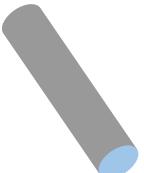




Unlocking Movement:



Understanding Real-World Learning in the Gym

Needfinding Report

Meet the team!



Kenisha Vaswani



Animesh Sachan



Jenil Prajapati



01

Research question & goals

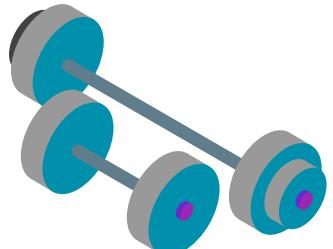
Embodied Learning (Theme 4)

Learning in the gym does not happen in a classroom. It happens through movement, repetition, and trial and error. People build physical skills while managing fatigue, time pressure, and self-consciousness.

Our research focuses on how gym-goers actually learn:

- How they try new movements?
- How they adjust through experience?
- How they move from uncertainty to confidence?

The gym is where learning happens in motion.





The 'Why': Understanding Skill Learning in the Gym

The gym is a real-world learning environment. People don't just exercise, they experiment, adjust, and try to improve through repeated practice. Unlike classrooms, learning here happens under pressure: limited time, social anxiety, and physical fatigue.

Why does studying this matter?

- Many gym-goers feel unsure if they're "doing it right"
- Poor form can lead to injury or stalled progress
- Learning is self-directed, informal, and often lonely
- Design opportunities exist in moments during practice

02

Participant profiles + recruitment

THE PLAN

Understand how recreational gym-goers learn and improve lifting technique during real workouts.

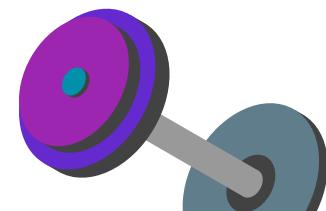


Non UCSB Students

**In person
Interviews**



**Observation in real
gym context**



WHO?

Recreational gym-goers who lift weights

Who:

- Recreational gym-goers
- Not working as a personal trainer
- Mix of beginner, intermediate, and professional lifters

Why:

- They rely on self-observation
- Experiences vary widely by skill level
- They encounter learning challenges during real workouts

WHERE?

At or around local gyms

Why context matters:

- Lets us observe real routines and habits
- Grounds responses in fresh, lived experiences
- Captures differences before and after a workout
- Reveals learning moments in real time

WHEN?

30-60 mins interviews

Time constraints:

- Evening or weekends
- Before and after workouts
- Schedule 2-3 days before so they can plan workouts accordingly

We spoke to..



Rosaline



Adam



Jose

Fieldwork





...and the questions we asked

- Is there anything you're currently trying to get better at in the gym?
- When you're doing a lift, how do you know if it went well?
- Tell me about a time you felt unsure during a workout.
- What do you do when something feels off while lifting?
- How do you usually get feedback on your form?
- How did you originally learn how to do these exercises?
- Have you ever worried you were doing an exercise wrong?
- What's usually going through your head between sets?
- What's frustrating about trying to get better at lifting?

