

# Designing with Empathy



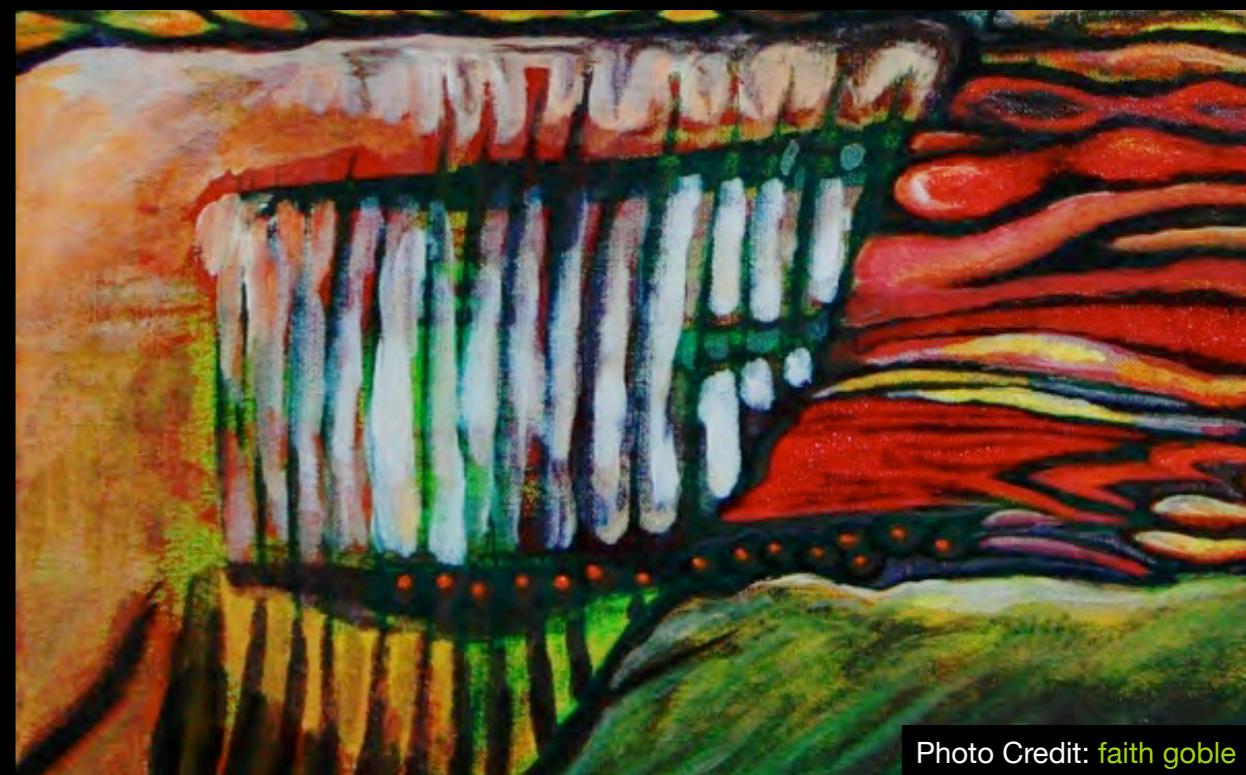
Aaron Gustafson  
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[adaptivewebdesign.info](http://adaptivewebdesign.info)



# Designing with Empathy



Design ≠ Art





Art serves the Artist

**“I’ve been amazed at how often those outside the discipline of design assume that what designers do is decoration—likely because so much bad design simply is decoration. Good design isn’t. Good design is problem solving.”**

**– Jeffrey Veen**



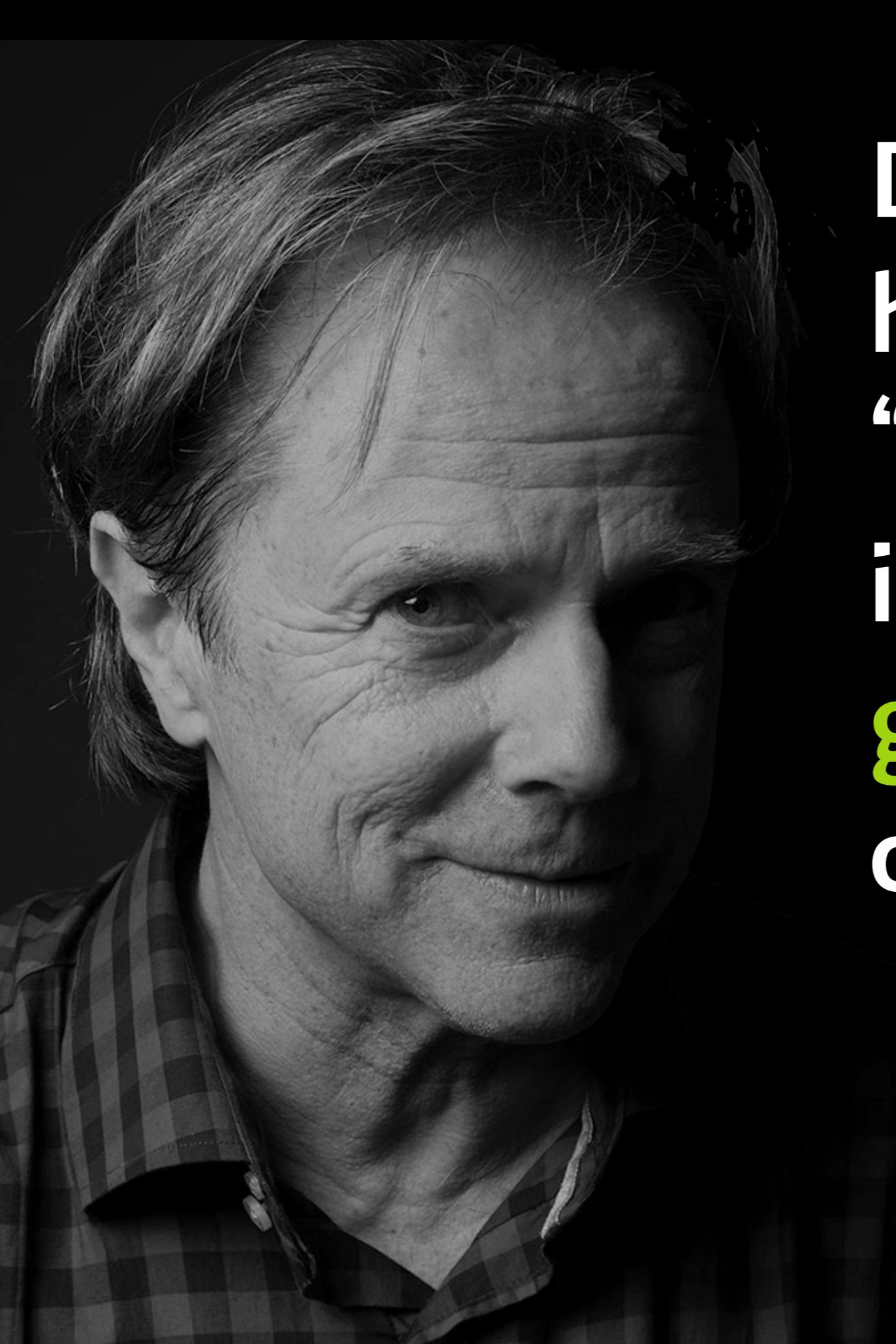
# de-sign

/də'zīn/

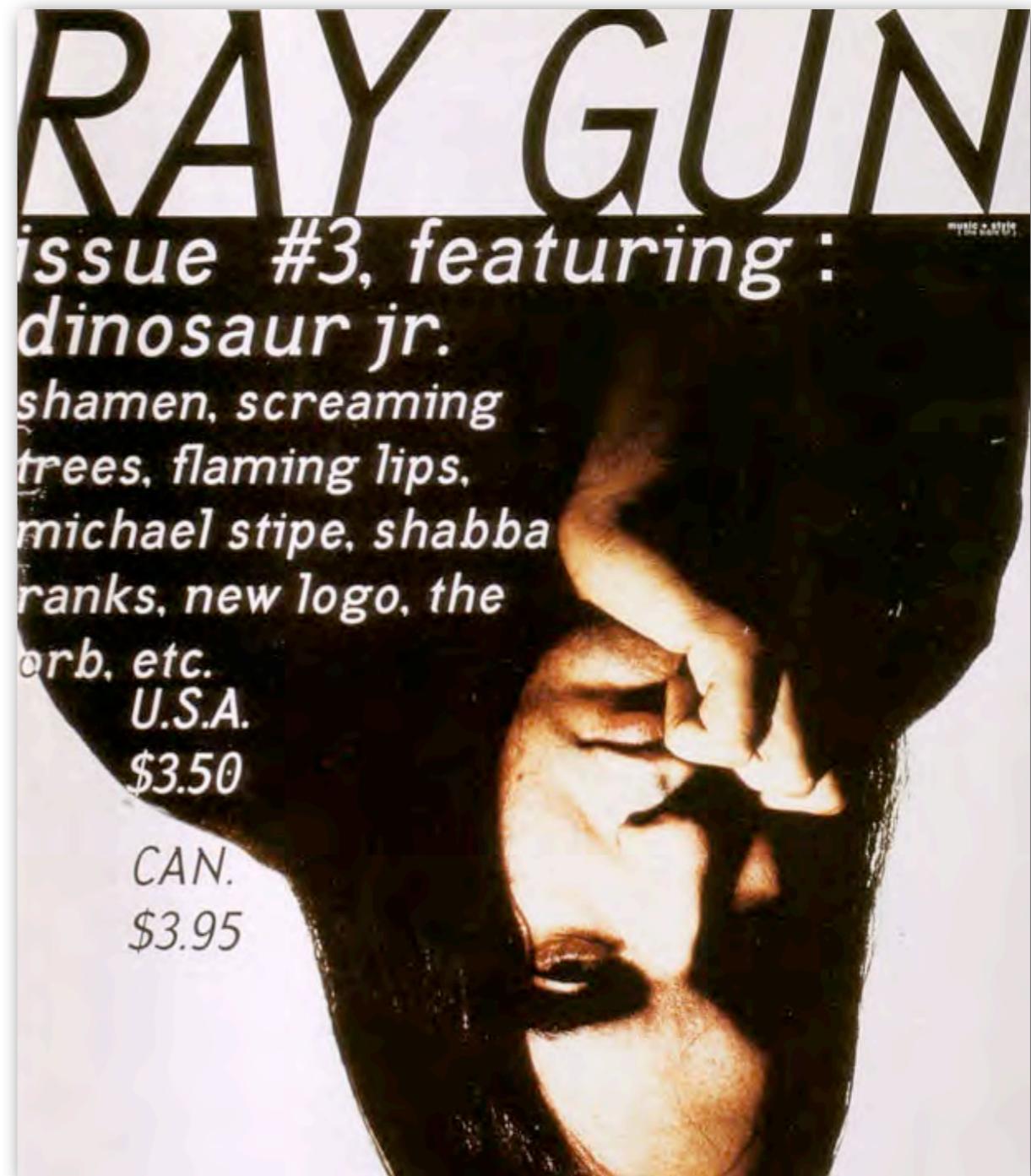
To devise for a specific function or end

