beep. And, and the beep,

when the beep occurs it, the, the beep lasts for a long time. It is. It's not just a beep. It's a beeeeeep; and the beep lasts until you push the white button.

7:19 Mel: Oh! So any time it goes off I have to push the white button to stop the beep. [RTH: Yes. Exactly.] Okay.

7:24 RTH: Um, yes, exactly and, and the reason for the reason for that is that I sort of the modern reason for that is that the that I want to, I want to encourage you to engage with the beeper. I don't want you to just be able to just ignore the beeper. So [Mel: Ah ha.] when the beep happens you got to do something you got to at least push the button. What I *want* you to do is to pay attention to what's going on in your experience while you while you push the button.

But, but at any rate, what I what I had started to say was that if the thing beeps and you *don't* push the button, it'll beep for a minute or two (I forget exactly how long; beeps, it beeps for a pretty long time) but *then* the beep stops, because the only time that the battery in the thing really gets exercised is when it's beeping. So, so it *stops* beeping and *then* it goes into what we call the *chirp mode* and it'll go 'chirp', and then 30 seconds later or something will go 'chirp' and then 30 seconds later so it'll go 'chirp'; sort of sort of like your smoke your smoke alarm when the battery goes down. It's the same kind of a deal. [Mel: Okay.] What, what, if you hear that chirp and you wonder *what the heck is that chirp?* it means my smoke alarm on? No, it's my beeper. What that means is that the beeper is telling you, you didn't turn, you, *I beeped. You didn't turn me off. You didn't press the button. But I'm still on. Turn me off to save the battery.*

8:47 Mel: Okay.

8:50 RTH: So if that happens just turn me off and if you and if you want a sample, turn me back on. It'll come on beeping; and stop the beep and then you're back in business.
So to review: There's three modes that the thing can be in—or four, I guess: one is *off*. And then when it's *on* it can be either beeping or not. And you stop the beep by pushing the white button, and if you fail to do that, it'll go into the chirp mode.

9:14 Mel: Mhm. Okay so I'm just like resting hanging out now. So if I was turning it off, is that when I do the black wheel all the way down.

9:23 RTH: All the way down and it'll click to *off*. Go ahead and do that. You'll feel, you'll feel it click off when you get there. And then you can be sure it's off by pushing down the white button and when, when it's...

9:36 Mel: Um, oh it's making a... Oy that's loud. It's doing like a singular tone like beeeeeeeep.

9:49 RTH: Yeah, that's the, that's the beep.

9:52 Mel: Oh that's the beep! [RTH: Yeah.] Is that weird timing?!? That was the beep.

10:01 RTH: What, what, so what happened there is while you were fiddling with the wheel, the beeper thought you had turned it off and then turned it back on again. So the,

there's a switch inside the wheel basically. When the wheel gets to...When the— The *object* is when the wheel gets to one end, there's a switch that turns, contacts that open, and the, and the beeper gets turned off. But that switch is, turns out to be more sensitive than it ought to be, and so you can exercise that switch when you didn't mean to. And the beeper thinks that you've turned it off and turned it back on quite quickly. And, and whenever you turn it on it comes on beeping.

- 10:34 Mel: Mhmm.
- 10:47 RTH: And then you have to push the button to stop the beep. [Mel: Okay.] So right now, right now is it off?
- 10:50 Mel: Um I'm not sure!
- 10:56 RTH: Well, the way you can tell is push the white button. And if the white button, if you and hold it down... [Mel: No it made a noise.] Push, push the white button and hold it down. If you get the square wave, it's on. If you don't get the square wave, it's off. So, so.
- 11:05 Mel: Square wave. So how do I not get that though?
- 11:13 RTH: So now with the wheel just like you're doing til you get to the end and then keep on going. [beeper clicks] There you go. [Mel: Oh! Wait! Yeah. I hadn't pressed it hard enough.] Now it's off. And now if you push the white button and hold it down, nothing will happen.
- 11:16 Mel: [she pushes the button] Nothing. Nothing. [Russ: Right.] Okay, okay yes I had not been like twisting the black far enough. Okay, so now I'll go back.
- 11:29 RTH: Right. You been, you were, you were twisting it far enough so that the beeper thought you were turning it off [Mel: Correct.] but not far enough so that you actually got it mechanically off.
- 11:36 Mel: Correct, Yeah, okay I'm good now. So we're on now.
- 11:48 RTH: Either, either way right now whether it's on or off, I don't really care one way or the other. So are we clear about the beeper operation? That's the first, first, first task of today's conversation. We got the beeper operation.
- 11:49 Mel: Okay. Yes I am clear about beeper operation now. Oh yes.
- 12:02 JBK: I have a couple questions. Um, so you mentioned it doesn't use the battery much. Do you ever have to replace the battery during sampling with somebody?
- 12:09 RTH: Rare, rarely. The battery... battery except while it's beeping the battery lasts on the order of years.

