

Design Thinking: Reflections

The design thinking course was the foremost distinctive course that I took in my whole educational life before the course started, I had done a touch of analysis on how design thinking works and the way it's tutored in different universities, because it involved tons of cooperative learning, partaking in brainstorming sessions, and was sceptical of its delivery on the online medium. Happy to mention all my doubts and disbelief are invalidated and therefore the learning from the course was huge and the crisp and clear delivery by Prof. Jitesh Panchal was helpful.

One of my biggest takeaways from the course is the application of Design Thinking methodology to everyday problems that are a wicked problem. A wicked problem is big, ambiguous and poorly defined, which sounds a lot like finding the right job that we love or passionately about, but I realized that as humans we are passionate about many things and passion doesn't define our career path. We should try something new, see how it works, tweak it, and keep experimenting. And that is exactly what Design Thinking is about. Building a future with Design Thinking means having an improvisational view of life and moving forward by "finding our way".

Here is an excerpt of what I was expecting from the course and what I got out of it, followed by a brief explanation of the design process.

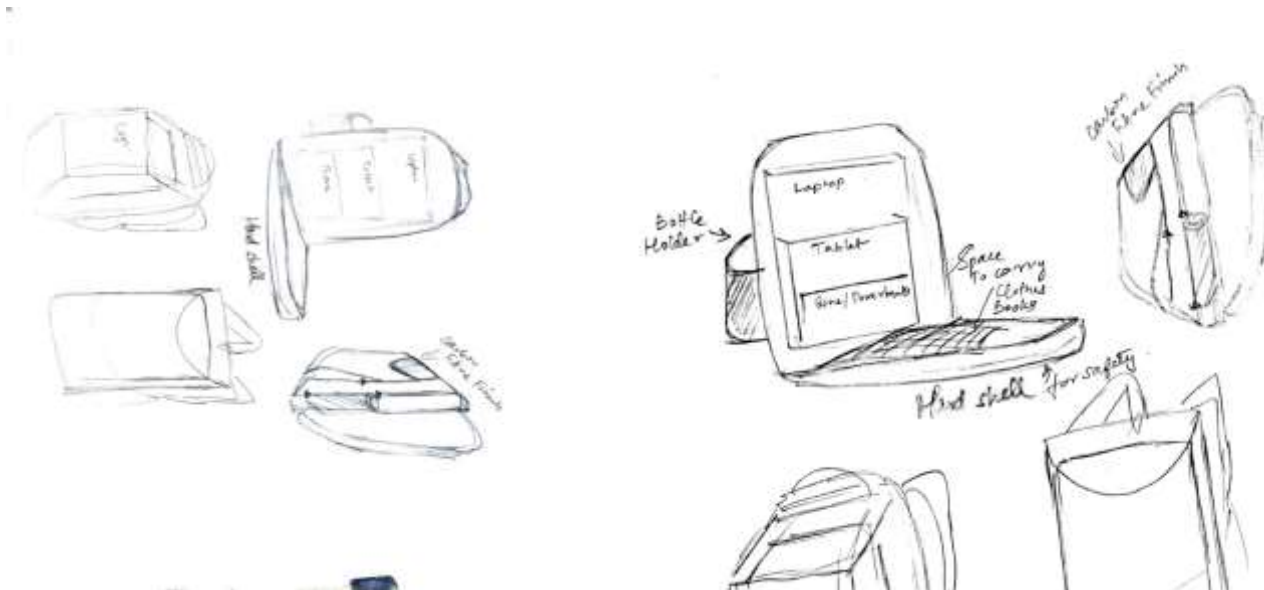
What did I expect from DT?	What I Experienced from DT?
A new artistic approach to unravel issues	A new doing approach to solving problems
Design cool products, with cool UI/UX	Use Empathy and Immersion
Lots of theoretical reading to supplement learning	Doing is a way of thinking
Working on real-world problems	Working on real-world problems + Devising uncanny creative solutions to them
A lot of learning	A lot of learning + unlearning + listening + observing + learning to be neutral to avoid creating a bias

My reflection has been divided into the following sections :

1. Empathy: To identify the actual problem
2. Asking the right questions, documenting the process
3. Redefining the problem
4. Working in a team, understanding team dynamics
5. User interviews and feedback
6. Iterate, Iterate, Iterate
7. Thinking differently

Empathy: To identify the actual problem

Our first undertaking during the design thinking class was to get active in planning a backpack for a fellow, this showed me the intensity of empathy. A lot of the organizations plan products remembering costs and different perspectives, and never keep a client-driven methodology. This class was a stunner as far as getting the nuts and bolts right of design thinking, learning about the audience for whom we are designing the solution, art of listening and asking deep open-ended questions.