Classical: To indicate

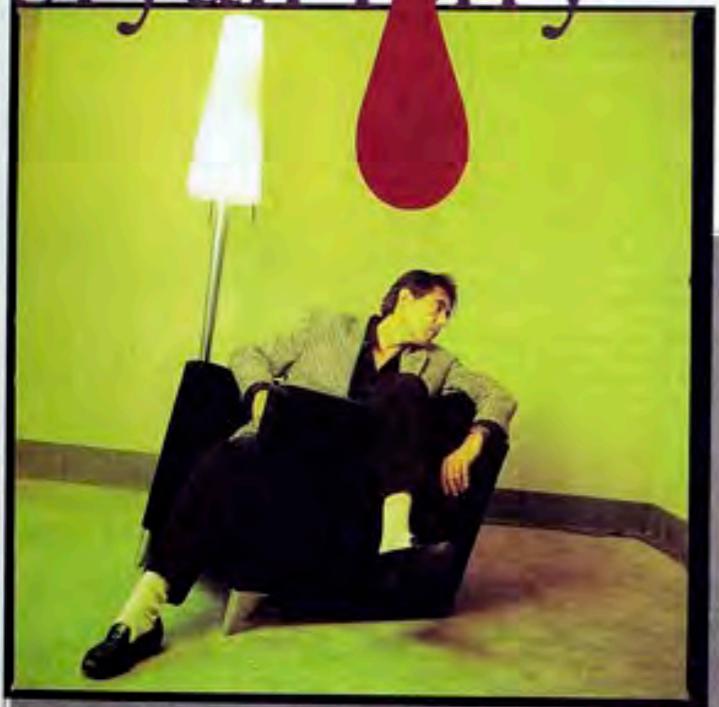
Medieval Latin: *designare*, to mark out

A black and white close-up photograph of David Carson's face. He has long, light-colored hair and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. His skin shows signs of age, including wrinkles and a prominent brow.

David Carson  
has been called  
“the most  
influential  
**graphic designer**  
of our times”



bryant + terry

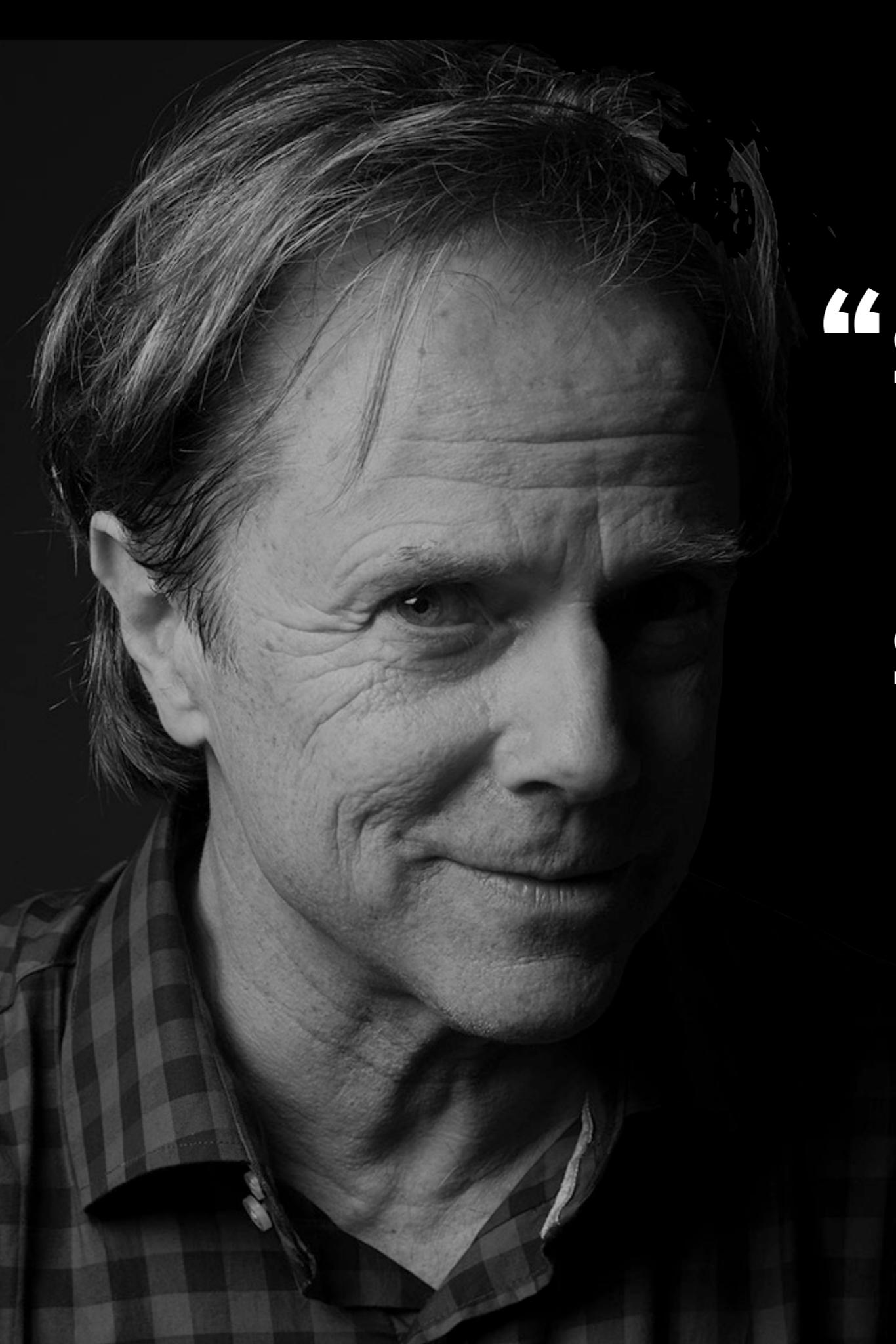


photos: Peter Morello; stylist: Jill Spectre



**It was Art**

**It was Ego**

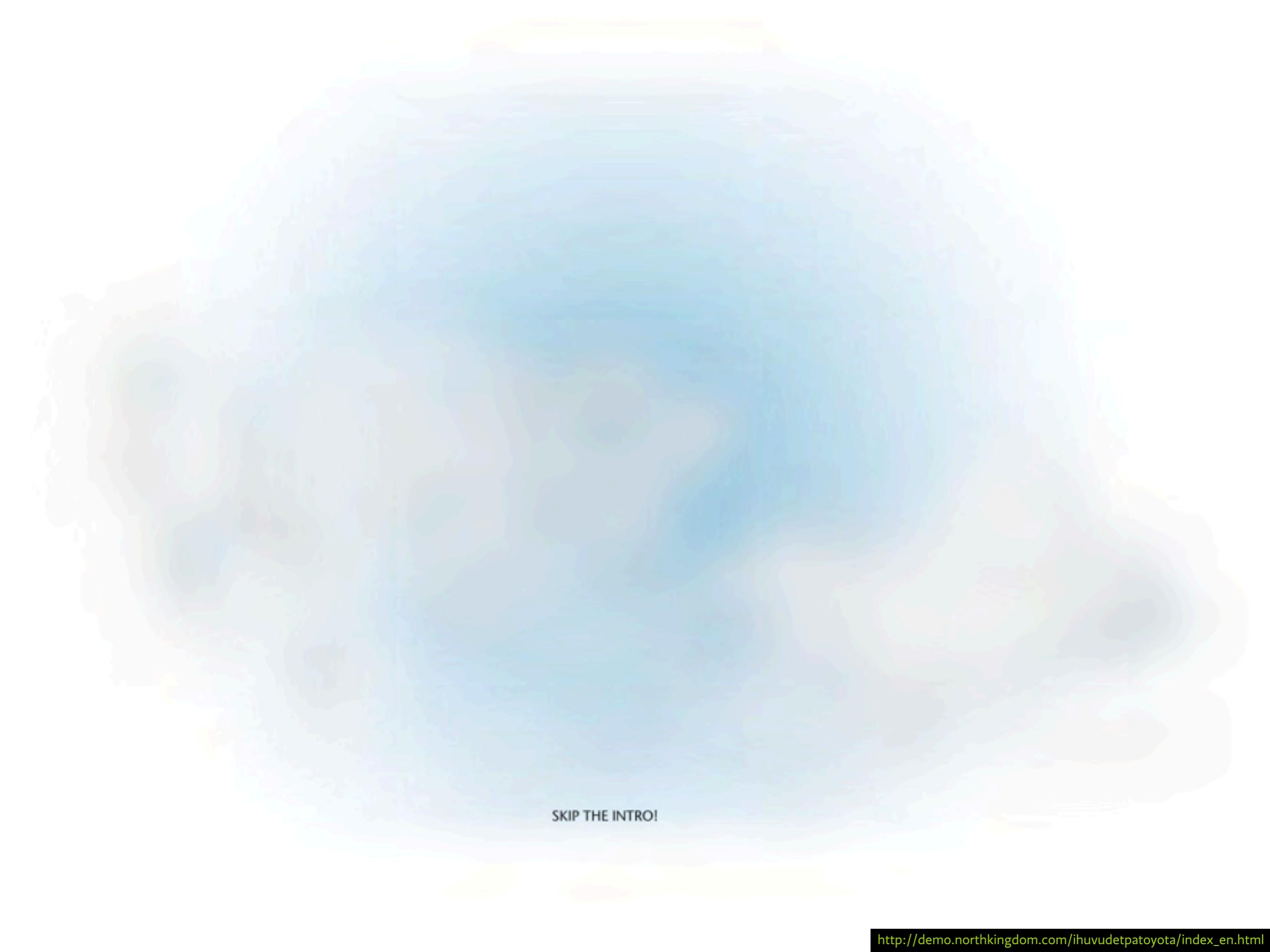
A black and white close-up photograph of a man's face. He has long, dark hair that is slightly messy. His eyes are blue and have a thoughtful, somewhat weary expression. He is wearing a plaid shirt. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and shadows.

**“subjective,  
personal, and  
self-indulgent”**



“Your ego is a  
bad designer.”

– Christopher Butler



SKIP THE INTRO!



TOYOTA

#04 #05 #07 #18 #25 #33 #40 #49 #51 #61 #74 #86 #92 #96 #114 #0



TOYOTA

#04 #05 #07 #18 #25 #33 #40 #49 #51 #61 #74 #86 #92 #96 #114 #120

Easy Flat System

# YESHIVAH OF FLATBUSH

## הישיבה דפלטבוש



X

Yom HaShoah Community  
Program- featuring Witness  
Theater Sunday April 7  
7:00pm

MENU



quick news: 3/06/2013 - 1st Annual Engineering Symposium at JBHS! [Read More](#)





quick news: 4/15/2013 8:00 PM - Yom Ha'atzmaut Community Program Monday April 15, 2013





Just because you can  
**doesn't** mean you should



# Design to



communicate  
not alienate



Design  
isn't about  
showing off

**Design = Creativity  
for Communication**

# Designing with Empathy

# em·pa·thy

/'em-pə-thē/

From the Greek *empathia* meaning  
“state of emotion”

# **em·pa·thy**

**/'em-pə-thē/**

**The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another ... without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner**

A close-up photograph of a large, white horse with dark spots, identified as Charlie. The horse is standing in a dense forest with tall, thin trees. In the background, a wooden fence and some equipment are visible on a path.