BEEPER HISTORY

12:19 JBK: [laughs] Nice. Okay, and um, pressing the button to hear the tone is the only way to tell it's on, right? There's no little light or something? [RTH: That's correct.] Okay. Uhh... I guess my other question just out of curiosity did, did you design this?

12:35 RTH: Yes.

12:36 JBK: The engineering too? Or did you conceptualize it?

12:42 RTH: Ah, let me see how I would describe that. I designed it. I had a guy create a circuit board based on my on my circuitry. I, I told him this is what it what it has to be. And then I had a company build, populate the circuit board. And then I built the what you actually see. I, I built so I took I took the circuit board that they had designed and put it into the case.

12:42 Russ comments: For completeness, RTH could continue: "And I wrote the firmware that controls the device and burned it into the chip."

13:10 JBK: And when you when you want to do one. You do, you just like phone up the factory and say *I need a new one* or?

13:19 RTH: Ah, the factory the factory has gone the way of a lot of a lot of things, and so I would be pretty much starting over again. So it's, so I hope I hope not to have to, have to need very many more of them. Let's put it that way. If I were to, if I were to do it again, the technology has advanced since I built that thing, so that that beeper is probably twenty years old maybe? Fifteen, fifteen [JBK: Legacy.] or twenty years old something like that. The technology is now, y'know, I'd, I'd probably do it differently if I had to do it, had to do it again.

13:53 RTH: This is the third I think the third basic beeper design that I have worked with over the years. They're all more or less the same, but, from, from the outside but the in inside...

14:06 Mel: Actually true.... Sorry. Um so you, you mentioned last time, just out of curiosity, um, that there was like, Julian, had you like played around with an iPhone compatible one or something? Cuz obviously like me as a millennial is thinking this would be very cool if I could use my phone and one Airpod, say.

14:27 JBK: Um, yeah I fooled around with it. But um, so Russ has instructions for setting up the, the beeps through a phone alarm system but the problem is well on some phones it works, but at some point the operating systems must have made it so you can only get beeps through the phone speakers and not through the, the Airpod so that's the trouble that I ran into last time I was trying it.

14:50 RTH: And I and I had— so Julian last time we had a conversation, that's the first I'd heard about it. Because I don't generally use that. The, the, the beep the beep that you get out of a phone even under the best of circumstances is *not* a very good beep. And what, what the definition of a good beep is from my point of view is ah, it has a rapid

a rapid rise time and it's unambiguous. The beep says *this is this is my Hurlburt beeper beep!* and nothing else. If it comes from your phone, then there's going to be a little bit *Oh. That's my phone. No, it's not the phone. That's the alarm from my phone and the alarm is really for Hurlburt's beep.* That screws up your ability to pay attention to your inner experience.

15:38 And the, even the alarm beep doesn't play as crisply as you, as, as you've [inaudible]. Although I, I think I've actually improved it since I've, since I've put it out on the web. I think what happens now is instead of actually playing a beep, I play a few seconds of silence and then a beep. And that makes the beep actually— the few seconds of silence, the, the— I've *tricked* the phone into thinking that it's actually playing something but it's not playing anything. And then a couple of seconds after that it beeps and that's an improvement in terms of it makes the phone ready to beep. Apple doesn't care, basically, about the beginning of a song as a generality. The beginning of song is like the introduction, and Apple is happy to have, have it do whatever it's trying to do, trying to figure out whether it's supposed to be playing the song or whatever during the introduction. But the beep, [snaps finger] I want I want the beep to be a rapid deal. But sooner or later I'm going to have to play around with what Julian has said and see whether I can figure out how to short circuit the...

16:48 JBK: Yeah I might try making an app to see if I can bypass..

16:51 Mel: Yeah. Um, yeah turns I can need a software developer.

16:56 RTH: I have an app when I, that I designed called iPromptU, but it doesn't deliver the beep as well as it should and so I don't ever use it.

17:07 JBK: I've had some problems with that. Alright. Should we, should we get on kind of explaining your task and I was thinking maybe I could *try* explaining it and, Russ, you could tell me what I'm leaving out.

DES SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS

17:21 RTH: Okay, fair enough.

17:26 JBK: I think that could be good for first sampling too if I kind of start first as an apprentice and then you tell me what I'm leaving out, what I could change. [Russ: Ok.] Um and then yeah, maybe for other days or other samples we could trade off sometimes you do then sometimes I do them. Sometimes even both.

17:44 RTH: I think it's generally a good idea when we actually get to the beeps if we if we *do* trade off, and so alternates where I would ask and then you would ask and then I would ask and you would ask or vice versa. And, and...

17:55 JBK: Ok yeah. Yeah, that sounds good to me.

18:01 RTH: I think there's virtue in that from a variety of different perspectives.

