

7th Annual Emerging
African Researcher
Training Academy
2026



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

Presenters: Dr Candice Groenewald and Dr Angelique Wildschut

Date: 30 July 2026

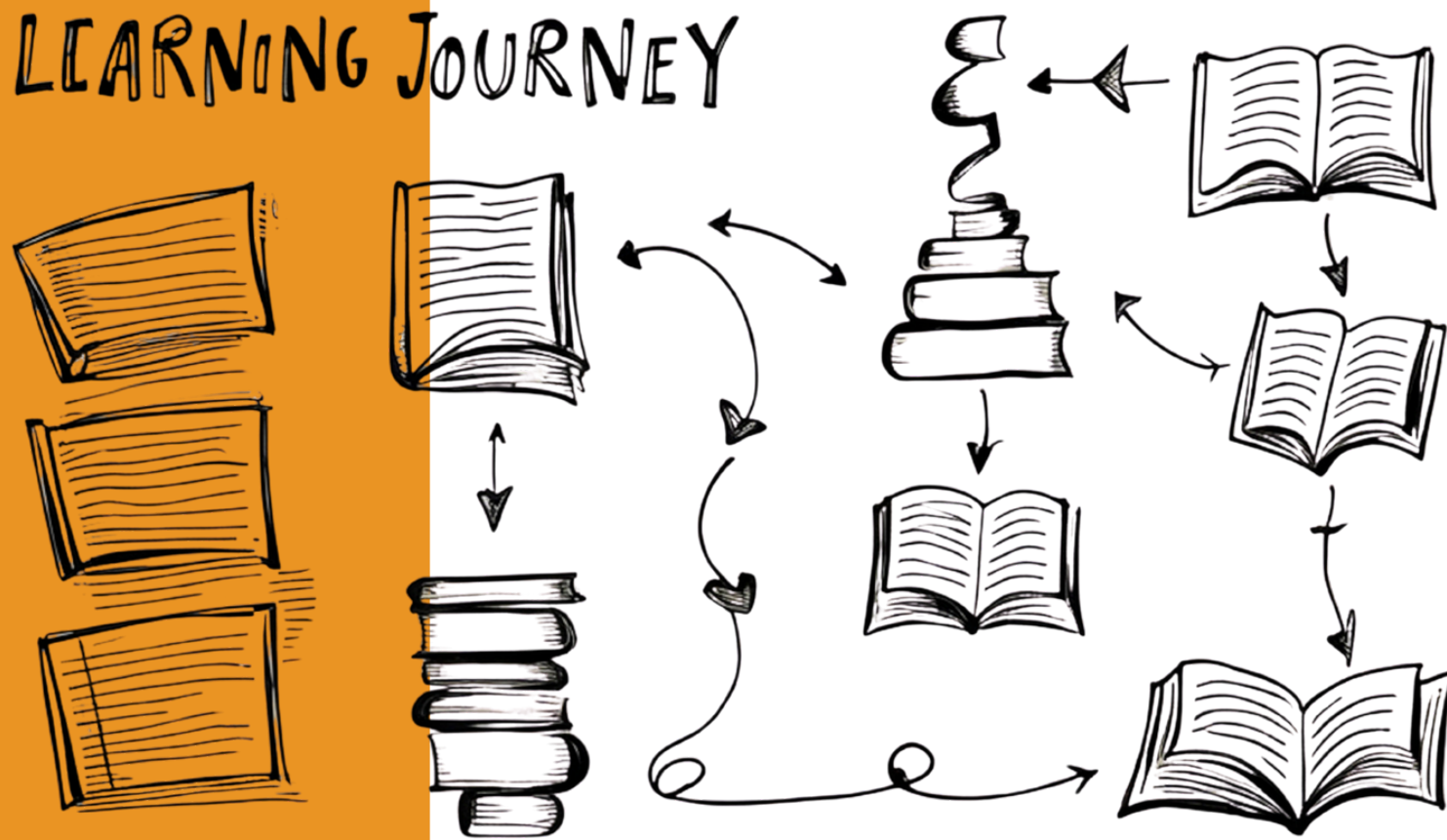
Time: 09:00-13:00

Presenter email address: cgroenewald@hsr.ac.za and
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*African Research Voices in
the Age of Artificial
Intelligence*