03

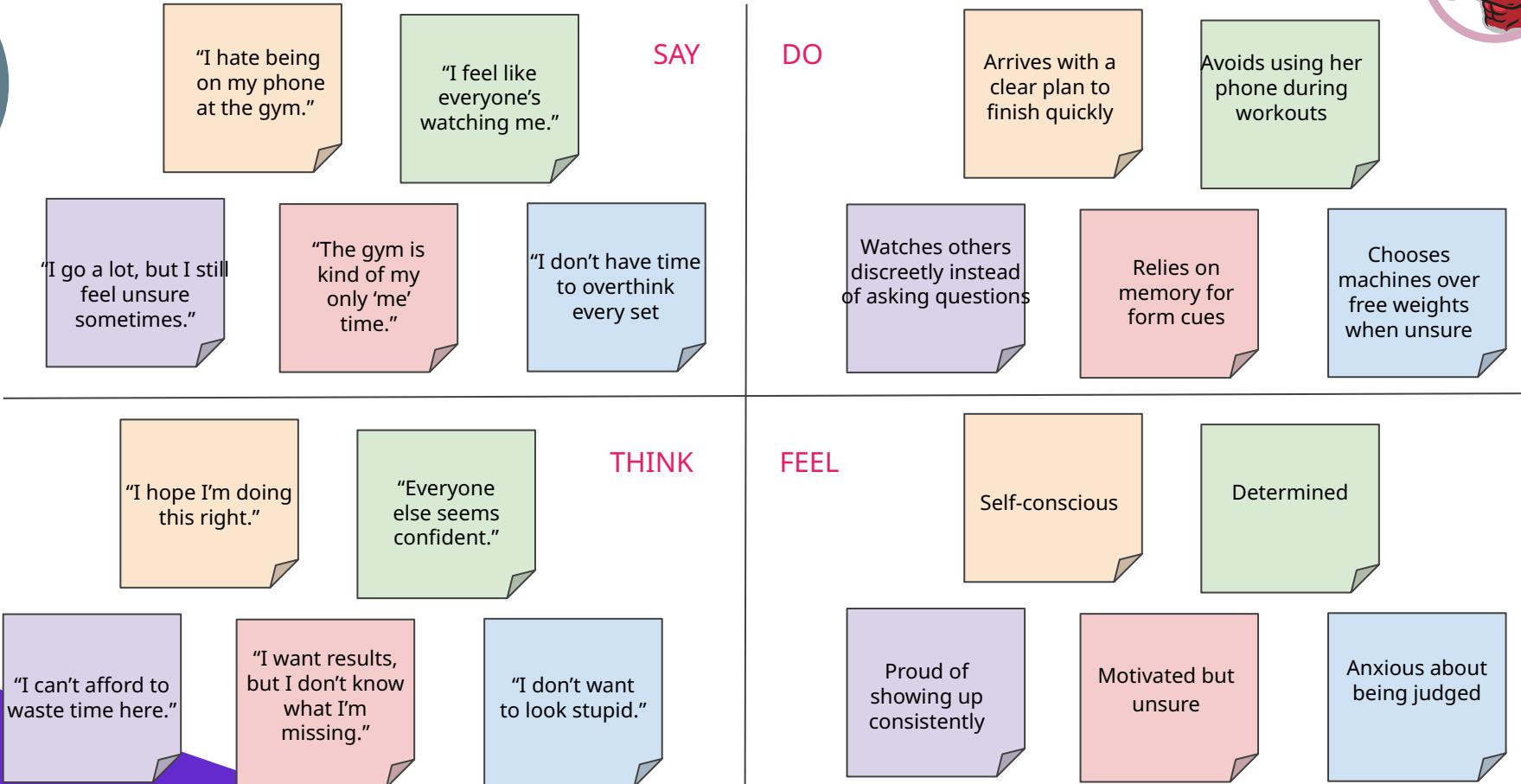
Empathy Maps

ROSALINE



- 32 Years old
- Parent
- Working
- Doing an online degree
- Goes to the gym 5 times a week
- Interview: Outside Planet Fitness

Empathy Map (Rosaline)