18:06 JBK: Yeah, um, and so I also was try-, trying to think of my approach doing this if I should kind of brush up on my DES knowledge, um re-read what you wrote. But I thought it might be interesting if I kind of went in um, without doing that, more from how I've been doing it, what I remember. The last time I did it was maybe eight months ago, um and then see if we have kind of different approaches. So...

18:37 RTH: I think that would be good. The, the method is really simple, I think. [JBK: Yeah.] You're going to get a beep and we're going to tell us about what your experience is at the moment of the beep. [JBK: Yeah.] And so that that's everything that I've written over the last fifty years, basically, that's there's some complexities to that. But if you want a review, that's....

18:45 JBK: Yeah.

18:54 JBK: Or yeah. And Mel, you've read up about it so you know more than some people starting this, but just to reiterate so and Russ does this too. There's usually a timeline [demonstrates] and... (I hope I'm going left to right) [RTH: You are.] [Mel: Yeah.] Okay, left to right? So then this is you as you go about your everyday life. You have the beeper in your ear. And at some point you'll get a beep through this line. And then you will record what, whatever was in your experience right before the beep. So the very short instance right before the beep. And be as specific as you can. Some people try to describe a much longer section of time, but really try to be as specific as you can to what was right before the beep and not at the beep, like *Oh I'm hearing a beep now. Darn!* So not that you're not right after the beep. Um, but really right before you got the beep.

18:54 Russ comments: There is a critique of these instructions at 45:18.

20:03 JBK (continues) Um, and so common question people have that you might not have because you've read more is: What exactly do I record? And I'm hesitant, and I think Russ is, too, to tell people exactly what because it depends on your experience. Really it's particular to you. So whatever it is that's in your experience, um, directly before the beep.

20:32 Um, and the other thing that's important to, to know is that you can always choose not to write it down. If you're busy, maybe you're driving and it would be dangerous—you, you don't need to record it. Maybe it's something that's personal to you. You don't need to record it. You don't need to tell us. Because um, every beep is personal. It's information that you have about your own experience. You can choose to share it or not. Um and it's always better—let's say you have a moment and there, and there's one thing you want to leave out, but, but everything else you're okay to tell us. Um please just drop that sample and move to the next one, because it's, it's better just to have, either you completely tell us everything or you don't tell us at all.

21:15 Mel: Yeah.

21:24 JBK: Um, so that's important to know. Um, what else? My spiel is generally pretty short the first day, because I, I don't want to bias or lead or, or maybe say too much. Um,

would Russ you can, you can tell me if I'm leaving something out. Do you have any questions, Mel?

21:46 Mel: Um, yes, but Russ, do you have anything to add first?

21:49 RTH: I would, I would say why don't you ask the questions and then I'm, I'm taking notes about things and I might say or not say or whatever, but we can come back to that.

22:00 Mel: Okay, um, well so I guess similarly I read up and things like that. But then got to a point where I didn't want to get too into the specifics with other people that have done this before because I didn't want to see too much about what other people were recording or how they were recording it, because I didn't want to impact my own— I don't, I don't want to lead myself down a way. So um, like how much when you say *record the moment* and whatever was going on, like how much detail? Like is that three words? Is that a paragraph? Is that...?

22:38 JBK: Um, so I will say as much as much detail as you can trying to be faithful to the experience. And if you're uncertain about anything, please note that or tell us. There's no need to have absolute certainty. If the beep happens and you have no idea what happened—*gosh I was doing so- I have no idea! I can't even remember!*—tell us! That's fine, and it doesn't it doesn't mean you're bad at the method, because the method is just telling us whatever you can with as much, and, and telling us how much certainty you have, so I'll say that.

23:21 In terms of what you should dot jot down in your notes, um, it really is personal and it's whatever to help you remember as much as possible. And I remember Russ talking about this before, saying that there are no real guidelines for how you write the notes. Because it's really up to you and up to you to help us remember. And he doesn't check the notes; I don't check the notes. So that's up to you. And then in terms of level of detail: It really depends on your experience. If it takes a lot of detail to describe your experience faithfully then use that. If um, if it doesn't, it doesn't. If it takes— So that's what I would say on the first sampling day.

Conversation about DES

24:07 RTH: So, so let me, let me say what I would say about that. I, I was going to say at the end but I I don't want to, I don't want to let that what you said I think what you said is a little bit down the wrong track, and I don't want to let that sit with Mel too long. [JBK: Okay.] So what you said as I recall was something like "as much detail as you can," and I *wouldn't* say that. I would say "write what you need and it's between you and you." So we, we are interested in as much detail as we can get about your experience—that's the object of the exercise. But what you *write down* is notes from you to you to be able to provide that detail. And if you can do it in one word, if that's if, if for you one word is all you need, one word is fine. And if it takes a whole page or ten pages then it takes a whole word or.

