**Title: Designing an Emotionally Intelligent App for Educational Communities Using the Empathy Map**

For our final project, my team and I came up with the concept of an app that promotes emotional well-being within educational institutions. While we initially focused on students, our idea expanded into a more holistic support tool designed to serve not just learners, but also parents, teachers, and administrative staff. To better understand their emotional needs, I used the Empathy Map—a Design Thinking method that explores what users think, feel, say, and do.

I carried out informal interviews with classmates and a teacher to uncover common emotional challenges in academic life. Many students shared their desire to feel heard, saying things like, “I wish I had someone to talk to, but I don’t want to seem weak.” Teachers described feeling overwhelmed, but without any space to express their emotions. These insights confirmed that our app needed to be more than informative—it had to be emotionally aware and responsive.

The Empathy Map helped identify a recurring emotional disconnect. In the “Thinking” quadrant, people felt pressured to hide their emotions to appear “strong” or “professional.” In “Feeling,” users showed signs of stress, fear, and isolation. In “Saying,” phrases like “I’m fine” or “Just tired” masked deeper emotional struggles. And in “Doing,” many avoided asking for help, withdrew from others, and tried to cope silently.

These findings led us to make vulnerability a core theme of the app. We included a direct connection to licensed university psychologists, anonymous emotional check-ins, and a digital “safe space” for journaling, personalized resources, or simply being heard.

The challenge was crafting an app that felt personal while remaining scalable and accessible to diverse users. We didn’t want it to feel clinical or like just another task to check off. Using the Empathy Map allowed us to design with true compassion rather than assumption.

This process changed the way I think about problem-solving. Now I don’t just ask, “What do users need?”—I ask, “How do they feel?” And that shift transforms everything. When emotions guide the design, solutions become not just functional, but truly meaningful.

Moving forward, I want to keep building tech with empathy at its core. This reflection—and the Empathy Map in particular—showed me that emotional insights are just as valuable as technical ones. I believe this approach has the power to transform not only how we build apps, but how we shape entire institutions.