LESSON PLAN

LEARNING JOURNEY



Session 1 (9:00-9:45)

- Welcome and overview (10 mins)
- Introduction to qualitative research

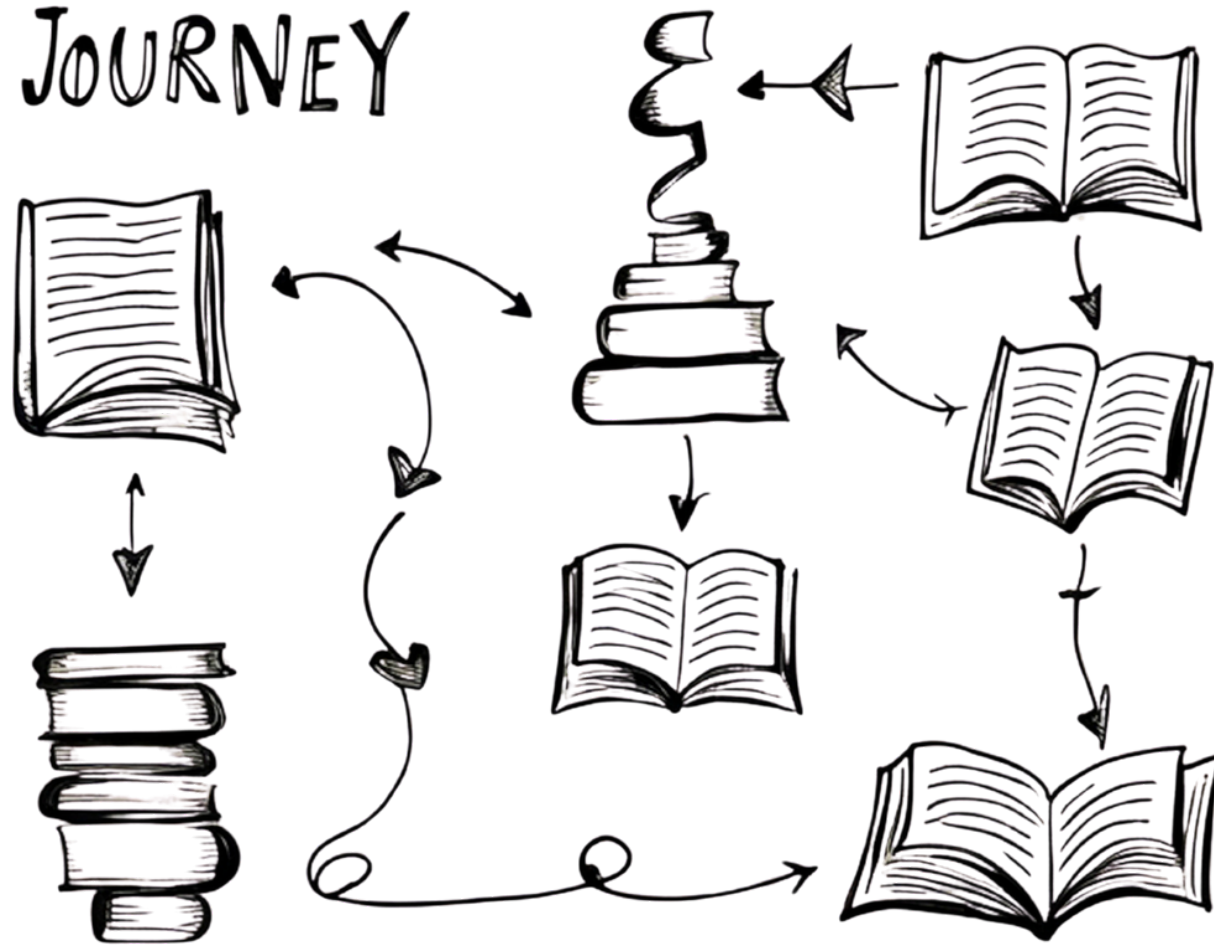
Session 2 (9:45:-10:30): Operationalising qualitative research

TEA BREAK 10:30-11:00

Session 3 and 4 (11:00-13:00)

- Guidelines for collecting quality information
- Introduction to qualitative analyses

