Prompts, Probes and Encouragement

1. Prompts: Things you may need to remind the interviewee about.
2. Probes: Getting the interviewee to say more about a particular topic.
3. Verbal & non-verbal cues: encouraging the interviewee to continue

1. Prompts (Ready-prepared things to mention if the interviewee hasn’t already done so)

These will be specific to your research design and the particular questions you are asking. You should have the different dimensions of possible answers to your questions in your mind, and if some are not mentioned, be prepared to say something like: ‘You haven’t mentioned X: what do you feel about that?’

2. Probes (Follow-Up questions)

Examples of Detail-oriented probes:

- When did that happen?
- Who else was involved?
- Where were you during that time?
- What was your involvement in that situation?
- How did that come about?
- Where did it happen?
- How did you feel about that

Examples of Elaboration probes

- Would you elaborate on that?
- Could you say some more about that?
- That’s helpful. I’d appreciate if you could give me more detail.
- I’m beginning to get the picture: but some more examples might help.

Examples of Clarification probes

- You said the program is a “success”. What do you mean by “success”?
- What you’re saying now is very important, and I want to make sure that I get it down exactly the way you mean it: please explain some more.

3. Verbal and non-verbal cues to continue

These will be specific to different cultures, but could involve, for example, nodding, smiling, maintaining eye-contact, saying ‘uh-huh’ or ‘I see’ in an encouraging way.