

EXPLORATION

1

Practicing Imaginative Sympathy means –

Being able to visualize an unknown person's situation and respond accordingly

~ 35-40 min.

EXAMPLE 1 | PART A

Let us look at this loan officer as she goes about her work of evaluating loan proposals...



Approach 1

Her approach to this work could be –



This is how she usually thinks about a decision on who gets a loan.



1. How is she evaluating the decision of whether to grant the loan to this applicant or not?
2. What do you think she will do now? Accept or reject this loan?

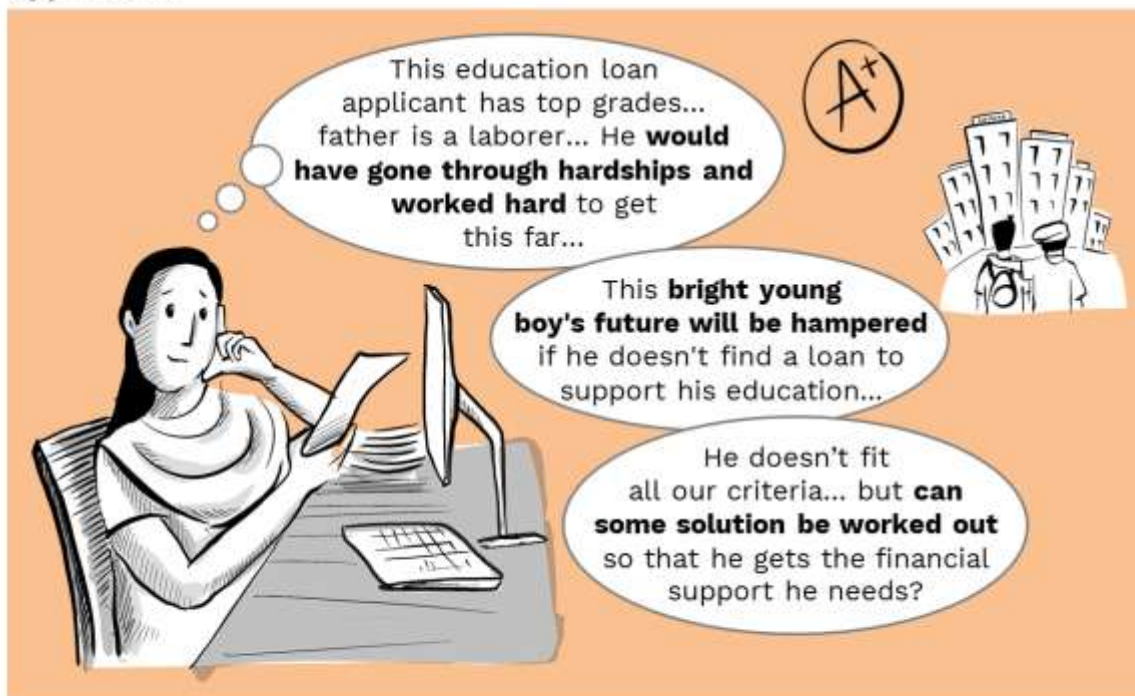
Quick discussion

EXAMPLE 1 | PART B



But what if this is the approach she takes to evaluate the loan decision instead...

Approach 2



1. What has changed in her approach or thinking while evaluating the loan proposal?
2. How will this approach now influence the way she processes this loan for this applicant?