Meet  
Charlie

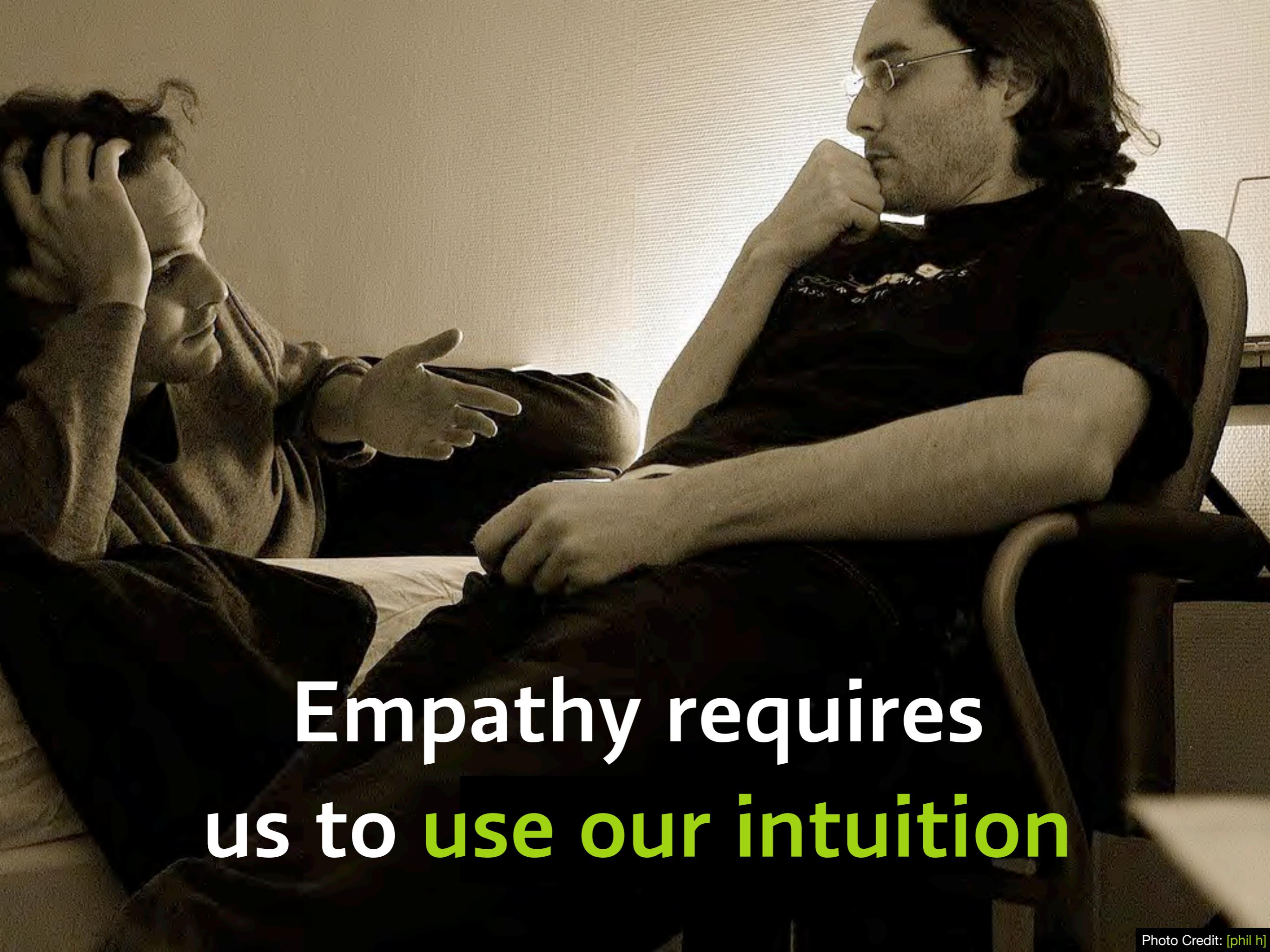
and  
**Jack**



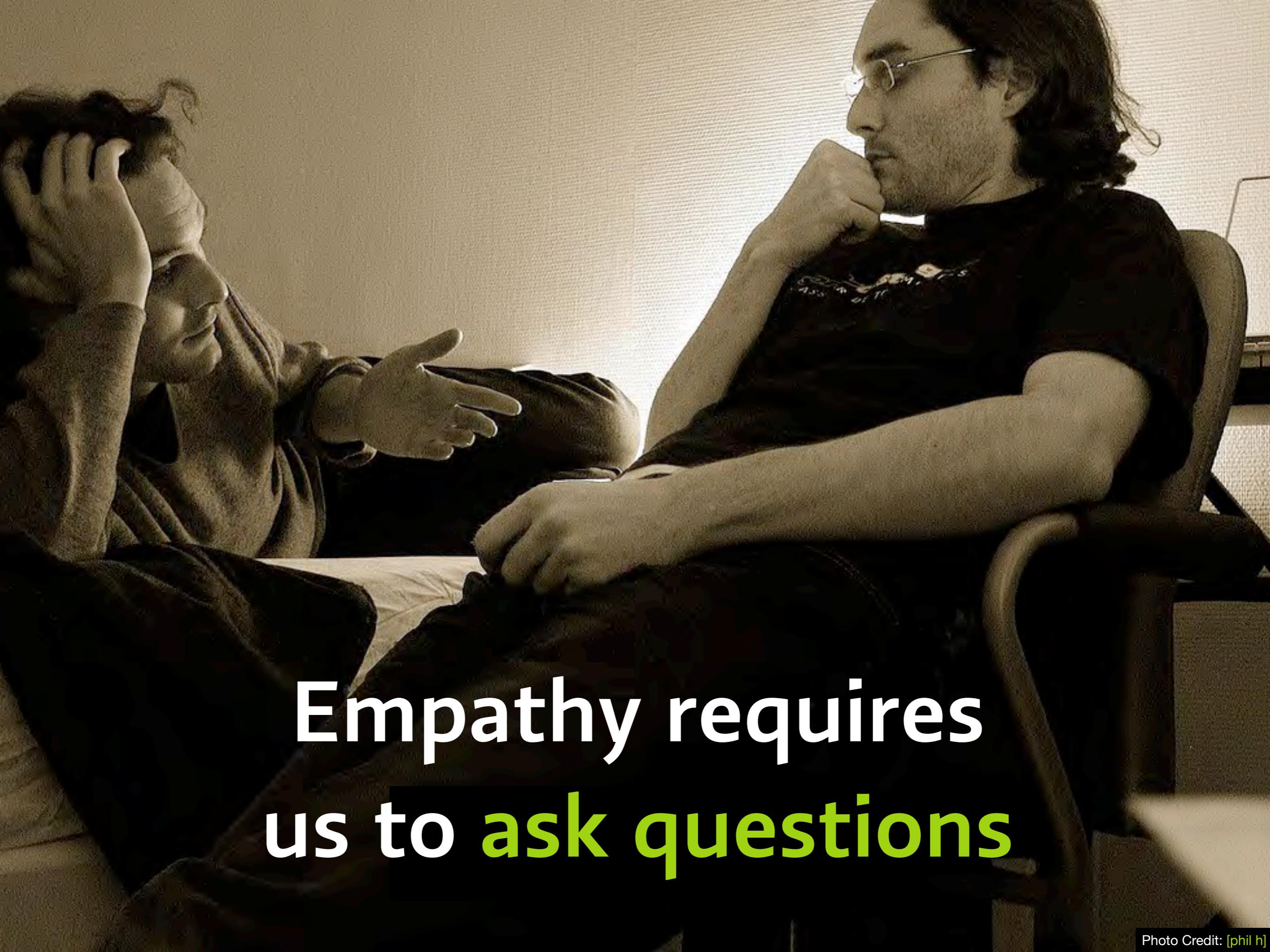


A photograph of a man with glasses and a young child. The man is seated in a chair, looking down and to the side with a thoughtful expression, his hand resting near his chin. A young child is seated on his lap, facing the camera with their hands extended forward. The lighting is warm and focused on the interaction between the two.