LEARNING JOURNEY



AIMS OF THE MODULE

- To journey through qualitative research together towards understanding
 - What qualitative research **means**
 - What it entails
 - How to **operationalise** qualitative research
 - How to **gather** qualitative evidence well
 - How to **consolidate** qualitative evidence
 - How to **analyse** qualitative evidence



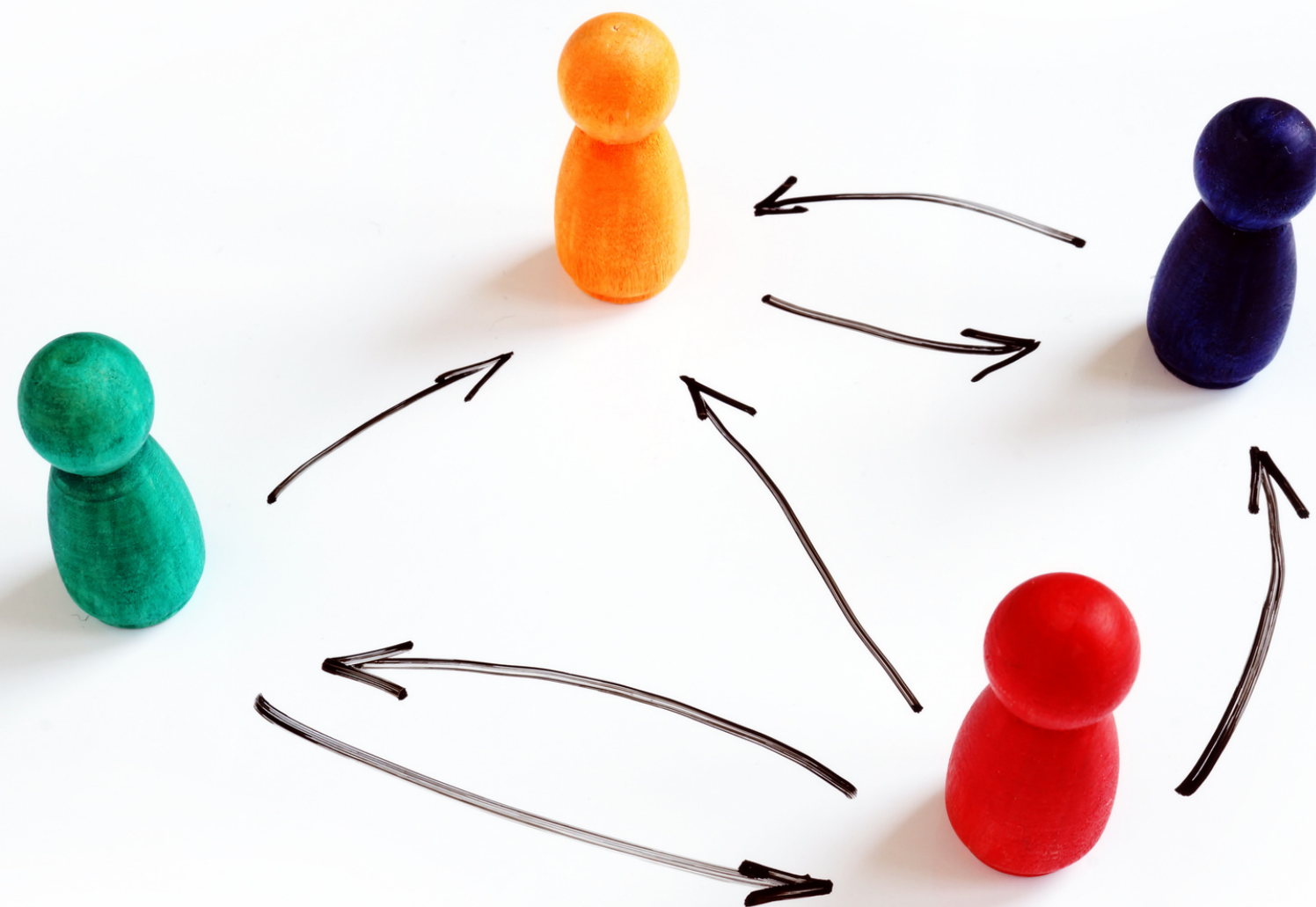
INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Presenters: Dr Candice Groenewald