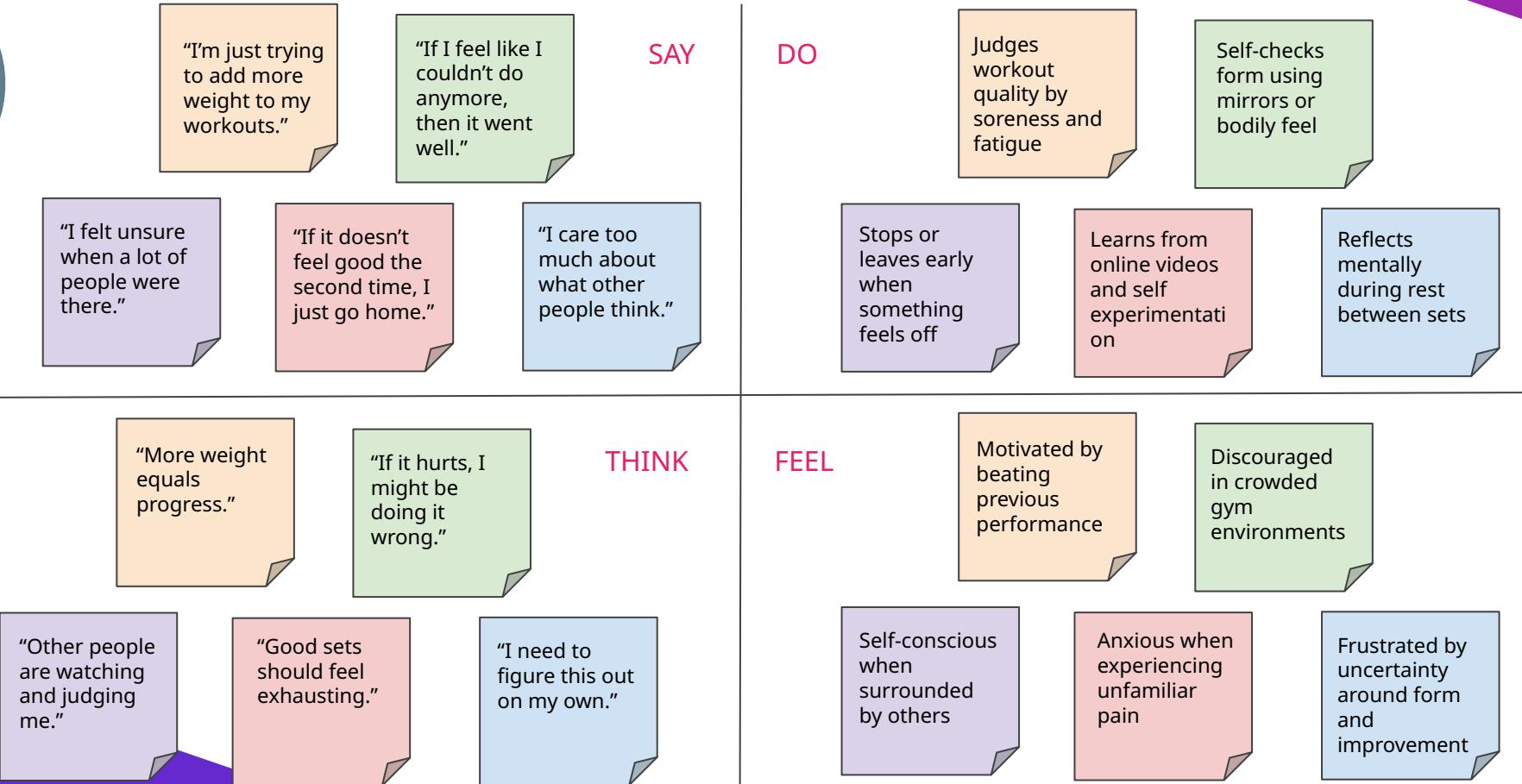


ADAM



- 23 Years old
- Employee 9–5
- Fast food worker
- Goes to the gym 5 times a week
- Interview: Opposite Planet Fitness

Empathy Map (Adam)