Asking the right questions, documenting the process

The subsequent stage in the process was to pose the correct inquiries and archive the cycle to return and have conversations, after the first session we were then separated into groups with various aptitudes sets to have a decent mix of viewpoint during conceptualizing conversations. This began with the 5X Why activity and followed by the 5WH activity during outlining of inquiries we conceptualized a lot, began to empathize

then edge our inquiries better to comprehend on the off chance that we end up in considering the problem to be a wicked problem. Additionally, as a feature of posing questions, what helped our group was that we documented our discussions in slides for reference.

Redefining the problem

After initial questioning, we came to realise what we know for sure and what are some of the questions which we are not sure about and need to validate, and what are some of the aspects of the problem we entirely do not know. We had to solve the problem of management of chronic diseases by improving the patient experience and by shared decision making.

A lot of the teams took the usual route to narrow down on a particular chronic disease and then tried to understand the pain points of the patients with that chronic disease.

Our team took a different approach as we wanted to create a mechanism that would reduce the mental stress and financial burden of going through having a chronic disease.

Working in a team, understanding team dynamics

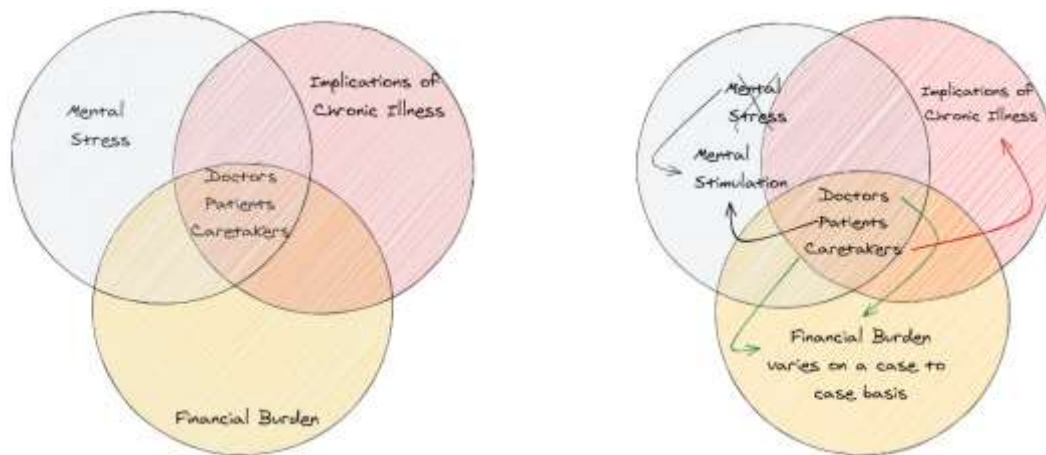
Another interesting learning from the design course was about team dynamics and managing remote teams. As our team was completely online and we did not have physical contact, initially it was hard to set up a time to meet and discuss and continue working in a team as I hadn't spoken to many of them much. But later I took it upon myself to be proactive in asking for team meetings and sending out invites on zoom and blocking calendars so that we could keep our momentum going.

There were some instances where some member of the team would miss meetings but as we followed the design thinking approach and documented our discussion all members were on the same page throughout the process.

User interviews and feedback

The next essential part of the process was to interview users, create a persona, create user journey maps to understand the problems prepare ourselves to ask the right questions.

The interview cycle was an eyeopener it led us to a totally different problem that we would end up solving.



Interviews shed light on aspects we weren't aware of: such as more than the patients it was the caretakers who were under financial and mental stress, also patients were in search of mental stimulation to keep themselves engaged and distracted from the chronic illness they faced.

Iterate, Iterate, Iterate

Iterating over the questions, iterating over ideation, iterating over prototyping.

As we took a different approach to solve the chronic illness problem, we failed in our initial problem definition and changed our solution proposition after iterations, design thinking is a process where we iterate over time and learn from failures. Failing fast, building faster prototypes to get feedback from the users will help us design better solutions faster.

Thinking differently

Design thinking helped us come to a totally different and innovative way to solve the chronic illness problem, it helped us have a holistic approach to solving real-world issues rather than narrowing down at the first instance itself.

I believe it's a human instinct to try to solve a problem once we define it. The mistake in that approach is that quite often, we have not characterized the issue effectively and are pushing ahead with an answer that isn't tending to the genuine issue.

That is the place where the assumption that I'm off-base' approach kicks in. By accepting I am off-base, about the solution as well as about my comprehension of the issue, I am compelled to dig deeper. I am compelled to contemplate the issue, attempting to more readily comprehend it from the point of view of those living it. Since I am excusing the first, and conceivably generally self-evident, an arrangement I showed up at as off base, I am compelled to find and think about new solutions.

This extra perspective powers me to be more compassionate to those encountering the issue, and more innovative in thinking about the potential solution – two cornerstones of design thinking.

In the end, I may find that my unique solution is true, the most ideal choice, and that is OK. The process of allowing myself to be wrong and dig deeper opens up possibilities and makes me remember that the process of design never really ends, which is part of what design thinking is about.