

Student Worksheet: Survivor Interview
Topic 6: One Survivor's Story – Edith Birkin – Question 4

Points to consider when conducting an interview with a survivor	Questions you may wish to ask survivors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not have preconceptions of a survivor's testimony. In other words, do not always expect there to be a special story of survival when there may not be one 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors now know how camps/ghettos were organised which they may not have been aware of at the time. With hindsight, therefore, their story today can seem to have a new meaning attached. Testimonies can therefore appear carefully constructed and thought through 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivors may be sensitive to the interviewer's needs and what they feel the interviewer is ready to hear/can cope with hearing. They may not wish to reveal their whole story 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewers who show shock may make survivors reluctant to talk 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember survivors of the camp system were part of a very different 'moral universe', where our language and structure of life provides no useful context. Interviewers must, therefore, facilitate, guide and leave time for reflection and silence 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• After interviewing a survivor, interviewers may feel a sense of personal accomplishment. Conversely, they may feel distress, denial or concerned about having intruded in a private world of grief	

Extracted from "The value of oral history for Holocaust research and remembrance", by Rob Perks, paper presented at the Amsterdam Conference on Remembrance, 2-5 May 2001, organised by the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.