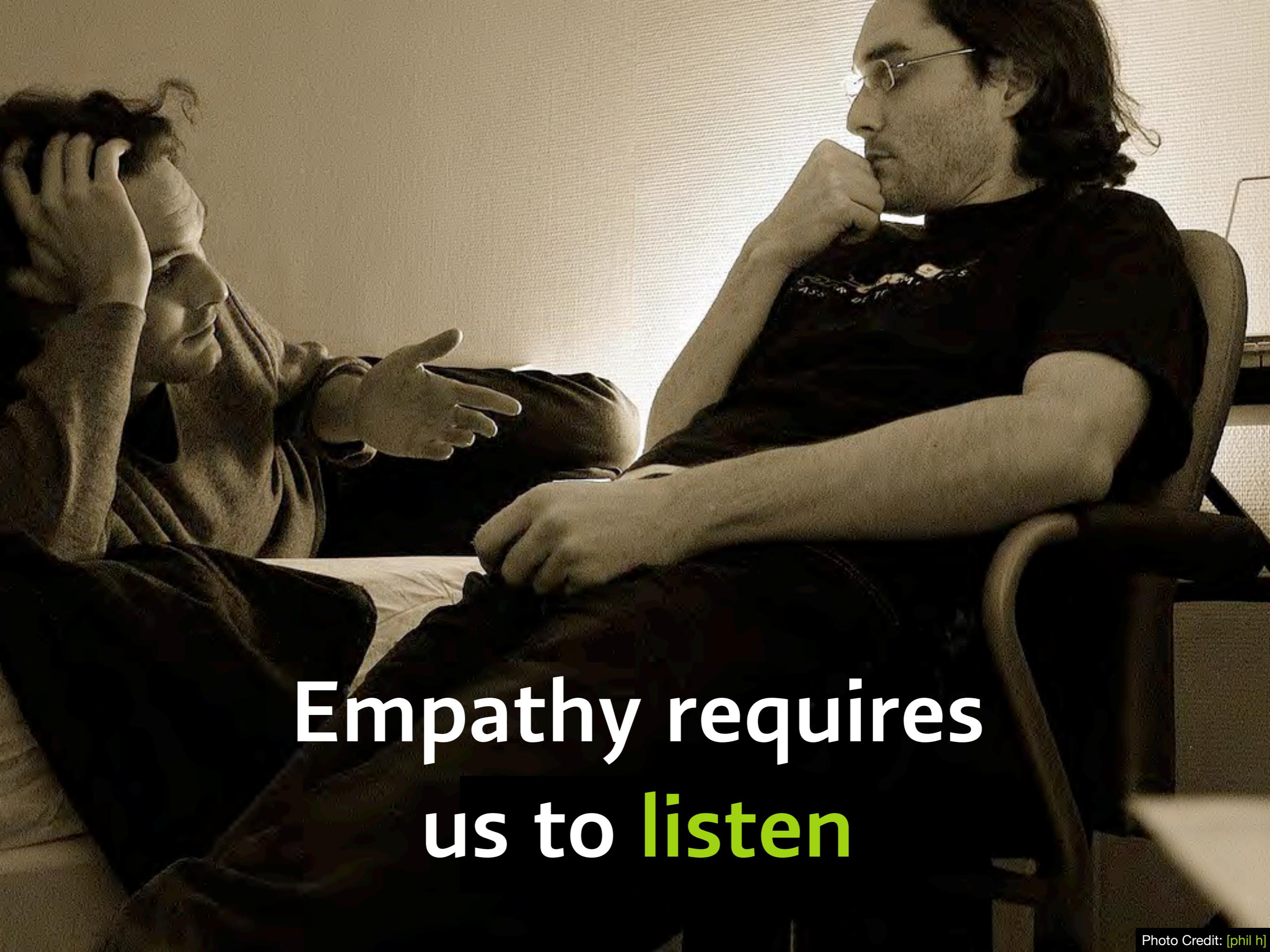
Empathy requires  
us to observe



Empathy requires  
us to use our intuition



Empathy requires  
us to ask questions

A photograph of a man and a woman in a dimly lit room. The man, wearing glasses and a dark t-shirt, is seated in a chair, looking down and to his left with a thoughtful expression, his hand near his chin. The woman, wearing a light-colored top, is seated across from him, gesturing with her hands as if speaking. The lighting is dramatic, casting deep shadows.

Empathy requires  
us to listen

A man with glasses and a dark t-shirt is sitting in a chair, holding a small child's hand. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt and has their head resting on the man's shoulder. The man is looking down at the child with a thoughtful expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

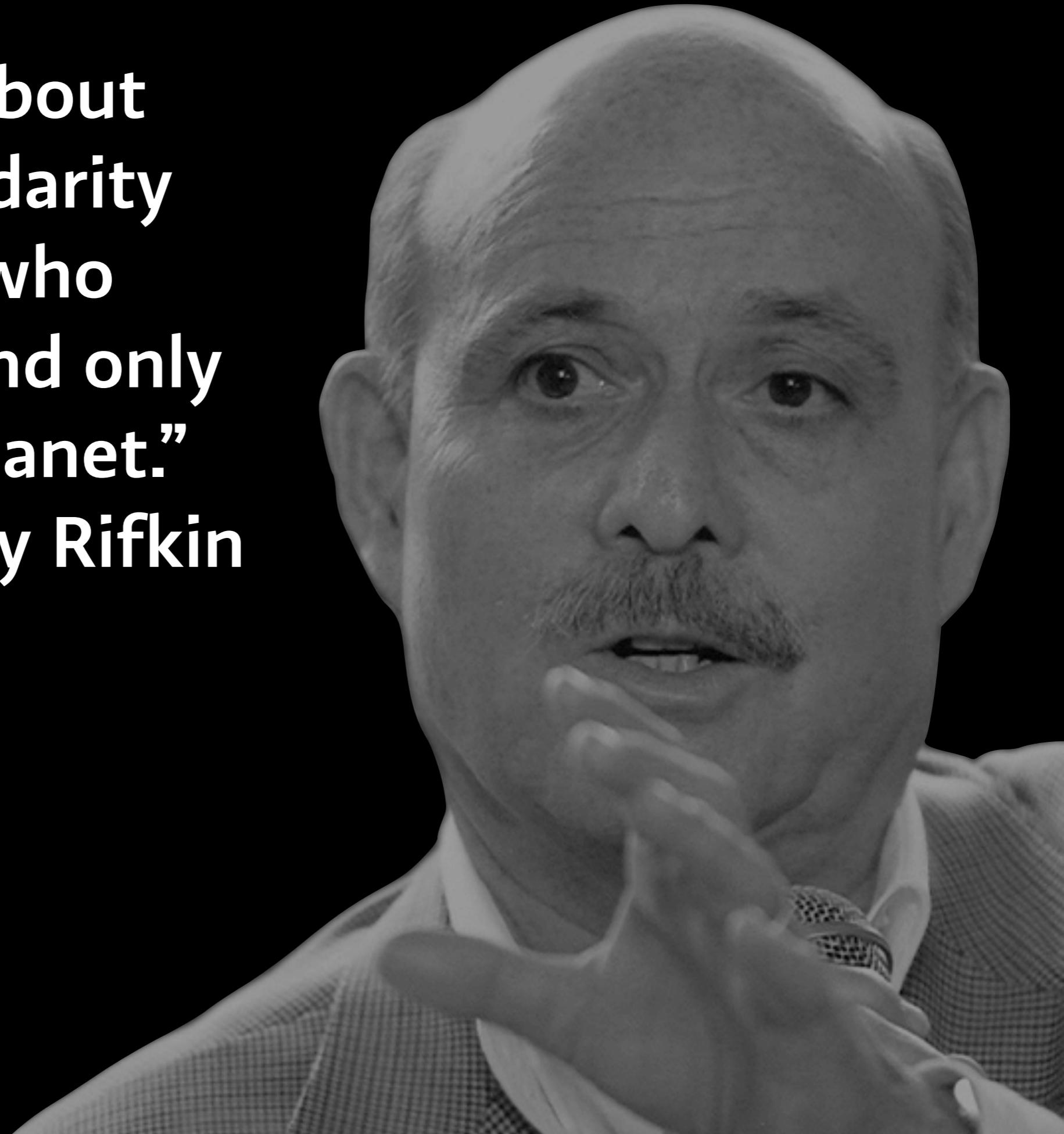
Empathy requires  
us to be patient

# Perspective is everything



**“Empathy is about  
showing solidarity  
with others who  
have a one and only  
life on this planet.”**

**– Jeremy Rifkin**





Solidarity requires  
communication

# Global Community



## Nation States



## Religious Groups



## Tribes



Global response  
within 3 hours

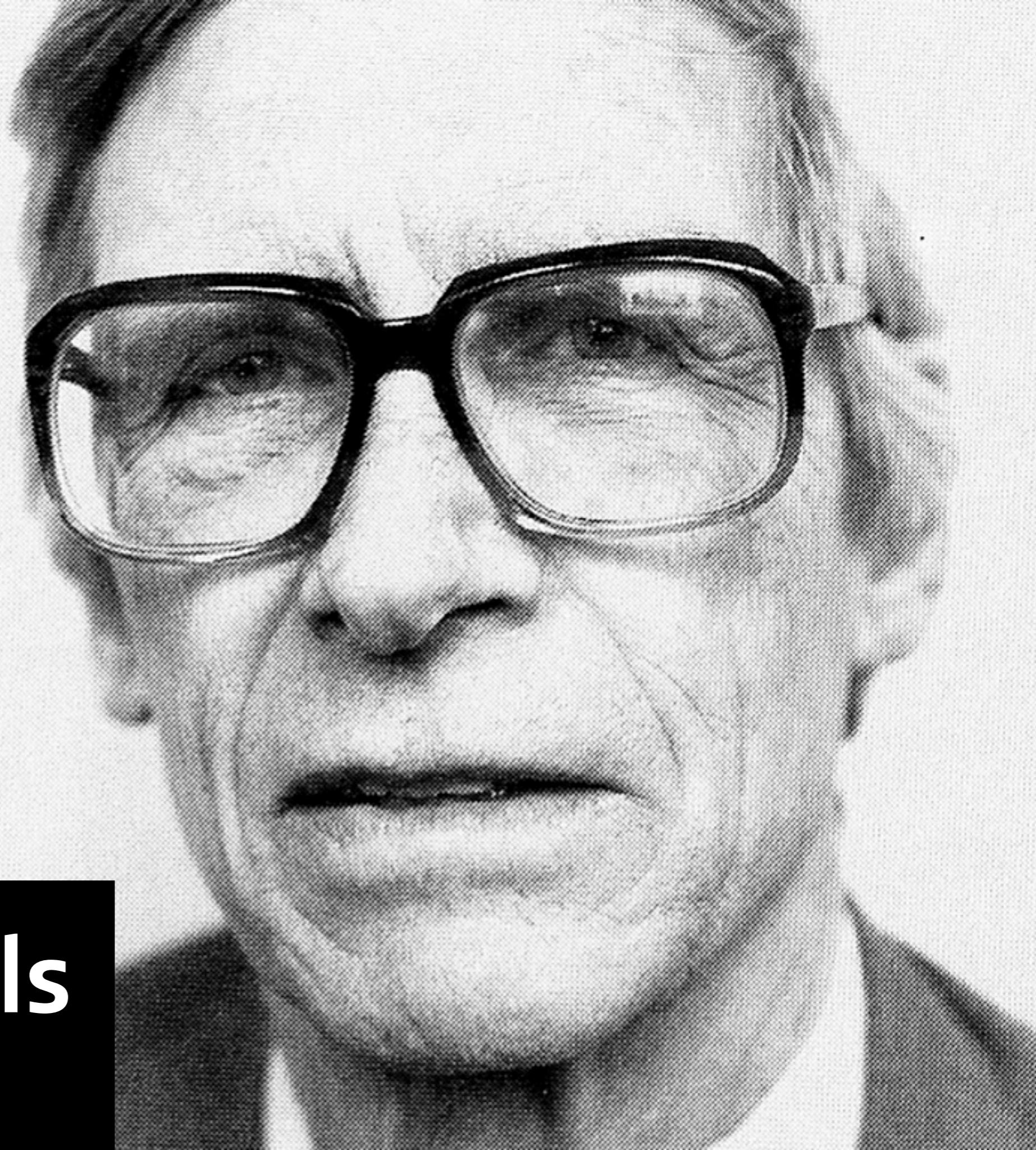
# **em·pa·thy**

*/'em-pə-thē/*

**The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another ... without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner**

**Also:** the capacity for this

**John Rawls**  
1921-2002



# Selfishness is a **survival instinct**



We are able to empathize by  
seeing ourselves  
in others.





**Aw, dude.**



**That SUCKS.**

# Personas

# foster empathy



“Tell me more! I need Internet at home and in my classroom. So, it’s got to work. When I do have trouble, though, I want to be able to fix it quickly on my own.”

My school continuously strives to be a premier educational institution in the state of Georgia. Technology is now a part of our everyday lives, so I use technology and the Internet in my classroom. I use it for personal projects, but also for classroom projects with all of my students. When in a classroom with 30 middle school kids, I don’t have time to call the DSL provider if I have trouble with the connection. So, I

## Teach Me **TINA** LEARNING FOCUSED Teacher

title:  
**Science Teacher**

company name:  
**Crabapple Middle School**

industry:  
**Education**

location:  
**Roswell, Georgia**

description:  
Crabapple Middle School has enjoyed twenty plus years of excellence in education since its opening in 1983. In 1988, Crabapple Middle became Fulton County's first National School of Excellence and a Georgia School of Excellence. In 2003, Crabapple Middle was recognized as one of the first Georgia Lighthouse School to Watch for excellence in middle level education.



