# **Empathy Map Worksheet**

***Instructions****: Use the following to guide your group through conducting an empathy map.****Materials****: Sticky notes or cards, a large piece of flipchart paper, and marking pens.*

An **empathy map** is a tool that can help you better understand the emotional and human context of a situation and gain insight into the needs, motivations, experiences, and expectations of a person or group of people. In empathy mapping, this is called the “persona.”

Before you begin an empathy map, it is important to:

* **Define the purpose of your map.** Are you trying to better understand how a certain person or group experiences something? The motivations or needs behind a certain behavior?
* **Conduct empathy exercises**. Conduct interviews, focus groups, guided tours and other empathy building exercises directly from a person or people with lived experience in the problem you are trying to understand.
* **Involve a team**. Empathy maps are most useful when conducted by a team.
* **Schedule enough time**. Plan 30-60 minutes to create your empathy map. Plan for an additional 15-30 minutes to discuss needs, insights, and next steps.
* **Set ground rules**. Don’t judge. Question everything. Be truly curious. Find patterns.

**Step 1. Describe who you are empathizing with? (your persona).** Include as much detail here to provide the foundation for your empathy map. Write this at the top of your flipchart paper. Consider:

* Is this based on **an interview** with one person? Write as much detail as you have on that person, the situation they are in, and any relevant details to the problem you are trying to solve.
* Is this based on **a group of people**? Describe that group in as much detail as possible. What are the common characteristics across of all the people you have talked to? What common situation are they in?
* While not ideal, you can also do this as a **thought exercise,** if you have not yet conducted any empathy building exercises. Think about who is impacted by your problem. Create a mini story based on your understanding of the problem. Who are they? What situation are they in? What led to this situation? **Caution**: If you use this technique, remember your empathy map will be based in your knowledge and experience rather than from those with lived experience. It is vital that you cross-check the needs and insights you develop with those with lived experience before moving forward.

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| **Example Empathy Map Grid & Prompts** | |
| *The Says/Does sections are for direct quotes and observations you have seen and heard.* | *The Think/Feel section of the map is where one infers and assumes things based on the data in the Says/Does section.* |
| **Says** | **Thinks** |
| *What are some quotes and defining words your user said?* | *What might your user be thinking? What does this tell you about his/her beliefs?* |
| **Does** | **Feels** |
| *What actions and behaviors did you observe?* | *What emotions might your subject be feeling? Infer these by paying attention to body language, tone, and choice of words.* |
| **Needs** | **Insights** |
| *What activities and desires could this person use help? Identify needs directly from the user traits you noted, or from contradictions between two traits.* | *Insights often grow from contradictions between two user attributes or from asking yourself “Why is this a need?”* |

**Step 2: Ground in Empathy.** As the goal of an empathy map is to understand a situation through the eyes of your persona, review any information you gathered via empathy exercises and/or data you have on your problem. Take a minute to have each team member quietly reflect, prompting them to imagine themselves in your persona’s situation.

**Step 3: Set up your Map.** Use a white board or sticky paper to set up a larger version of the grid to the right.

**Step 4: Says-Does-Thinks-Feels.** Distribute sticky notes and pens to all members of the team. Instruct team members that you will first be focusing on the Says-Does-Thinks-Feels sections. Review the prompt questions to make sure everyone knows what goes in each section.

* Take three to five minutes for all members to brainstorm silently, writing one idea per sticky note.
* Have everyone come back together to compare ideas. Group like ideas and place them in the appropriate section of the empathy map.
* As a group, examine your empathy map. Create new sticky notes and add them to your empathy map as you discuss:
  + Is there anything missing in the Says/Does section from your empathy exercises?
  + Look at what you have under Says/Does. Grounding in empathy and really trying to think about the situation from the perspective of this person- What might this person be thinking as they Say/Do these things? What might they be feeling?

**Step 5. Infer Needs.** Now, you will infer needs from your empathy map. Needs are human emotional or physical necessities. Needs are verbs (activities and desires with which your persona could use help), not nouns (solutions). Identify needs directly out of the user traits you noted, or from contradictions between two traits – such as a disconnect between what they say and what they do.