25:02 So the, the um the object of and the reason that I want to want to make this clear is that *I don't know* what the best thing for you to write down is. [Mel: um hmm.] *You* probably know more about that than I do, and, and you will probably learn more about that as the process goes.

- 25:19 But the, so, so that's what I would say. And the, and the, and the reason that I would say that is a, is a couple of reasons. But, but among the more primary ones is that the beginning of DES, and the whole, the whole, the whole deal about DES is to enlist Mel as a co-researcher, where she has responsibility. I don't know how to do this. She has to, she has to do this. And I want to convey that from the get-go: that, that Mel is not a subject in my research. Mel, Mel is a co-researcher. And, and, and I am, basically, and the only the only really thing that I want to convey on the first day (and it doesn't really much matter what I say about that to, to convey it) but what I want to convey is *I'm interested in what Mel's experience is like at the moment of these beeps and I want to do whatever it takes to get there*, and, and Mel's gotta hold my hand to do that. And that's... and she's got to, she's got to be the guide. After that I don't really care what gets what gets conveyed.
- 26:29 Mel: Mhmm, yeah, okay, that makes sense. Um.
- 26:30 RTH: *And*, and I would also say I don't I don't expect Mel to understand what I'm talking about on the first day. It takes (or on the zeroth day—this is the day that I call day zero). This is, this is a first crack. Mel, Mel's trying to figure out whether she really wants to be involved with this, and does she get in over her head, and whatever. And, and so I'm, I'm trying to convey what is *for me* a genuine interest in her experience. I'm gonna, I'm going to be genuinely interested in it. And, and I hope that she can do what, what she has to do to tell me about that.
- 27:14 Mel: Mm hmm. Okay, my other question is slight, is more practical I guess. Um like in an ideal world like how often am I wearing this? Like 24/7?
- 27:30 JBK: Um, I'll try to answer first I guess and then Russ can clarify. So it's six beeps a day. That, that's how you do, Russ, right? [RTH: Yup.] So try to wear it until you get those six beeps. And as far as activities, um, whenever it's practical, you can do that. So maybe if you're in a *very* important meeting, you don't need to do that. Um, wherever it's practical if you got a beep you'd be able to, you might be able to record it—you can, you can wear it. Of course, any beep you can, jot down what you can. And to just do it until the 6 beeps are collected, and that won't take 24 hours. Um it usually my experience is 3 to maybe 5 maximum. Um, is there anything you would add, Russ?
- 28:25 RTH: So I, I, I agree with that. What I would, what I would say, the only thing that that I *wouldn't* have said about that is that I, I would avoid an important meeting or whatever. What I would, because I, I would it might very well come to pass that Mel would like to wear it in an important meeting. She wants to know what, what's, what's going on in important meetings. How does how does she deal with that? And wearing the beeper in an important meeting is fine. [JBK: Okay.] So I wouldn't, I wouldn't prejudge when she wants to wear it.
- 28:59 What I *would* say is there's some advantage in doing it all in one, one setting, basically. One setting is a bad word for that, but all at one time. But, but I don't even really care about that. The, the *advantage* is that if you put it in and you do it in one, in one *go*, then you s-, you have a higher chance of forgetting that you're doing it, which is really what I want you to do. I'm, I'm more interested in your experience

without wearing the beeper than I am wearing the beeper. So I don't want what... The *worst* thing to do would be to wear it until you get a beep and then take it off; and then to put it back on it later on and wear it until you get one beep and then take it off. Because then you're sort of maximizing the *intrusion* of the beeper. Y'know, you got to start it and whatever. But if you, if you think you're going to wear it for six beeps and then and then after the third beep something happens and you can't do it (y'know, the baby's crying and she's grabbing on my earphone and whatever and y'know there's a lot— life happens) then take the beeper off and come back and finish enough when you're, when you can.

- 30:08 JBK: Do you? Um, so there are no prescriptions like—proscriptions—you like you can't wear it here.
- 30:14 RTH: Ah, the, the only thing that I would say about that is the only time that ah that that I that I don't want you to where it is if you're going swimming. [Mel: Yup!] It would, it wouldn't like to get super wet.
- 30:20 Mel: Yes.
- 30:23 JBK: Um, yeah, and if people ask *should I wear when I'm driving?* What would you say to that?
- 30:29 RTH: I would say, *yes if you if you like, wear it when you're driving*. Don't do anything that would, would be unsafe about it. But a lot of people wear it when they're driving and then, particularly after they get more skilled, but ah. But then you can't write it, maybe you can't write it down. You gotta pull over and write it down. But, but you can *freeze* what's going on in your experience while you're driving.
- 30:51 JBK: If someone says well I was driving and the beep came and I was 15 minutes away from my destination and thought *oh I'll, I'll remember it till then and jot it down there*, would you say that's acceptable? Or no?
- 31:07 RTH: I would say *I'm interested in your experience at the moment of the beep and if you're right about that, that you can wait 15 minutes, that's fine with me. But I don't know about that and ah and you probably don't know about that either*. We'll find out about that, whether you can wait 15 minutes.
- 31:23 JBK: Any, any other questions, Mel?
- 31:26 Mel: I don't think so, I'm just feeling a bit like *Wow I wonder what— I just can't imagine what words I'm gonna have to articulate what's going on in there*. But I guess time will tell [laughs] when the beep goes off. Yeah.
- 31:43 JBK: That's the challenge of the method.
- 31:46 Mel: Yeah! Um, no, and then my brain just goes like I think as time goes on I would be curious to (kind of like what you said before, Russ) with if there is an important meeting keeping it in like I think that there's a lot of interest in trying to keep it in as