**EMPLOYMENT**  
» Medium sized middle school - Science teacher - Southeastern United States

**TECH SAVVY**  
» Knows some computer jargon, but may need further explanations for some terms and concepts

**COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES**  
» Likes seeing connection speed and other detailed information pertaining to her DSL connection

Credit: Kevin O'Connor

They also  
frequently  
devolve  
into another  
name for  
**“the user”**



A photograph of a stack of terracotta pots leaning against a wooden garden bench. The pots are stacked in a spiral-like pattern, with some moss growing on them. The bench is made of light-colored wood and is situated on a brick-paved area. In the background, there are green bushes and purple flowers.

Personas  
need to  
be real.

They need  
to be  
human.

User Scenarios =  
situational empathy

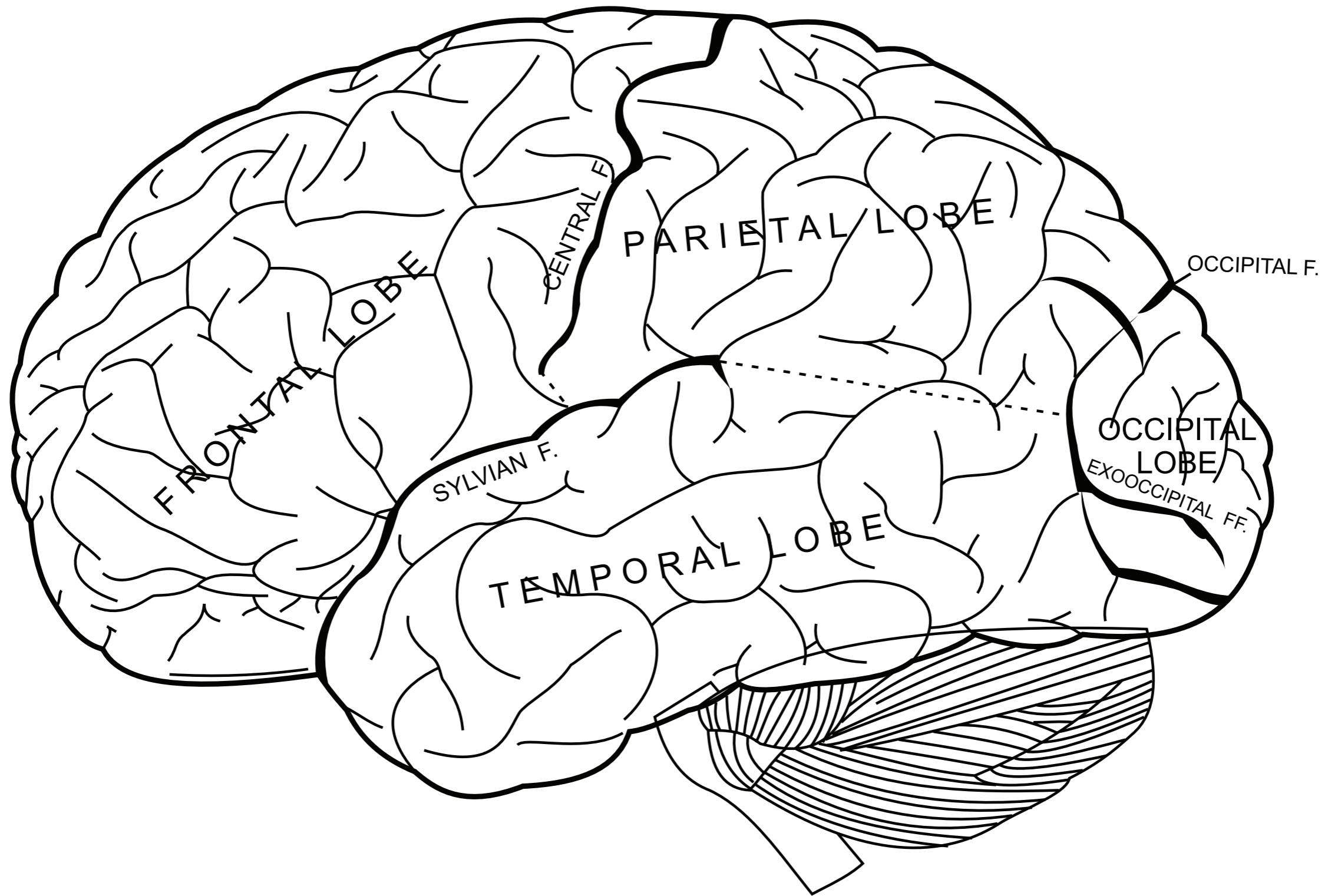


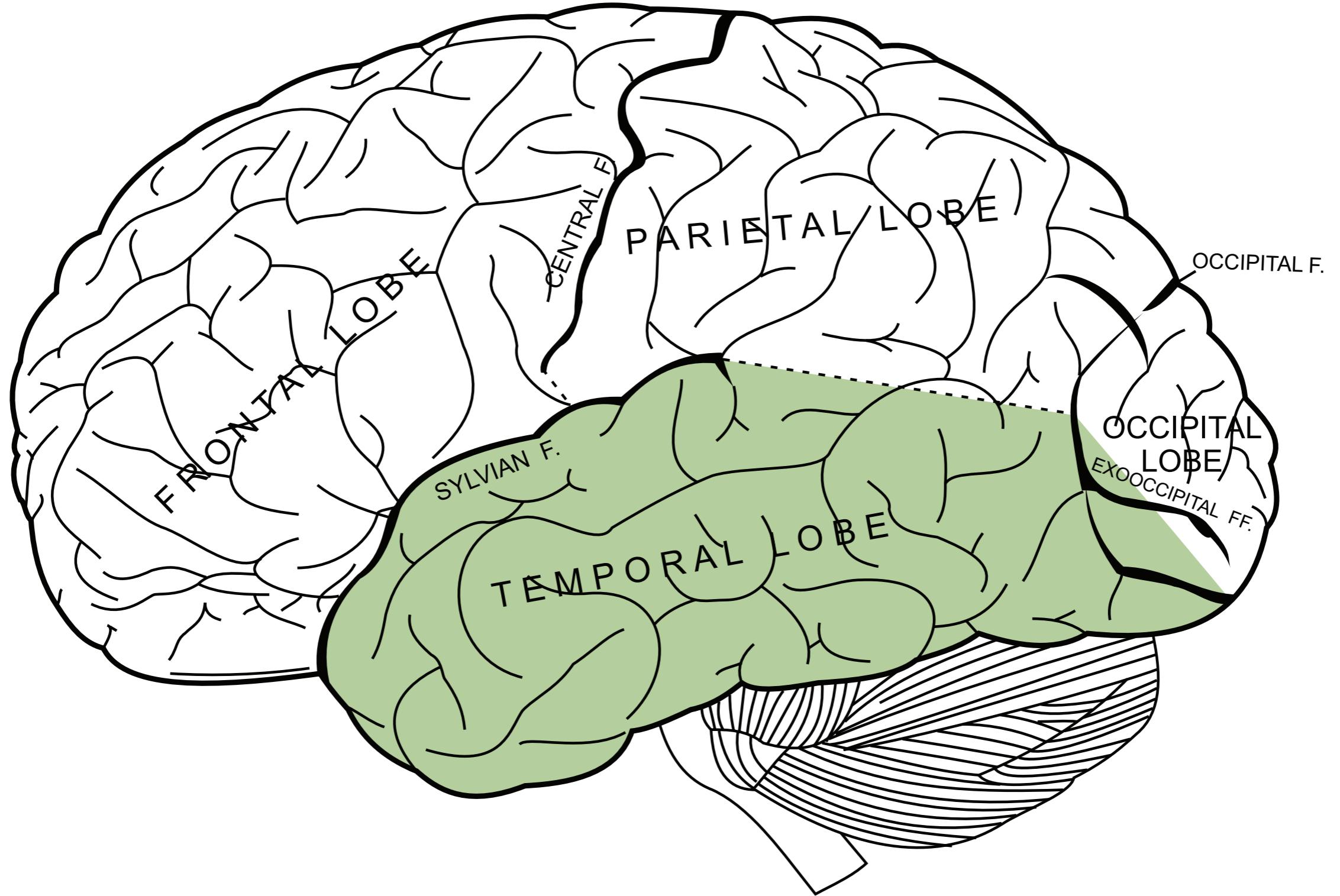
User Scenarios =  
situational empathy

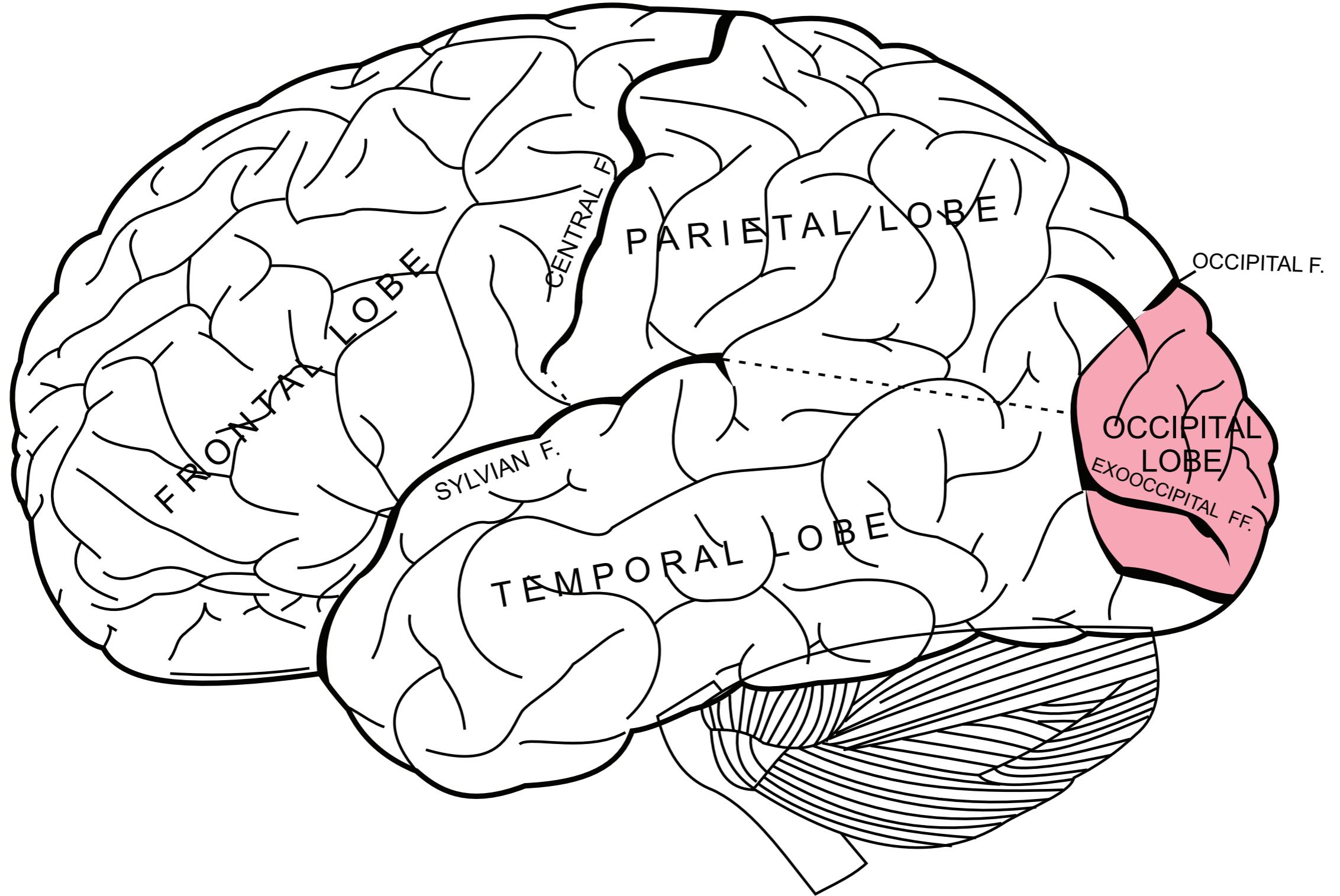


A photograph showing three individuals from behind, looking down at a desk. They appear to be working together on a project, possibly related to design or problem-solving. One person in the center is wearing glasses and holding a pencil. A keyboard and a computer mouse are visible on the desk.