* Take three to five minutes to brainstorm silently, writing one insight per sticky note.
* Have everyone come back together to compare needs. Group like ideas and place them in the Needs section of the empathy map.
* As a group, examine your empathy map. Discuss the following, writing and adding additional sticky notes for each new need.
  + Are there any other needs the user has explicitly stated?
  + Are there things the user says they do or would like to, but are not doing? What do they need to be able to do this?
  + Are there challenges that the user is facing? What do they need to overcome this challenge?
  + What are the emotions they are experiencing? What needs impact these feelings?

**Step 6. Identify Insights.** An insight is a remarkable realization that you could leverage to address your identified problem. Insights often grow from contradictions between two user attributes or from asking “Why?” a particular need occurs.

* Take three to five minutes to brainstorm silently a-ha moments as well as contradictions and tensions between what this persons Says-Does-Thinks-Feels, writing one insight per sticky note.
* Have everyone come back together to compare insights. Group like ideas and place them in the Insights section of the empathy map.
* As a group, examine your empathy map. Discuss the following, writing and adding additional sticky notes for each new insight.
  + What challenges do they face? What is causing them? What could make them easier?
  + Is there anything surprising on your empathy map?
  + What were the needs? What can infer from your empathy map why this is a need?

**Step 7. Create insight statements.** Finally, a useful way to frame insights and leverage them to address your identified problem, is a user insight statements. Two basic formats are shown below, choose the language that resonates with your team.

* Have members take a few minutes to create insight statements individually.
  + Ask: How do our insights relate to our needs? Do they cause the need? Contribute to the need?
* Come together, share, and combine insight statements. Write them down on flipchart paper.
* Look at your empathy map:
  + Are there any needs that you have not addressed? Examine your map, see if there are any related insights. (If it is helpful to this brainstorming process, you can use a second piece of flipchart paper with the insight statement template and move stickies from your empathy map to visually craft insight statements.)

Example 1. [USER] needs a way to [USER’S NEED]. Unexpectedly, in their world [INSIGHT].

Example 2. [USER] needs [USER’S NEED] because [INSIGHT].

**Step 8. Get feedback.** If possible, it is recommended to share your insights with those experiencing your problem to verify your interpretations.

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| **Persona:** Based on interview with an African American mother, age 33, on her first experience going through the drug court system for a non-violent drug offense. She is currently enrolled in the diversion program. | |
| **Says** | **Thinks** |
| * “How do I get to the treatment center? I don’t have a car.” * “I can’t afford uber or lyft, and they moved the bus.” * “I didn’t even know where to find a treatment program in my neighborhood.” * “The courts are racist.” * “This program is important to me, I really don’t want to go to jail.” * “I was surprised to get into this program. Everyone says is it’s just for whites.” * “I don’t know where to send my kids when I’m at my appointments. They told me they can’t come anymore.” * “My day job is starting to get angry with me. I can’t lose that one.” * “I’m wearing thin.” * *“*I feel like I can’t ask questions. No one is here to help me.” | * I cannot get to my appointments. There is no transit there. * I just can’t make it to my appointments, and work both jobs, and watch my kids. * I don’t know how much longer I can balance all of these expectations. * There is no one available to help her. * The diversion program is not for African American mothers. * I don’t trust the courts, or this program. I feel discriminated against. |
| **Does** | **Feels** |
| * Frequently misses appointments. * Works two jobs. * Cares for two children as single mother. * Avoids contact with case worker and court as much as possible. * Completes minimum requirements for interaction with program staff. | * Enrollment was frustrating. * Relived she won’t have to go to jail. * Worried about meeting the requirements of the program with all of the challenges in access, etc. * Concerned about time away from work, lost wages, and money spent on childcare. * Free of losing her job * Exhaustion, confusion * Distrusts program staff, as she feels that the justice system discriminates against African Americans * Feels alone, with no support |
| **Needs** | **Insights** |
| * A way to get to appointments * Access to services near her home * Ability to get childcare during appointments * Someone to provide them emotional support * To be treated equally within the system * To have job stability | * They moved the bus stop outside of the 99999 zip code. * Kids aren’t allowed at SUD appointments * There are no SUD services in the 99999 * Says this program is important, but minimally participants because of mistrust of system |

**Example Identify Insights Statements:**

This African American mother needs a way to get to her appointments, because unexpectedly in her world they closed the only bus stop in the 99999 zip code.

This African American mother needs to feel like the court systems are fair and just, because unexpectedly in her world there is a history of diversion programs like this one, only benefiting whites in her community.