**Activity- Empathy Mapping**

**(Understanding How Change Impacts a User)**

**Objective:**

To help participants **understand and empathize with how users experience change** — emotionally, mentally, and behaviorally.  
The activity aims to identify how a new process, system, or product might **affect users’ thoughts, feelings, actions, and pain points**, thereby informing better change strategies or design decisions.

**Duration:**

60 – 90 minutes

**Materials Required:**

* Whiteboard or chart paper (Empathy Map template)
* Sticky notes (multiple colors)
* Markers or pens
* Sample “change scenario” handouts (organization, product, or process change)
* Tape (if maps are displayed on walls)

**Group Size:**

4–6 participants per group

**Pre-requisites:**

* Basic understanding of **Design Thinking** and its *Empathize* phase.
* Awareness of organizational or user change scenarios (e.g., system upgrade, new policy, new technology, workflow shift).

**Activity Overview:**

In this activity, participants will **step into the user’s shoes** to explore how a specific change (such as introducing a new system or process) influences the user’s **thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and needs**.  
The **Empathy Map** serves as a visual tool to capture the user’s experience and uncover **hidden fears, motivations, and resistance to change**.

**Step-by-Step Instructions:**

**Step 1: Introduction to Empathy Mapping (10 minutes)**

* Facilitator introduces the concept of **Empathy Mapping** as a Design Thinking tool.
* Explain the four main quadrants:
  1. **Says** – What the user says about the change.
  2. **Thinks** – What the user is thinking but might not express.
  3. **Does** – Observable behaviors during the change process.
  4. **Feels** – Emotions and attitudes related to the change.

*(Optional additional quadrants: “Pains” – struggles faced, “Gains” – benefits or positive outcomes.)*

**Step 2: Present the Change Scenario (10 minutes)**

Provide each group with a **specific change scenario**.  
Examples:

* A company introduces a new digital workflow replacing paper-based processes.
* A university adopts an AI-based learning management system.
* A hospital transitions from manual records to an electronic health record system.

Each team is assigned one scenario or chooses one relevant to their context.

**Step 3: Identify the User Persona (5 minutes)**

Ask each team to define **a specific user** affected by the change.  
Examples:

* An employee with limited technical skills.
* A student struggling to adapt to online learning.
* A nurse adapting to a new patient record system.

Encourage participants to give the user a name, role, and short background.

**Step 4: Create the Empathy Map (30 minutes)**

Each team draws an empathy map or uses a printed template.  
They fill in each section with insights related to **how the change impacts the user**.

**Says:**

* What does the user express about the change?
* Example: “This new system takes too long to load.”

**Thinks:**

* What thoughts or concerns might they have but not say aloud?
* Example: “I’m afraid I might make mistakes with this new process.”

**Does:**

* What observable actions or coping behaviors are visible?
* Example: Avoids using the new tool or relies on old methods.

**Feels:**

* What emotions does the user experience?
* Example: Anxious, frustrated, uncertain, curious, or excited.

**Pains (optional):**

* What challenges does the user face during the change?

**Gains (optional):**

* What benefits does the user expect or experience after adapting?

Encourage participants to use sticky notes for each insight so they can rearrange and cluster similar ideas.

**Step 5: Analyze and Discuss Findings (15 minutes)**

Each team presents their empathy map to the rest of the group.  
Facilitator leads discussion with guiding questions:

* What emotional patterns did you notice?
* What aspects of change cause the most stress or resistance?
* What could make the transition easier for the user?
* How can empathy-driven insights improve the change strategy?

**Step 6: Reflect and Summarize Insights (10–15 minutes)**

* Teams summarize **3–5 key insights** about how change impacts their user.
* Identify at least **two design or communication strategies** to ease user transition (e.g., better onboarding, clear communication, additional training, user involvement).
* Facilitator connects the insights to the next **Design Thinking phase (Define)**, where these findings help shape the problem statement.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this activity, participants will:

1. Understand how users emotionally and behaviorally respond to change.
2. Identify potential sources of user resistance or stress.
3. Recognize empathy as a foundation for designing user-centered change initiatives.
4. Generate actionable insights to improve change adoption and communication strategies.

**Facilitator Tips:**

* Encourage participants to “think and feel like the user,” not like a manager or designer.
* Remind them to capture both **negative and positive** reactions to change.
* Ensure teams discuss **realistic user experiences**—not assumptions.
* After the session, display all empathy maps on a wall for cross-team comparison.

**Example Scenario (Illustrative):**

**Change:** A university introduces a fully online student attendance and grading system.  
**User Persona:** Raj, a 45-year-old professor, comfortable with traditional methods but less confident with new technology.

**Empathy Map Insights:**

* **Says:** “The old system worked just fine.”
* **Thinks:** “I might embarrass myself in front of students if I can’t use this.”
* **Does:** Avoids logging into the system until the deadline.
* **Feels:** Anxious, frustrated, skeptical.
* **Pains:** Fear of losing control, lack of training.
* **Gains:** Easier grading once he learns the system.

**Key Insight:** Resistance comes from fear of incompetence, not rejection of innovation.  
**Actionable Response:** Provide one-on-one digital literacy support and peer mentoring.