Design is  
problem  
solving







# Call out the relevant facts:

Bob is a mechanic

He is left- handed

He wants to look up parts info (and possibly order a replacement part) while under a car



We only need enough detail  
to be able to put ourselves in  
his shoes.



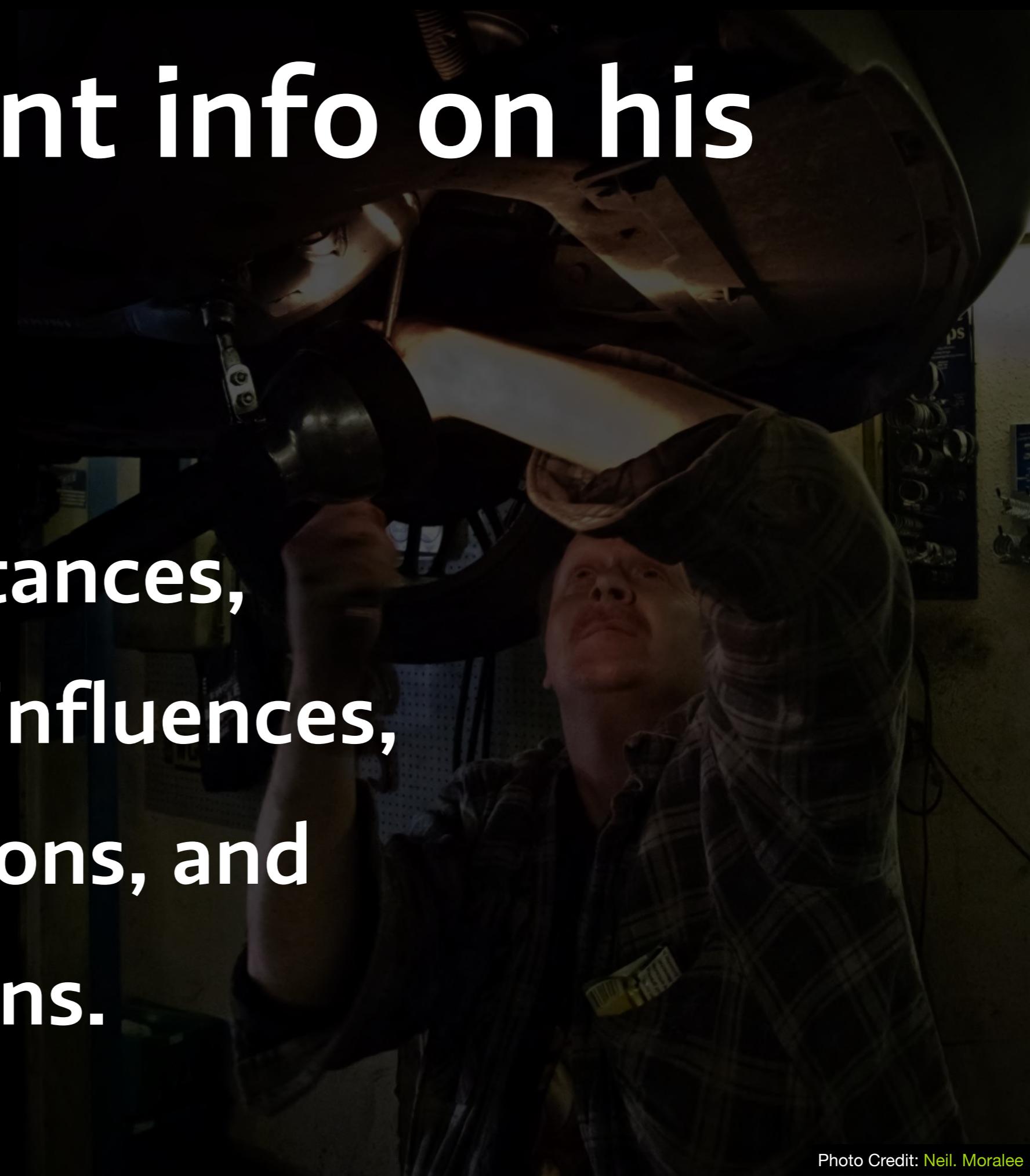
We only need **enough detail**  
to be able to put ourselves in  
his shoes.

Who cares  
about his  
macchiato  
addiction?



# We want info on his

- goals,
- needs,
- circumstances,
- outside influences,
- distractions, and
- limitations.



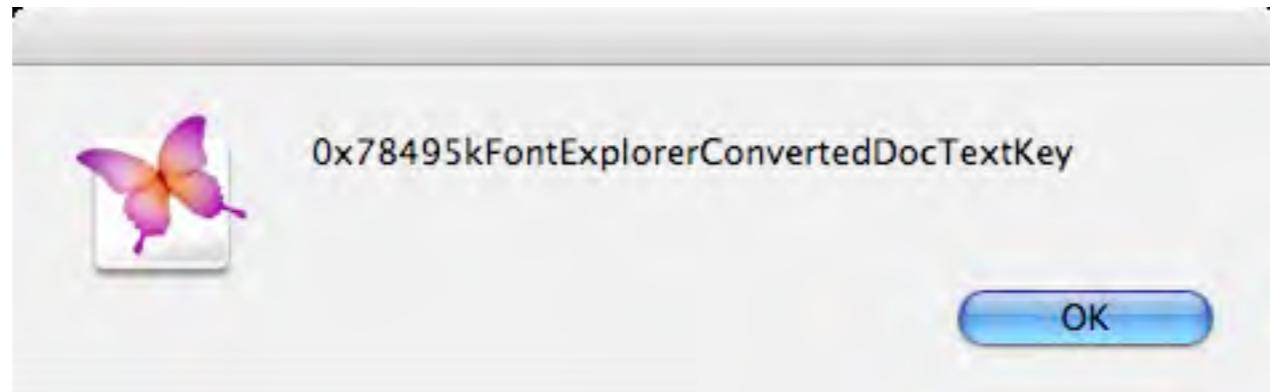
User scenarios help us  
empathize in a **productive** way