much as I can in just like my regular day because just like thinking ahead I'd be very curious if there are differences based on my changing environment. Y'know whether, when it's when I'm on the subway or when I'm at home alone or when I'm walking through Central Park or feeling surrounded by lots of people at a certain place—like I think that that would be really cool to explore. So um, yeah, that's just me spit-balling for the future. Um.

32:29 RTH: So I think I think that's great. And, and, and I, and I would say you, if it was just me doing the sampling I would say, *that's great*. And the reason that I would (and, ah and I would say I'm saying and I would say in in any kind of a situation) is I *want* you to be interested in in those kinds of things. That, that because I'm interested in those things, and, and I want *you* to be interested in it. I'd, I'd rather have you talk like that than to say *Well, Hurlburt says I got to wear the beeper and so now I'm going to wear the beeper*. And so the, so that would give me another opportunity to bring home the co-investigator stance. And it, and it will unfold as you get more comfortable wearing the beeper, more skilled at responding; then there are going to be times when you when you would wear it where you might not have worn it on the first day or whatever.

33:26 Mel: Um, yeah, oh yeah.

33:30 JBK: Um, I've had people note the, the *time* of the beep. Um, Russ, do you do the same?

33:36 RTH: What I would say about that is I'm interested in your experience at the moment of the beep, and I don't care whether you write me the time or not. A lot of people find it convenient to write the time, and a lot of people find it convenient to, to *say well, the beep happened at 1:47; and at 1:47 I was doing something*. But, but I don't, I don't.... What, what I want... What my *goal* is, is to make the task as straightforwardly simple as it as it can be. Which is if I could get inside your head / body / whatever and experience your, your experience the way you experience your experience, you would do that, I would do that. And so I don't, what I, what I *want* to do is to make the task as *unobtrusive* as I can. So I'm not going to put any rules on it at all. I don't care whether to use the paper or not; I don't care whether you use a pencil or not; I don't care whether you write one word or ten; I don't care... [Mel: Um hmm.]

34:38 The only thing I *do* care about, actually, is that you wear the beeper that, (excuse me) wear the *earphone*. It's not good enough to have the beeper sitting over there and there's the beep or whatever. I want, I want the beep to be *injected* into your consciousness so that there's no question about there's no beep, there's no beep, but now there *is* a beep. So I want the moment to be well defined.

34:38 Russ comments: RTH didn't really answer JBK's question. No, I do not ask people to note the time. I also do not ask people *not* to note the time. If it is natural for them to note the time, then fine, note it. If it is not natural for them to note the time, then don't note it. I don't want to interfere with whatever is natural.

In short: I want people to be focused on their experience however they can best do that, and I don't want to tell them anything about how to do it, because then they will be focused on the DES procedure rather than on their experience.

