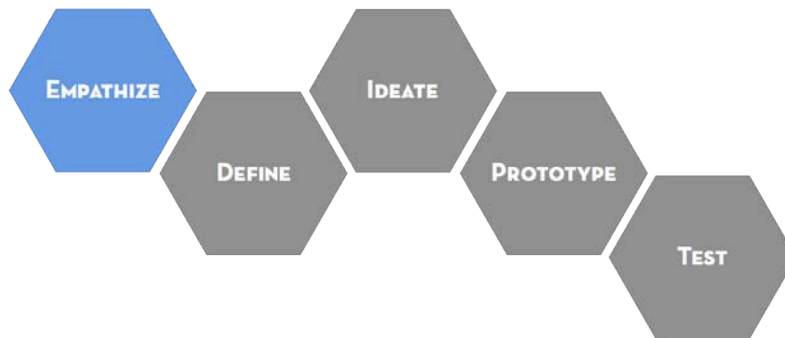


MODE

EMPATHIZE



WHAT is the empathize mode

Empathy is the foundation of a human-centered design process. To empathize, you:

- **Observe.** View users and their behavior in the context of their lives.
- **Engage.** Interact with and interview users through both scheduled and short 'intercept' encounters.
- **Immerse.** Experience what your user experiences.

WHY empathize

As a human-centered designer you need to understand the people for whom you are designing. The problems you are trying to solve are rarely your own—they are those of particular users; in order to design for your users, you must build empathy for who they are and what is important to them.

Watching what people do and how they interact with their environment gives you clues about what they think and feel. It helps you to learn about what they need. By watching people you can capture physical manifestations of their experiences, what they do and say. This will allow you to interpret intangible meaning of those experiences in order to uncover insights. These insights will lead you to the innovative solutions. The best solutions come out of the best insights into human behavior. But learning to recognize those insights is harder than you might think. Why? Because our minds automatically filter out a lot of information in ways we aren't even aware of. We need to learn to see things "with a fresh set of eyes" – tools for empathy, along with a human-centered mindset, is what gives us those new eyes.

Engaging with people directly reveals a tremendous amount about the way they think and the values they hold. Sometimes these thoughts and values are not obvious to the people who hold them. A deep engagement can surprise both the designer and the designee by the unanticipated insights that are revealed. The stories that people tell and the things that people say they do—even if they are different from what they actually do—are strong indicators of their deeply held beliefs about the way the world is. Good designs are built on a solid understanding of these kinds of beliefs and values. Engage to:

- Uncover needs that people have which they may or may not be aware of
- Guide innovation efforts
- Identify the right users to design for
- Discover the emotions that guide behaviors

In addition to speaking with and observing your users, you need to have personal experience in the design space yourself. Find (or create if necessary) experiences to immerse yourself to better understand the situation that your users are in, and for which you are designing.