Date: 30 July 2026

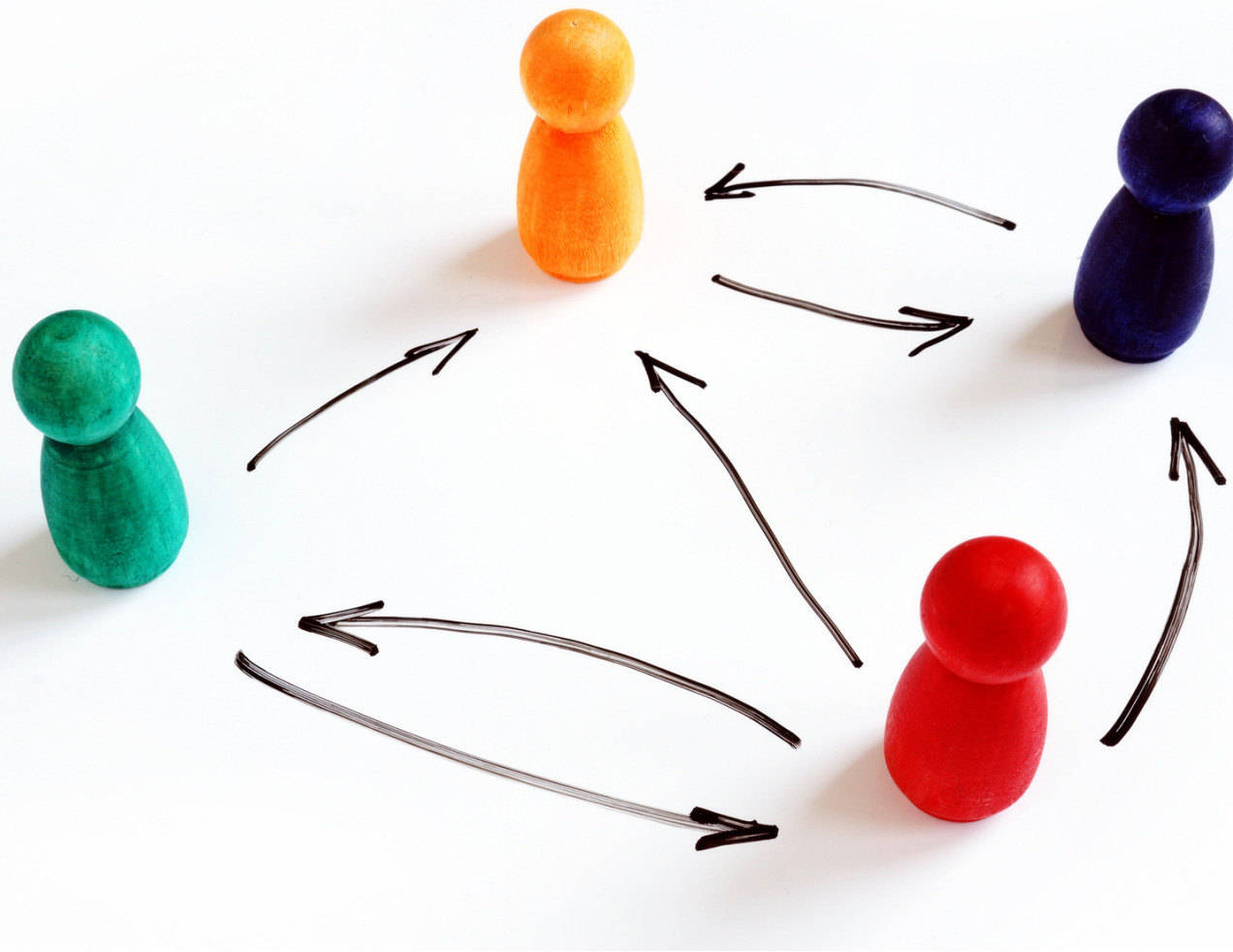
Presenter email address: cgroenewald@hsrc.ac.za

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HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH?