# Set a **performance budget**





Author appropriate content

# Consider physical limitations





Facilitate **satisfaction**

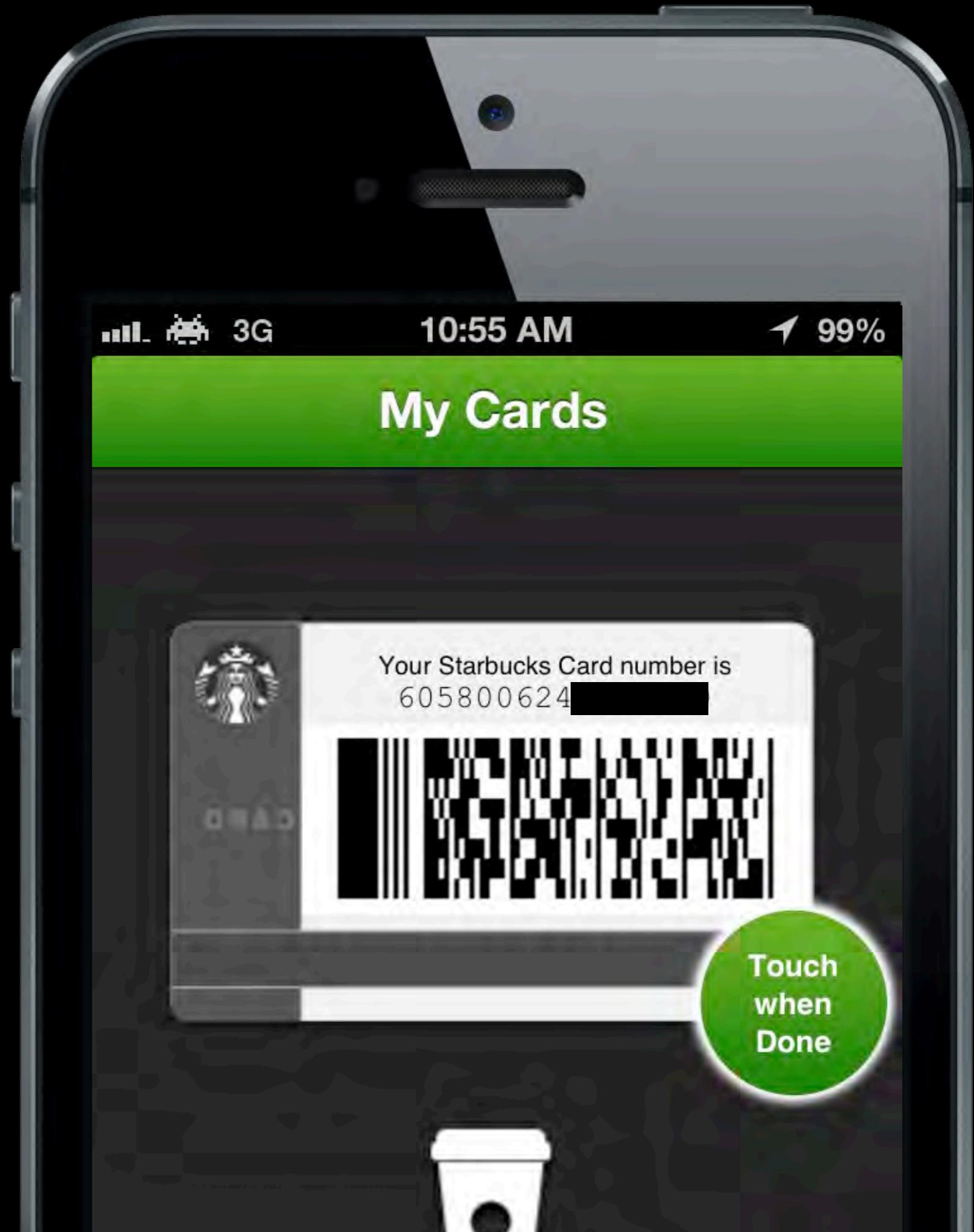
# Don't create unnecessary barriers



Don't force  
your agenda  
on your  
customers



# Consider indirect users



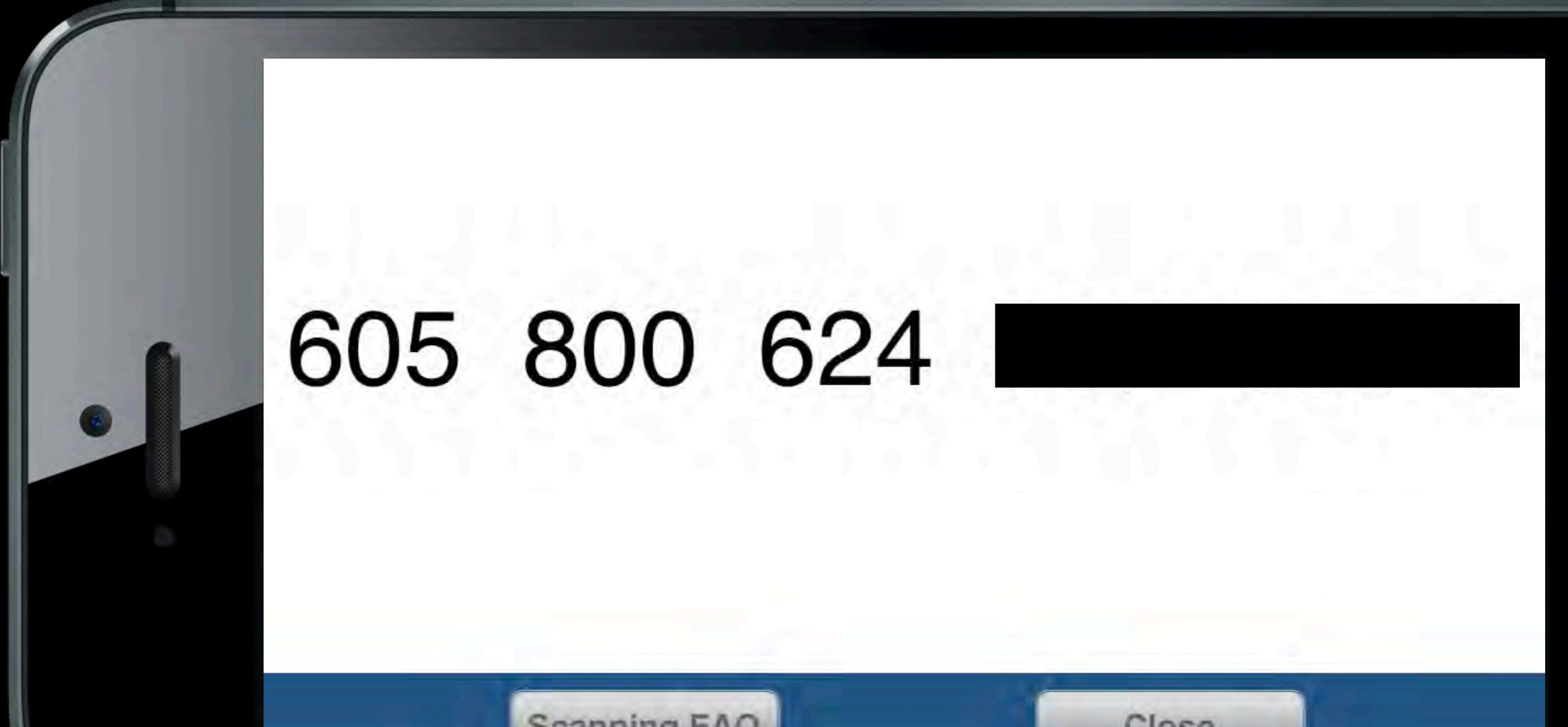
# Consider indirect users



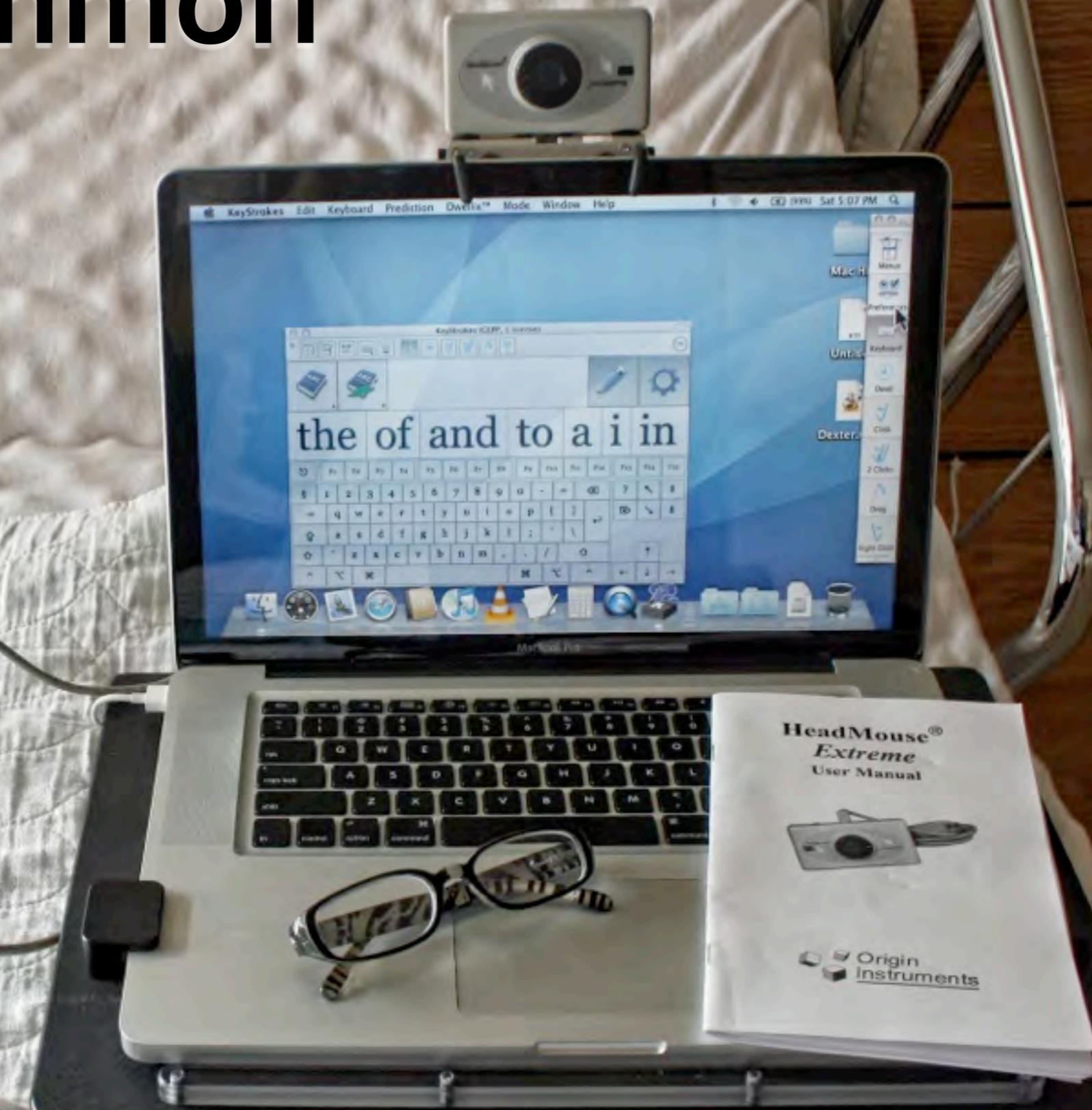
# Consider indirect users



605 800 624 [REDACTED]

A dark smartphone is shown from a side-on perspective, its screen displaying a white background with faint, illegible text and graphics. A large black rectangular redaction box covers the right portion of the screen where the phone number would be.

# Support common assistive technology



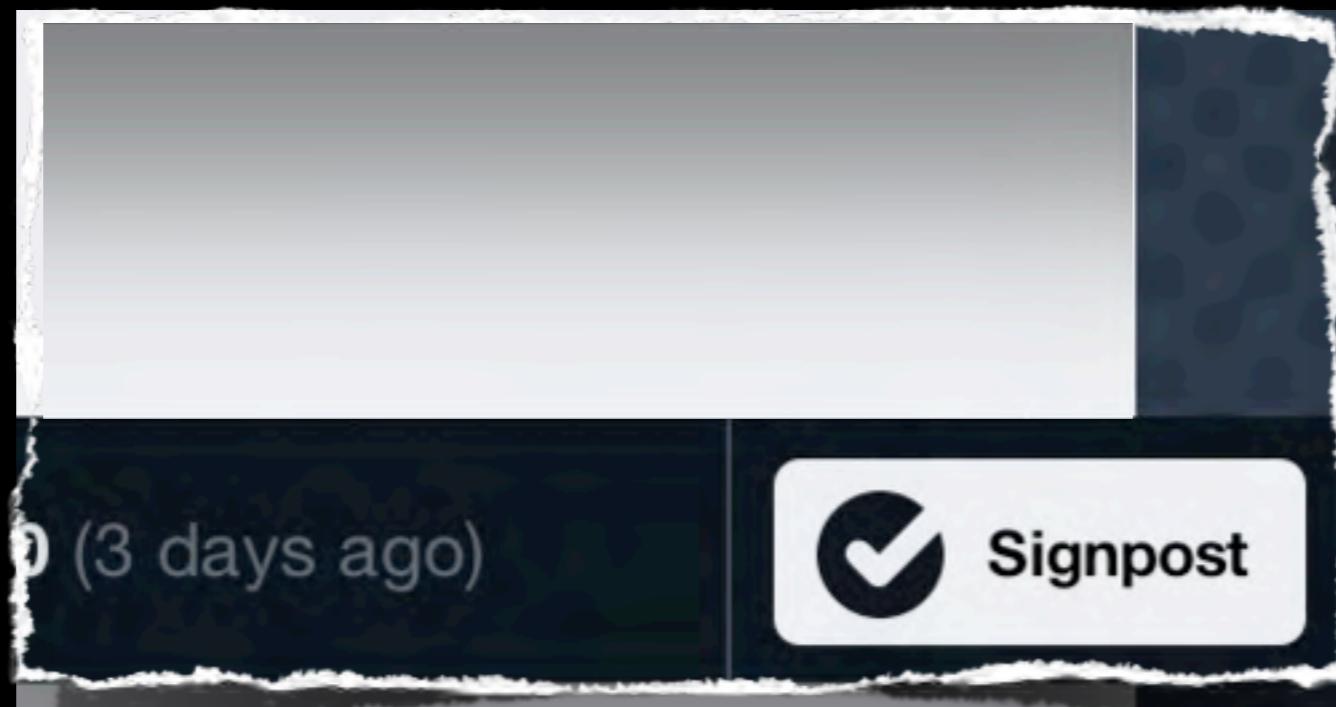
Help users learn to  
accomplish complex  
tasks and

