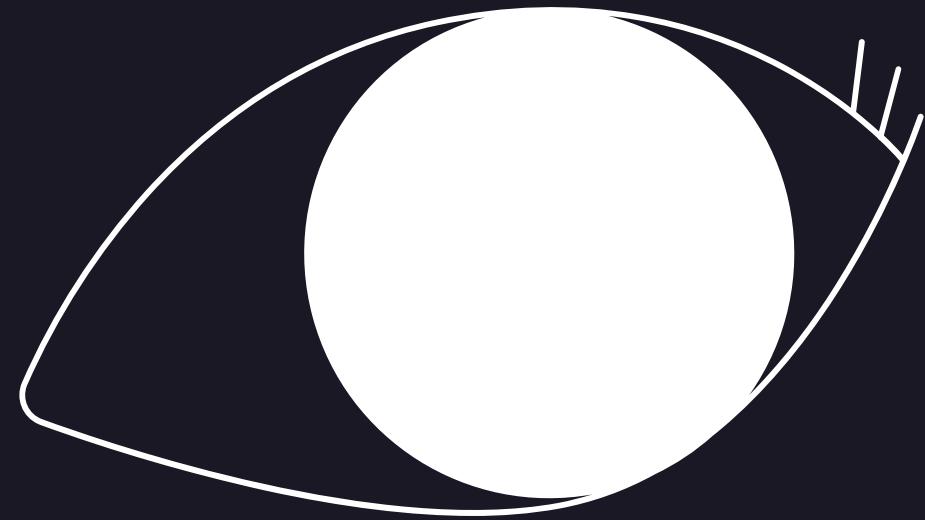




Design thinking as a way to  
improve patient experience

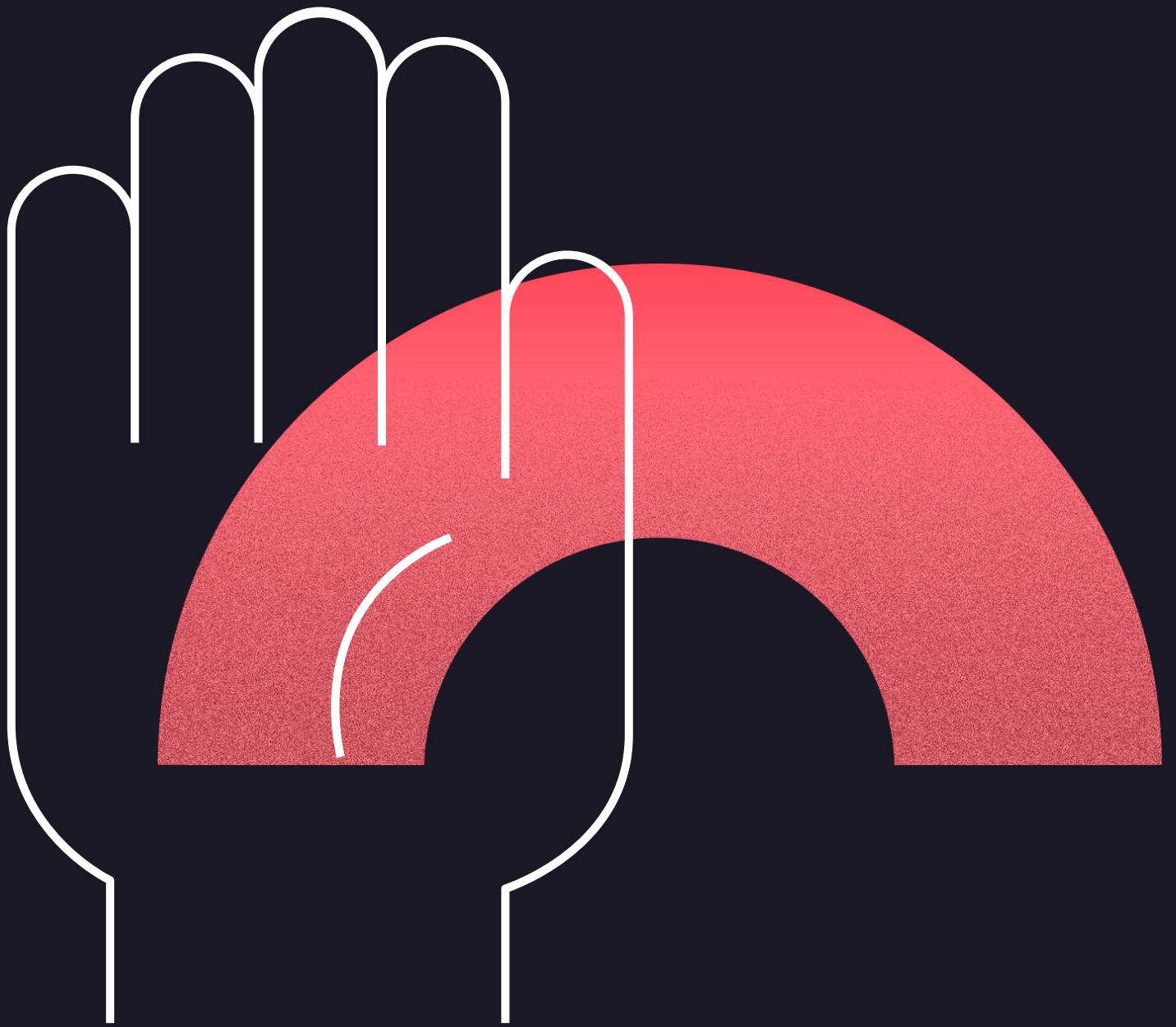


# EMPATHY

**STAN NOWAK PLAYED THE  
ROLE OF THE FATHER OF A  
FICTIONAL YOUNG WOMAN  
BROUGHT INTO A  
SIMULATED VERSION OF  
STANFORD HOSPITAL'S  
EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT  
AFTER AN AUTOMOBILE  
ACCIDENT.**

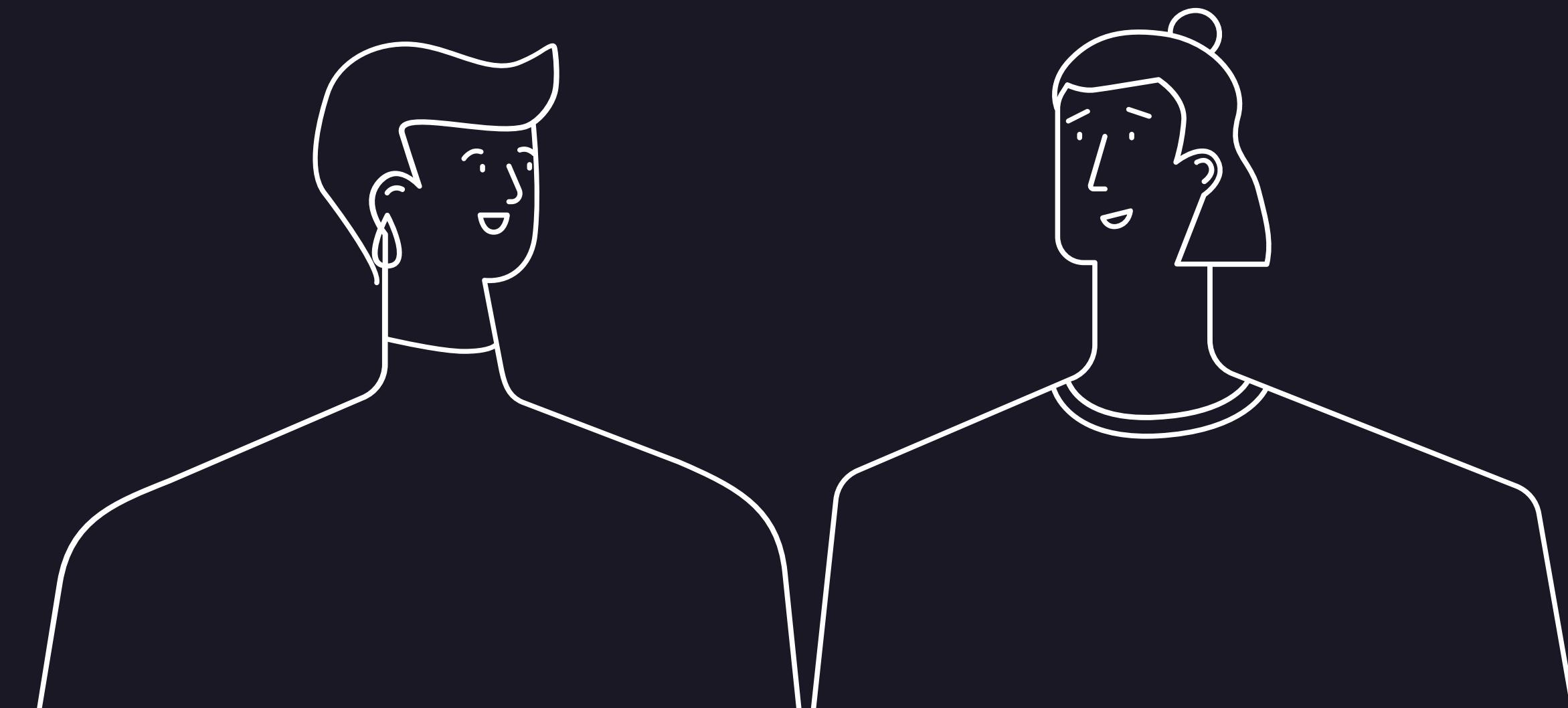
Stan Nowak, PhD, a physicist at the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, typically spends his days using X-ray spectroscopy to understand the chemical and electronic properties of matter.