- 35:05 Mel: Yeah.
- 35:05 JBK: I have another question um because I like that you express interest in knowing about your experience in different settings. Maybe when you're in a meeting, you're out in the park and yeah, we're interested too. Um. Russ, so what would you say to somebody who says, *oh I can only really sample, y'know, once I come home from work and I'm watching TV*. And then all the beeps are going to be during this kind of experience. I mean I think it's fine because you, you're still learning something about their experience. You're still getting samples of their consciousness. Um, even if it's just one activity. But like analysis after might be a bit skewed if you try to say *oh their whole experience is like this*. But I mean I guess from my perspective it's fine, so long as you know you're only getting experience of certain activities. Um, yeah, how do you, how do you approach that, Russ?
- 36:03 RTH: Well, what the first, first thing I would say is I, I don't think we ever get the whole Mel. Our, our, object is not to get the *essence* of Mel or the *entirety* of Mel. We're going to get, we're going to get 36 moments of her experience or something. And, and that's what we're, that's what we're going to get. And I would say ah about the watching TV: I, I think watching TV is not particularly interesting but I wouldn't make a I wouldn't make a big deal about it on the first day and if, if somebody says *well I can only I can only do it when I'm come home from working and watching TV*, I would say *well let's do that and, but, and then let's see what happens*. And then on the second day or the third day I might say *well, y'know, we got a lot of beeps watching TV; maybe be worthwhile doing it something else*.
- 36:55 The, the *first day* (all, all days in general) but the first day *specifically* is I want to make the task as natural as it can be, and I want to express as much interest as I can and I want to ah, ah shouldn't say that I want to express as much interest *as I have* not as much as I can but as much interest as I have. Which is generally quite a lot of interest. So it's, I'm, I'm going to express that. And, and after that it doesn't it doesn't make too much difference what I say. I don't think, I don't think what is said or not said on, on the first day is very important unless it's misleading in some way.
- 37:36 JBK: Yeah, because um, yeah my first day is generally pretty short and then when you put your YouTube videos up showing your sampling, I think one of them, the first day was quite long and there was like an hour discussion. So I was wondering *Oh, is there a lot I'm leaving out y'know on, on and day zero as you say?*
- 37:59 RTH: Um, so if, if so if Mel had come in and said *I got this! I understand what I'm supposed to do. I'm going to stick this thing in my ear. It's going to beep; I'm going to pay attention what was going on in the beep and ah and, y'know, they don't really need to tell me anything about it*, I'd say that's fine with me. And our first conversation would have been 30 seconds long. If Mel had come in and said *I've got these questions and these concerns and these whatever, and, and I got these philosophical things and what, what happened about this and, and that* then our first conversation would be an hour long. And the *reason* for that is I want Mel to be a co-researcher. And if she's got these interests I'm going to be interested in that, and I'm *not* going to say, y'know, *These are the rules. This is, this is the spiel that I'm going to get. My spiel*

*is 2 minutes and 47 seconds long and when I get to 2 minutes and 47 seconds long, we're, we're done. I, I just don't think... Well, (A) I don't think it's very nice. But, but (B) I think I, I want I want Mel to be on my team, or I want to be on Mel's team, or I want us to be a team. And if Mel has interests, then I'm gonna, I'm, I'm gonna try to respond to it. But it's *not* because I think it makes much difference as far as the instructions for the sampling is concerned. It's about conveying, it, it's conveying an interest. And I, I guess I *do* want to build Mel's interest. If she didn't if she didn't have any I would try to build an interest like I might, I might give a spiel why I think inner experience is important, y'know, and, and that would take me a few minutes or whatever. But Mel seems to already think that Mel, that that's important, that inner experience might be interesting so I don't have to do *that*.*

39:55 Mel: Yeah, and then I don't think I have a whole lot of questions because even to me right now I can understand that it's just so hypothetical at the moment like I just have to start hearing beeps and trying to record them so I don't I don't know what questions I have yet until I do that.

40:12 RTH: Um, I think that's, I think that's exactly right. And that's, and, and, and, and when I think Mel's in that mode, then I think they then we're done, ya know? And so the, the first day there, there is *absolutely nothing* that has to be said on the first day I think.

40:12 RTH Comments: Most of psychology believes that instructions should be scripted so that all participants hear the same instructions. I think that is always misguided—*issuing* the same instructions by no means ensures that the same instructions are *heard*. But worse than that, operating according to a script conveys in the strongest possible terms that the experimenter is the expert and the controlling master, and the participant's (who should better be called a subject) task it to follow instructions. Scripts are particularly misguided when the aim is fidelity: we *don't* know the best way to proceed.

40:38 JBK: Like a common question I get is them asking, um, *so what do you mean by experience? Like what I'm doing?* Or something like that. Or they might ask, *what d'you mean, like what I'm thinking?* And I don't wanna, cuz the actual answer is it could be, y'know, thinking, feeling a whole number of other things. It could be, y'know, there's so many possibilities. Um, I want to convey that without kind of giving ideas of what else it could be. So that's sometimes a challenge. So that's maybe I'll say like um, *if what's you're doing, if what you're doing is in your experience then and tell us that, or it might be something different*. But, but I guess, Russ, what's your approach to questions like that?

41:24 RTH: I would say I'm interested in whatever is before the footlights of your consciousness, and that *might* be what you're doing, and it might be what you're *thinking*, and it might be what you're *feeling*, and it might be some *sensation* you're having.

41:36 JBK: Um, because sometimes I don't even know to use things like thinking, feeling, stuff like, that because you might give some ideas and...