**reward**

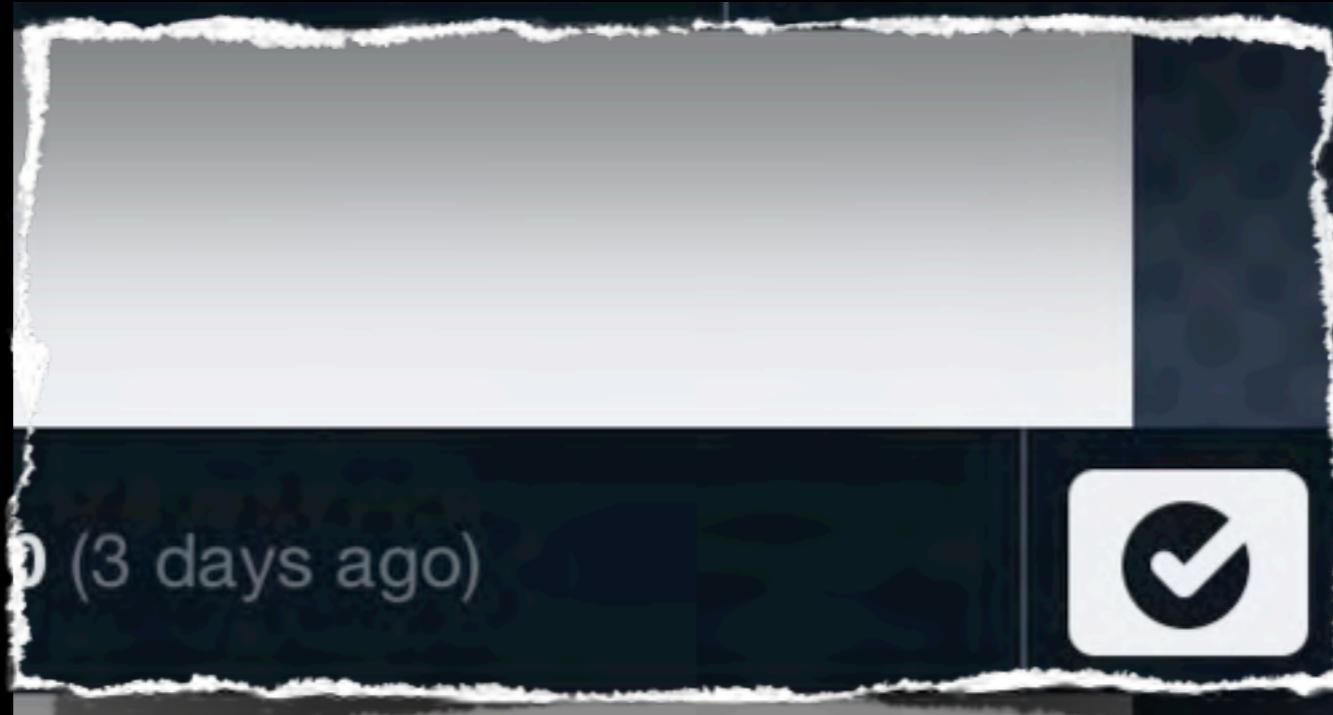
them for  
doing so.



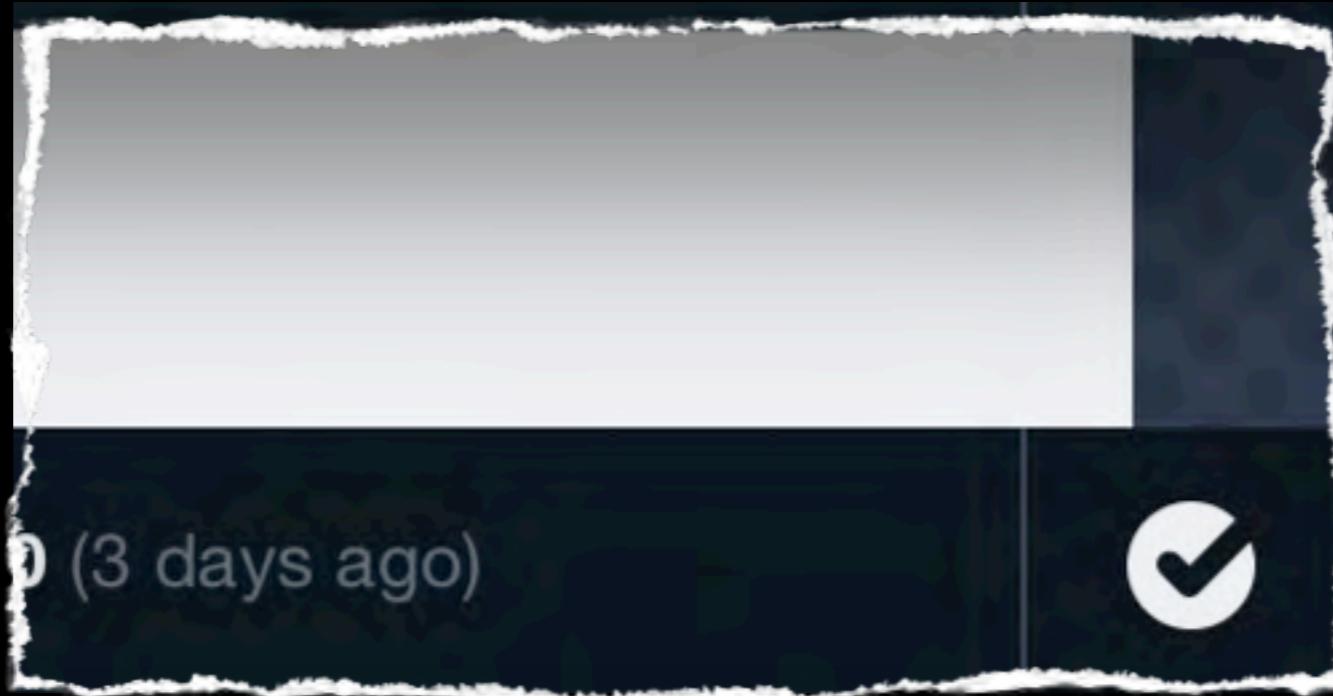
# Progressive Reduction



# Progressive Reduction



# Progressive Reduction



Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find harmful.

-Buddhism

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

-Christianity

# The Golden Rule

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

-Islam

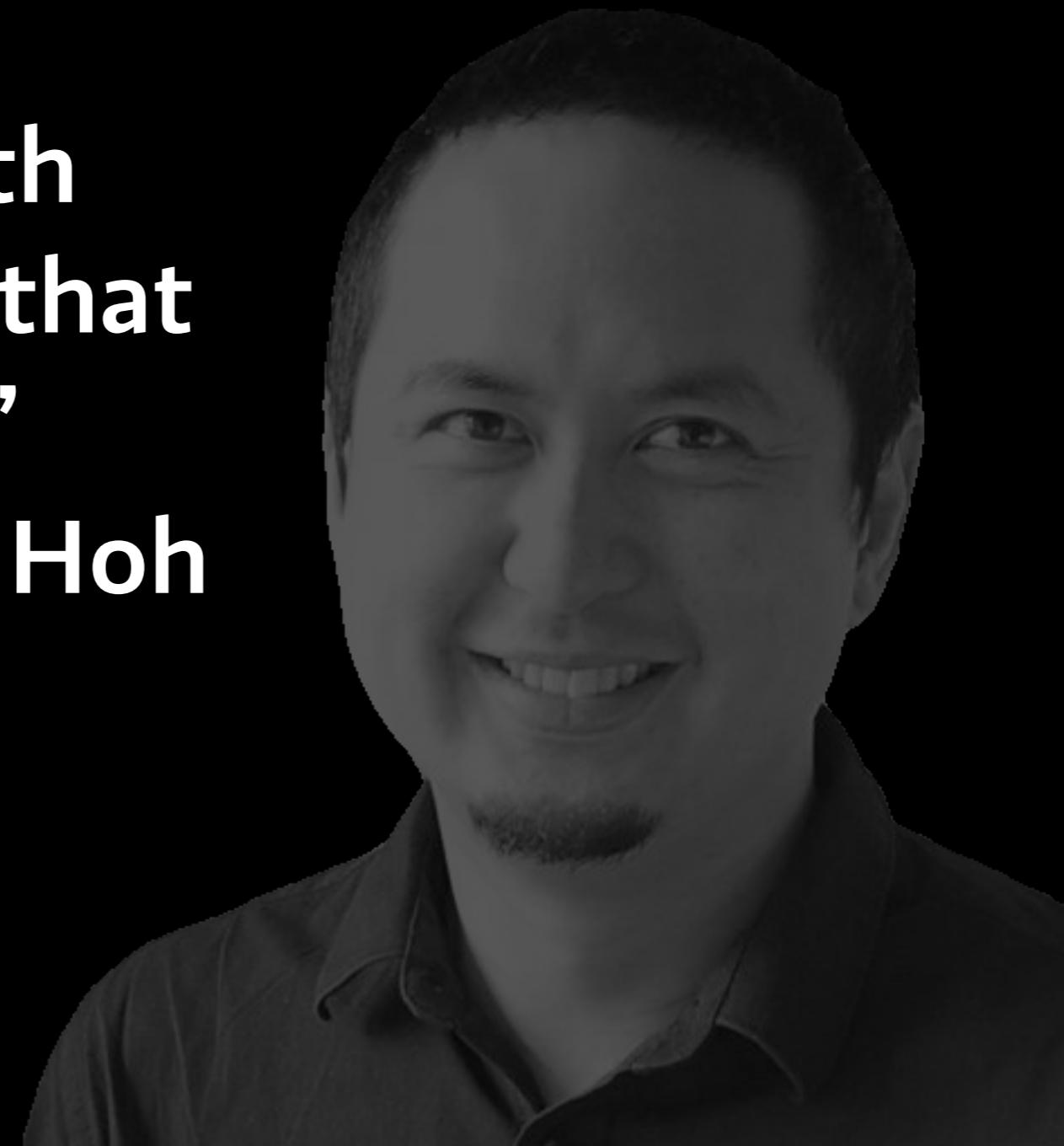
What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the entire law; all the rest is commentary.

-Judaism



**“[Progressive enhancement]  
keeps the design open to  
the possibilities of sexiness  
in opportune contexts,  
rather than starting with  
the ‘whole’ experience that  
must be compromised.”**

**– Ben Hoh**



# Egalitarianism

Equality of opportunity,  
not equality of outcome

# Designing with Empathy

Thank you

# Designing with Empathy

by Aaron Gustafson  
@AaronGustafson

Further reading:

<http://readlists.com/820c6ff1>  
<http://adaptivewebdesign.info>  
<http://blog.easy-designs.net>

Slides available at  
<http://slideshare.net/AaronGustafson>

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