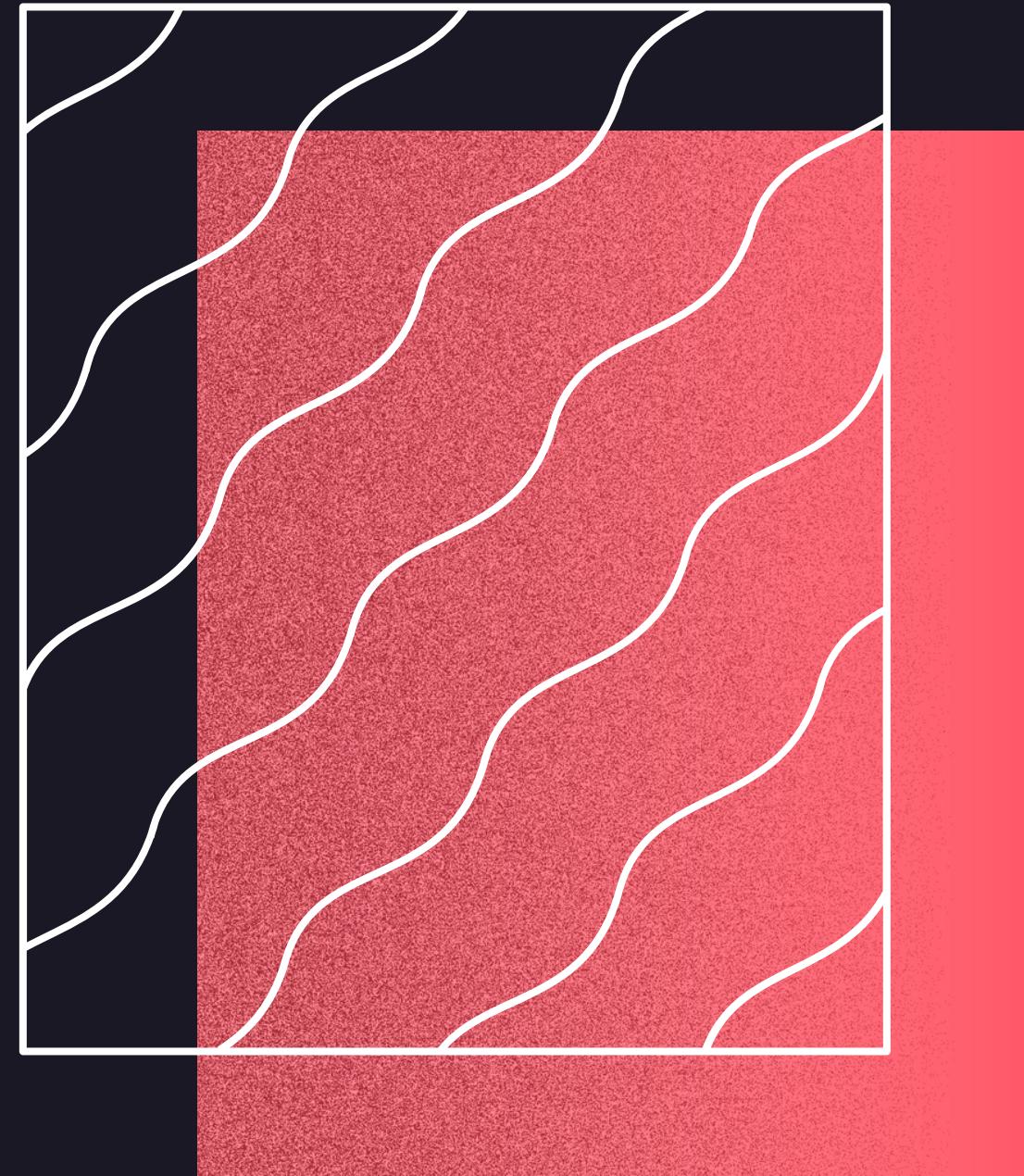




THE EXERCISE WAS PART OF A TWO-DAY COURSE IN DESIGN THINKING. THEIR GOAL WAS TO FIND WAYS TO IMPROVE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE IN THE HOSPITAL'S EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT. FOR THE EXERCISE, THEY PLAYED PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS TO GET A SENSE OF WHAT IT ACTUALLY FEELS LIKE TO BE IN THE OFTEN-CHAOTIC ATMOSPHERE OF AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT.

**Empathy is a key element of design thinking, a step-by-step approach to problem-solving that involves observing and interviewing people as they go through an experience, and then using that information to prototype and test ways of improving the product or process.**