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: THE BASICS



- Qualitative research is a **methodological approach** that incorporate various methods to gather, analyse and make sense of the gathered information
- Generally, the intention of qualitative research is to **engage or interact** with people on a particular topic to understand
 - how they **feel** about it,
 - how they **think** about it
 - how they have **experienced** it
 - how it has **impacted** their lives
 - how they think something can **change** or be **improved**

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: THE BASICS



- The approaches we adopt to do qualitative research is dependent on a few considerations
 - what you want to know? [i.e. the topic]
 - who do you want to engage? [sample]
 - when and how do you want to engage with your participants?
 - what kind of information do you want to collect? [audio, text, images etc.]
 - how do you want to use the information you have gathered
- These considerations are often consolidated in the designs we employ



Focus groups



Workshops



Visual methods



Surveys/ questionnaires



Information gathering



Interviews



Chat or webpages



Literature reviews



Secondary data

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: POSITIONALITY

- In qualitative research the researcher is **intrinsically involved** in the research experience:
 - how the research is defined
 - how the questions are developed
 - how the data is collected
 - how the data is transcribed
 - how the data is analysed
 - how the data is interpreted
 - how the data is written up



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: POSITIONALITY

Qualitative research is thus **subjective**- both for the **researcher(s)** and the **participant**

- Researcher's lived experience
- Participants lived experience

Because of this subjectivity:

- It is not necessarily about establishing 'the truth' but capturing the **participants truth**
- It is important for the researcher to practice **reflexivity**:
 - to be aware of, and document, and personal opinions, thoughts, attitudes, knowledge and experiences that may influence how you engage with the topic, participants, and interpretation of data





IN SUMMARY

Qualitative research is not a technique, but a methodological approach that is intrinsically linked to the researcher's positionality which ultimately determines the designs, methods and analyses we employ to do qualitative research



GUIDELINES FOR COLLECTING QUALITATIVE DATA THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Presenters: Dr Candice Groenewald

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GOOD INTERVIEWS = GOOD QUALITY DATA

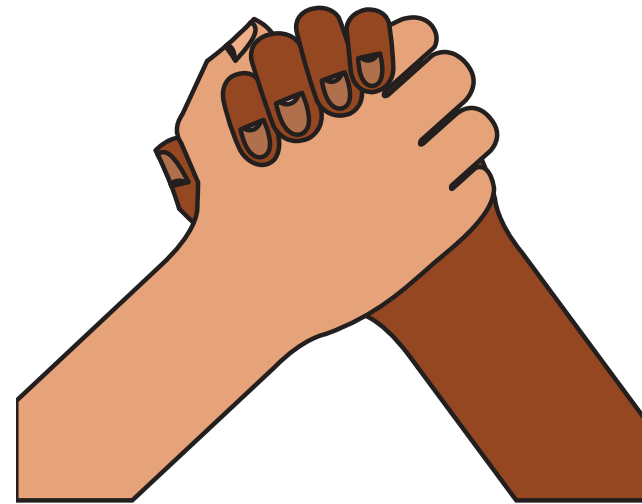
- The data we generate through qualitative engagements are shaped by the interviewer
 - if the interview was conducted well, and all the questions were asked, then we have good quality data
 - if the interview was compromised in some way, the quality of our data is compromised
 - if we have compromised data, we have severe limitations to the type of analyses we can conduct and the depth of our interpretation
- Ultimately, knowing how to design and operationalise qualitative research is not always enough to get good quality data
 - we need to be interviewers who are ready, able and willing to collect the information in a transparent and indepth way



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS: GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING

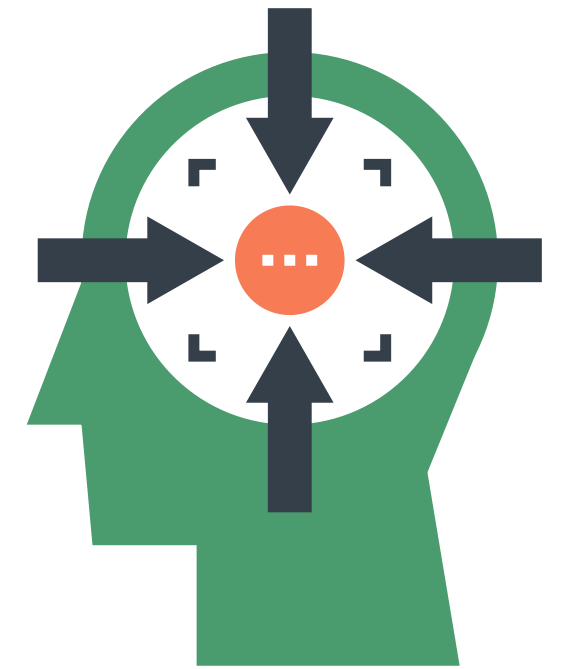


Be prepared



Be respectful

Be attentive



BE PREPARED



- Ensure that you know **AND UNDERSTAND** the study and the research questions that you are going to ask.
 - What am I researching? [aims of the study and anticipated outcomes]
 - What kind of information am I looking for? [depth, comparisons, collective understandings etc.]
 - NOTE: The participants will ask you clarifying questions so you have to know what you are researching! [what do you mean by that?]