- 41:47 RTH: So I agree that I agree that there's a risk, there's a risk to that, and, and, and my way of dealing with that is whenever I use a term like that I try to make it seem like I don't really care about that.
- 42:04 JBK: Mhmm.
- 42:04 RTH: So what I just said was "y'know it could be your *thinking*, it could be your *feeling*, it could be something else." My way of speaking about those words was I don't really *know* about that or care about that or whatever, whatever is before the footlights of your consciousness. By, and the um opposite of that it would be, *well, some people some people say they're thinking and they think in words and, and when they think in words they think in full sentences and whatever. Some people think like that.* I would *not* say that on the first day.
- 42:36 I would, I would, I would, I am, let's put this way, I *am* ignorant about what Mel's experience is like. I *don't know* what is going what she's going to find I don't want to give her suggestions. And I could very well— uh I would sometimes very straightforwardly (or *always* very straightforwardly or whatever) say I don't know what's in your experience I don't want to make suggestions about what you should be looking for. [Mel: Mm.] So I want to, I *do* want to convey that. [Mel: Mm.] But the, but the actual words that I use to convey it, I don't think is very important. [JBK: Mhmm.]
- 43:10 Mel: Yeah, and, and I think ultimately like on this side of the fence, it's less is more. Like the, the less that you say today is better, because as- I don't want to hear about thinking or feeling or all these different possibilities. Like I— the less I know about what I could possibly be recording or interpreting is better. Because otherwise I already feel overwhelmed with like sort of looking for stuff. So uh, just like on this side of the fence, I think the less that you say is actually more helpful.
- 43:44 RTH: I think that's right. I will, the, the, first the in the first day I don't think any, any answer any specific answer to any question matters *other than* I want Mel to feel like Russ heard what she said about whatever it is that she said; and I want Mel to begin to build some kind of a notion of *well I'd sort of like to tell him what he-, what happens with me* and we'll see what happens. [Mel: Mhmm.] And, and that, and that he's *not* going to punish me and say *well that was a stupid question, y'know. This is what this is This is what I want you to do, Mel, if you're not doing that, god damn it...!* I *don't* want to, I *don't* want to convey anything like that. [Mel: Mhmm.] I want to co, want to convey a genuine interest (which I have a genuine interest), and I— because I think it's sort of the most interesting thing in the world, what, what Mel would be like. And if she's willing to tell me about it then great! [Mel: Cool.] And I want her to hear that: *well I'd sort of like to tell him and see what he thinks* and maybe, maybe I'll find out something interesting.
- 45:01 Mel: Mhmm. Cool. Well I don't really have any questions, I think.
- 45:05 JBK: Yeah I'm done with I my questions, too. Um is, is there anything else on your side, Russ? Or should we schedule the next...

45:18 RTH: Well, we do have to schedule and we and we probably reached the end. But I did have a couple of ah... in your opening spiel when, when in your in your diagram that you drew, [Mel says something about her charger and stands up to get it] you had the beep being, you had your beep being at one line on the page. [Julian: (holds up his sketch) My beep.] And I would draw it as a yeah, I would, I would draw the beep as [Russ draws] I would draw the beep as being like [holds up his drawing].



Julian's sketch



Russ's sketch

45:50 JBK: Oh okay. [Mel: Oh yeah.] Yeah, the so this the beep onset but I guess the beep the beep goes until you turn it off. Okay.

45:59 RTH: Right. And then, and then so I would, I would say "so time is marching on like this and the beep happens here, and it's continued to beep and continue to beep and then you push the button to stop the beep and then time keeps marching on." And I would be as accurate about that as I can be: when I'm the beep the beep happens here you... beep continues to beep, you push the button to stop the beep. Because that makes it clear what, what her task is. And then I would say: "And the moment that I'm interested in is this moment right there, as close to this beep as I can possibly get it, like sometimes I call it *the last undisturbed moment just before the beep occurs*. I don't think it, so Julian I don't think it matters because it's the, it's the first day. But ah, but as far as building the skill, when you when you talked about the *just before the beep*, [JBK: Uh huh] and I don't think, I don't think words, words matter. But I do think what you're going to convey matters. And the problem with, the problem with the words "just before" is that there's, there's *no meaning* to them to those words. Just y'know you could say that the Mesozoic age was *just before* the Pleistocene age, or whatever. I don't have.... But y'know that's some billions of years or whatever I um (I don't know anything about that at all). But, but *just before* doesn't mean, doesn't really have any meaning. So what you really want is the... Even the *last undisturbed moment* doesn't really have any meaning but it's closer than *just before*.

47:28 JBK: Yeah, because the beep could come in the middle of some kind of experience. So I guess I mean every way to phrase it has a little bit of a downside. [RTH: Yep.] As you say what's important is just conveying we're looking for something, y'know, something quite very close to the beep.

47:28 Russ comments: "Something quite very close to the beep" is quite misleading, as RTH will explain.

47:52 RTH: What...one, so one, one useful terminology there is "caught in flight by the beep." [Mel: Mmm] We're we're interested in an experience that is caught in flight by the beep. So it could have been ongoing for a few minutes if you've got a long experience. Doesn't, most people don't but it could be. [A computer beeps. Julian: Heard some kind of beep somewhere.] And, ah, we're, we're interested in what,

what gets *caught in flight*. So the object is not to look backwards. The object is to look at right at the very beginning of the beep. But for the most, for the most part—all that stuff is, is that you said, but, but, but for the most part it doesn't really matter.