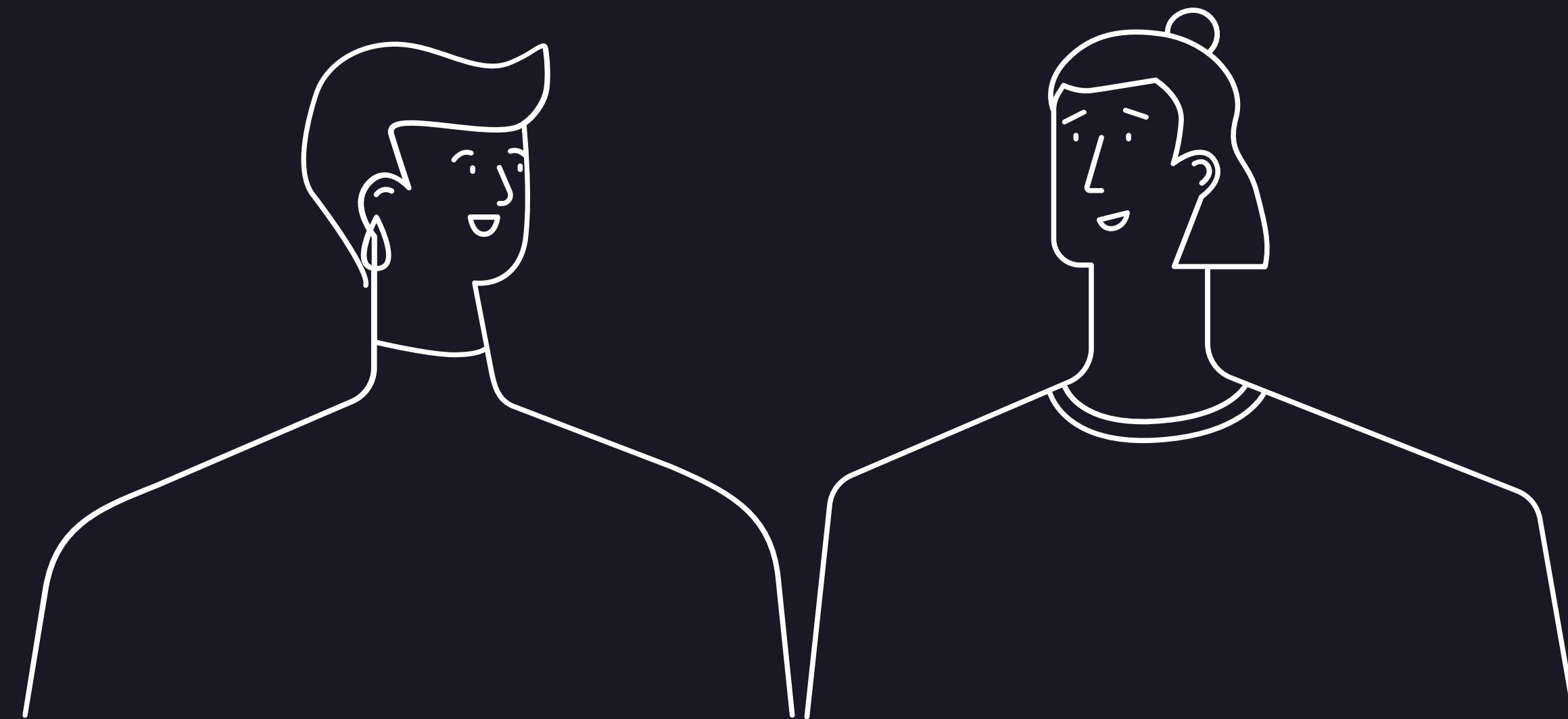


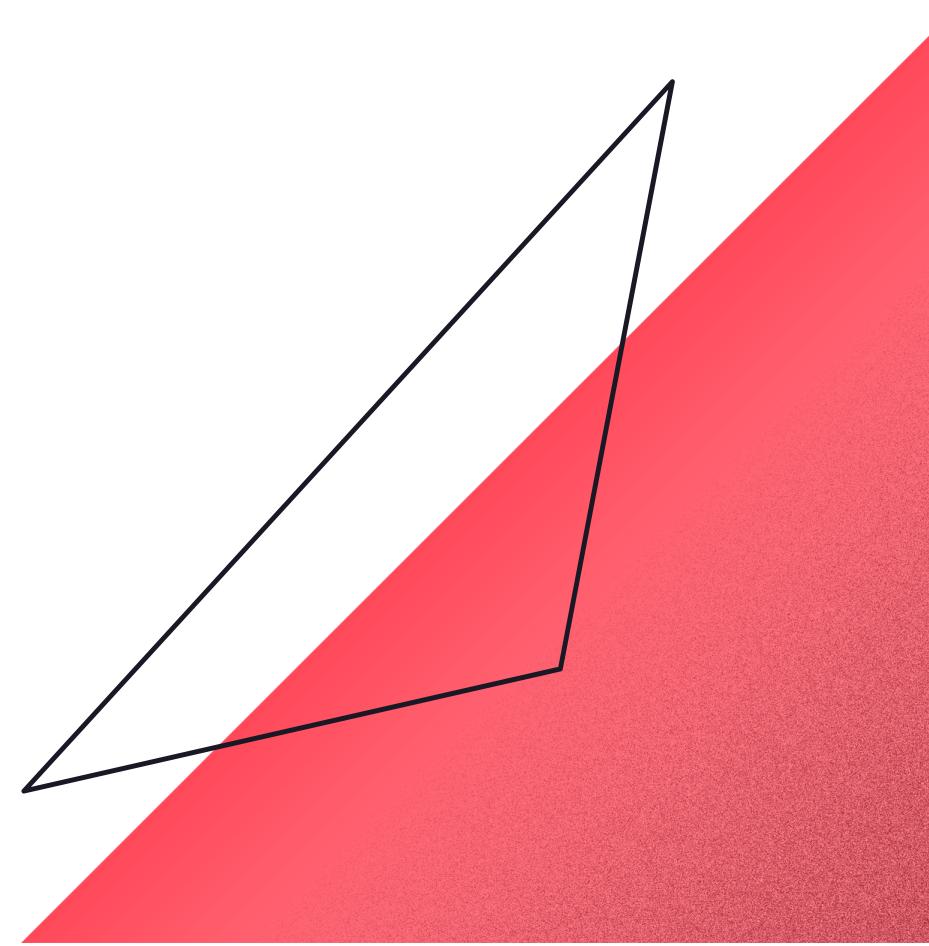


"Suddenly, our students could empathize," Wagner said. "It's a tool that encourages students to step out of designing for themselves and trust the people they're designing for."

That first day produced an abundance of material to guide the class' second day of prototyping: Certain themes were quickly evident. Patients wanted a regular flow of information to help them better understand what was happening, and they wanted to know that their care providers were communicating with one another. Coordinated and clear communication, they said, would do much to relieve their heightened anxiety and fear.

**DESIGN THINKING "IS A WAY FOR HEALTH CARE TO  
MAKE CHANGES BY EMPATHIZING WITH OUR  
PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES," SAID ALPA VYAS,  
STANFORD HEALTH CARE VICE PRESIDENT FOR  
PATIENT EXPERIENCE.**





The participants concluded the class by presenting their research and ideas to hospital administrators and emergency medicine professionals.