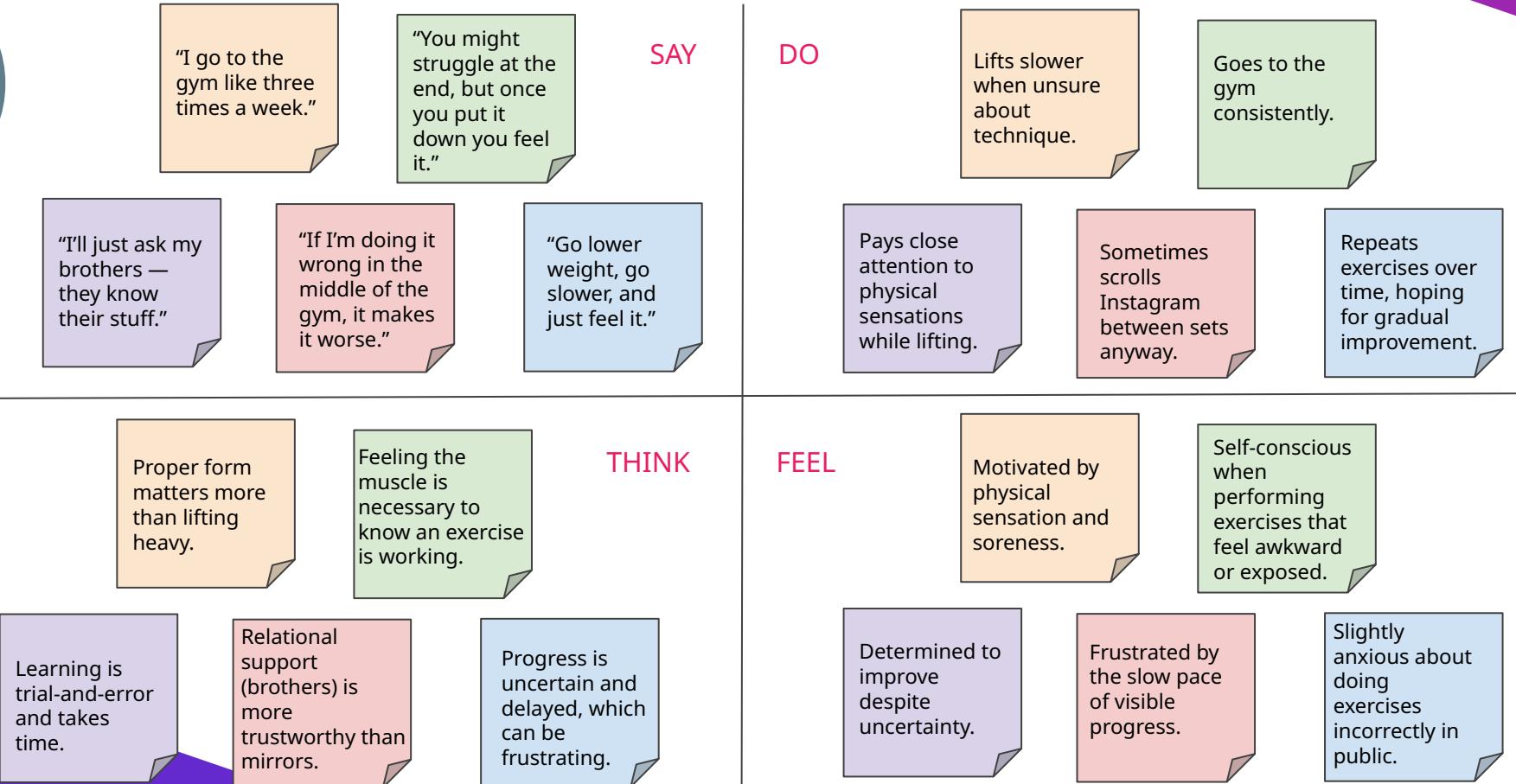


JOSE



- 21 Years old
- SBCC Student
- Goes to the gym 3 times a week
- Learns primarily through family
- Interview: Behind Girvetz Hall

Empathy Map (Jose)



04

Summary

Putting it all together!

1

Embodied Feedback

People rely on physical sensations.

2

Confidence Through Familiarity

Learning feels safer and more effective when movements are familiar

3

Form Over Performance

People value correct technique more than lifting heavier weights, even when progress feels slower.

4

Socially Mediated Learning

Gym skills are learned through trusted people.

Next Steps...

TARGET 1

Synthesize findings into
Point-of-View (POV) statements

TARGET 2

Generate in-depth How Might
We (HMW) questions to guide
exploration

TARGET 3

Explore early experience-based
concepts to support learning
without interrupting flow