BE PREPARED



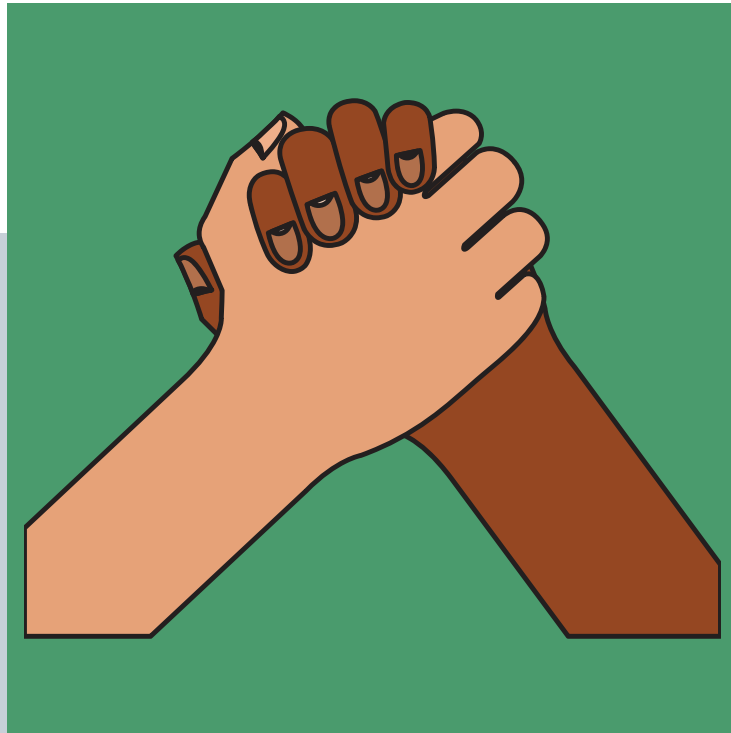
- Prepare the materials that you are going to use
 - **Audio recorder**- what will you use?
 - How does this work, where do I stop or pause, where do I save the information (folders), do I need to charge the device and how long does the battery last?
 - **Discussion guide** - understand this, discuss with team leads or other researchers
 - **Consent forms**- have to be signed before the FGD starts
 - **Notebook**
 - Anything else?

BE PREPARED



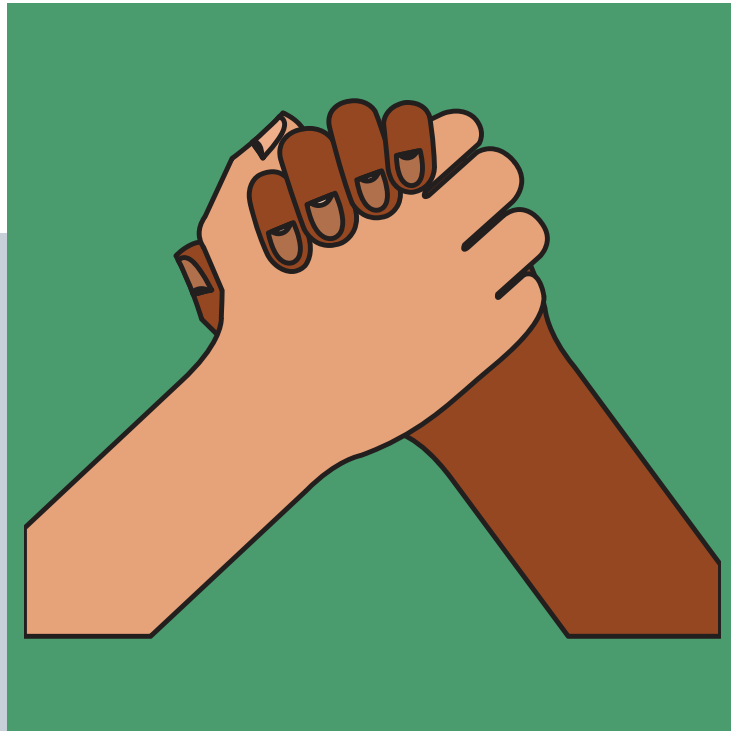
- Identify an **appropriate venue** that is private, quiet, non-threatening and comfortable. This will encourage participation.
- Prepare for **challenging situations**
 - When people do not want to contribute
 - When people speak too much
 - When people are rude
 - When people demand money
 - Brainstorm (with others) some of the challenges you anticipate and think of ways to deal with them
 -