- 47:52 Russ comments: The words that are used don't really matter, but the intention behind the words matters greatly. If the intention is on target, then over time and repetition, the words will naturally get aligned with the target. But if the intention is off target, then over time, the words will draw us farther and farther to the *wrong* target. We will see in later interviews that Russ thinks that Julian has a too-imprecise view of *something quite very close to the beep*, which will have to be refined if he is to become skilled at DES.
- 48:43 JBK: Uh huh. And I'm sure we'll talk about what, what, exactly a moment is and, and, how short or how long because I mean I wrote my thesis on time related to DES or time related to consciousness so it was all about. What, what exactly is this moment like, is a moment an actual thing and I guess um yeah we don't need to talk too much about specifics. But they're kind of like a lot of things coming up that I could say that I that'll hold off on and I know we'll get to those.
- 49:17 RTH: Right. So I would, I would definitely recommend that you *not* talk about that. [JBK: Yeah exactly.] You, we *don't* want Mel to be worried about what is a moment. We want Mel to be given a shot at trying to describe her experience.
- 49:30 JBK: And, and I guess this first we're saying much more than we normally would because the hope is that you're resilient. You've read up on the method a little bit so going a little bit behind the scenes won't hurt too much. But yes, it's good to it's good to not say too much.
- 49:51 RTH: Um I have I have I have great confidence in the iterative process. So I don't I don't I don't think there's really too much we can do to screw up Mel on the first day. [JBK laughs] We can, we can screw up, we can screw up Mel over the long haul, but on the on the first day [JBK: Not the first day. Yeah.] We can... but, but, but, for example, if we had had, if we had had a long conversation about what the moment is or, or whatever [JBK: Yeah] that would have *complicated* things for Mel and ah probably would have slowed down Mel's process and getting be, to be good at this task, but we could repair that down the road. But it'd be a lot easier if we just didn't have if we didn't have to. So there's a lot, there's a lot of stuff that we that we know that will emerge, maybe. So I agree we should figure out when we're gonna do this again.
- 50:44 Mel: Yes.
- 50:46 JBK: Um, and um, you should, the beeps should be within 24 hours of the interview. So whenever the beeps come if... Let's say we schedule the interview um for the same time next week. You could either record um the morning um before that interview or the day before so long as it starts within 24 hours of when the interview is scheduled to be. [Mel: Okay.] So now so your time is 12; it's about noon right now, right? [Mel:

Yep.] Okay, and if we have a similar time.... Um, well, well when would what when do you think would be good for, for the next interview, Mel?

51:36 RTH: So the, the way that I would have done that, Julian, is I would just let let's figure out when the next, next interview is, and go straight at that. And after we'd done that, then I would have had the conversation about 24 hours before that. [Julian: Okay.] And, and in the in the *doing* of that we might have to revise well I can't, I can't, if I knew that I wouldn't, wouldn't have scheduled that. But let's, let's go for the interview, because that's the, that's the only part that really matters.

52:00 JBK: Let's go for the interview, yeah.

52:03 RTH: So we could do the same time next week, as far as I'm concerned.

52:06 Mel: Yep, um I can do that. [JBK: Mhmm.] I—

52:12 RTH: Or we could do the same time on *Tuesday* as far as I'm concerned—the tenth or the twelfth, we're talking about.

52:18 JBK: Yeah, from my perspective we, we could do it *tomorrow* from my perspective so. But yeah I think Tuesday. How does Tuesday work?

52:30 Mel: Um, yeah, probably Tuesday because then so what then I need to be doing the recording on the Monday. Is that what you're telling me?

52:39 RTH: Or on early on Tuesday morning. Sometime within [Mel: Yeah. Within the 24 hours.] sort of 24 hours. The way, the way I feel about that is you can sleep on a, on a batch of beeps once but not twice.

52:55 Mel: Mhmm. Mhmm. That's a good way to put it.

52:55 RTH: So I wouldn't want you to do it on Sunday because then you'd sleep on it Monday night and, or Sunday night and Monday night. There's something about the sleep process that actually, I think, does disturb the recollection. But it but it's okay for one time.

53:17 **Comment: They compare calendars (which is not transcribed).**

53:53 JBK And so Russ you're saying the 24 hours isn't so serious so long as it's, y'know, one day before is okay?

54:01 RTH That's right. So let- let's say we were going to meet at 5:00 on on Tuesday. It'd be alright with me if she wore the beep on Monday morning. [JBK: Ok.] Which would be technically 28 hours before, 30 hours before or something. That wouldn't bother me. But if, but It would bother me if she wore so now we are going to meet on Sun- on Tuesday morning. If she wore the beep on Sunday night, [Mel: It's too long] that that would be problematic. So I want her to wear the beep sometime on Monday or Tuesday early morning.

54:43

Comment: They talk about ending the recording and then conclude the meeting.