BE RESPECTFUL



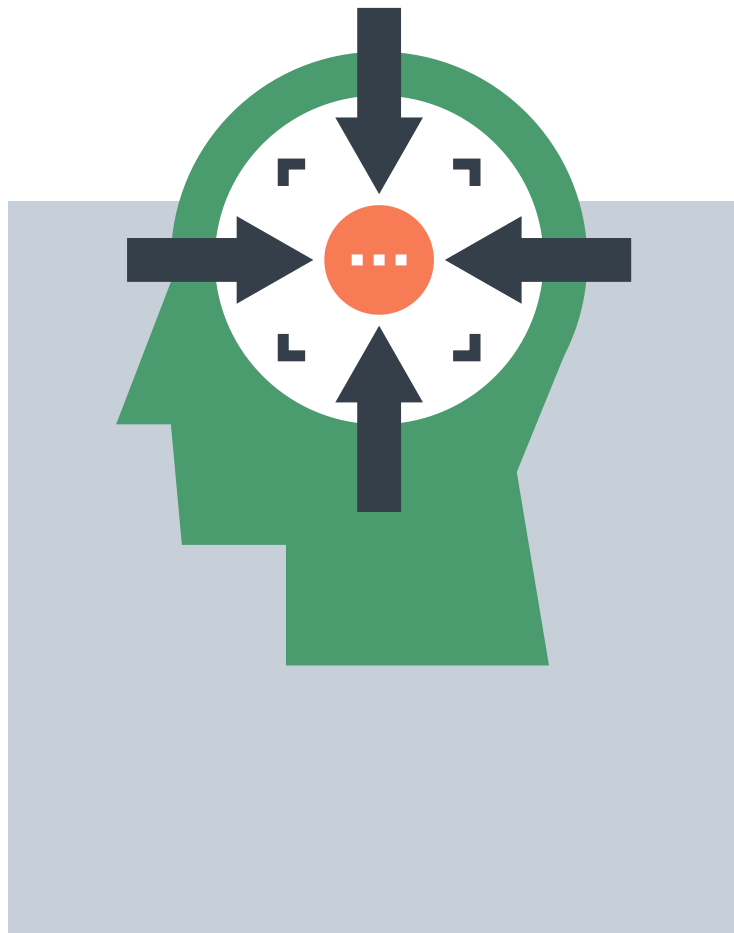
- Remember this is a **conversation** not a talk
 - you are interested in their story
 - you are not a teacher
 - be conversational
- Ensure that you create an environment that **promotes voluntary and honest discussion**
 - be approachable
 - smile
 - be interactive

BE RESPECTFUL



- Remember that you are there to collect subjective information through **discussion** and not a series of questions
 - give people time to respond- some people are thinkers
 - don't rush through questions
 - discussion not a tick box exercise
- **Know your audience**- the way we talk to different groups of individuals vary
 - Incorporate ice-breakers to make the group more comfortable and build rapport with the participants- to make them comfortable
- Be mindful of your **own perspectives**
 - You are there to collect information, not provide an intervention or training- Try to be neutral.
- **Be transparent**- If you need to write something down, make sure you do this in a transparent way- on the table.

BE ATTENTIVE



- **Know your audience** and research sensitivity
 - In FGDs, some people may be uncomfortable to discuss certain issues.
 - Be mindful that you are a stranger asking someone to tell you something personal
 - Encourage discussion by focusing on the societal level rather than individual.
 - For example, asking “*why do you drink alcohol while studying?*” is more intimidating than “*why do you think students drink alcohol while studying?*”
 - then bring it back to the participant to ask: how do you feel about this.