Quick discussion

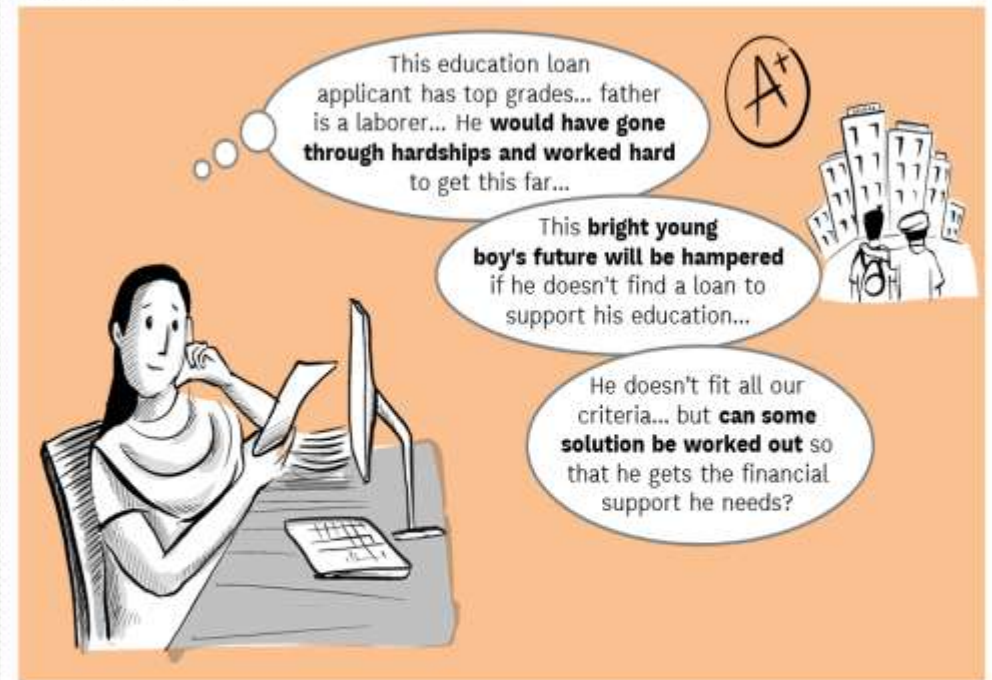
EXAMPLE 1 | PART C

Approach 1



Here she is blind to the human being whose loan she is evaluating and his world and conditions

Approach 2



Here she visualizes the boy's situation, his family condition, future aspirations, and then responds to it

This approach shows Imaginative Sympathy

EXAMPLE 1 | PART D



When we are unable to practice Imaginative Sympathy, it may have several consequences we may not even have thought of...



Suppose the officer had taken approach 1 and did not visualize the applicant's situation, what consequences would it have on the applicant? What 'opportunities' would be missed because of it?



- Reflect individually & put down for yourself.
- Then a few participants may share their responses.



How would it affect the boy's future and many such applicants in need of financial support?



How would it change her as a person?



How would it affect the value of her work and the joy she finds in her work?



Based on the examples explored so far...

What happens when in any situation, we try to visualize the other person's situation (even if we don't know the person) and respond accordingly?

Open sharing



- How does it affect our approach to people?
- What will happen because of this?
- As we practice this more and more, how would it change us as a person?

EXPLORATION

2

Practicing Imaginative Sympathy means –

Being able to map the human consequences of projects or decisions or actions on the lives of people, rather than merely focusing on the execution or rollout

~ 30 min.

What happens when we don't consider the 'human consequences' of a project and only focus on the execution or rollout?

Let us explore this further in a case example ➡

EXAMPLE 4 | PART B:



A scheme implemented by the government



The government set an ambitious target of building 65.82 lakh **individual household toilets** & **5 lakh community and public toilet seats**.

In terms of time, As the mission crossed the halfway mark, **over 30 lakh individual toilets and more than 2 lakh community toilets** had been built. Many states had surpassed the targets they had set for themselves to build toilets. **The government saw this as a reason to celebrate!**

However they soon faced many challenges,

Reports showed that the **existence of toilets at people's homes is no guarantee that they will actually use them**. Often, the toilets were being used as go downs or for other purposes!

Men around the country refused to use toilets because **they felt it was only for women**. They felt that open defecation was a sign of virility.

On the other hand, **women's** groups were seen rallying against the toilets. They saw it as a **threat to their freedom** to leave the house at least once a day.



In this case, the government only focused on the implementation or roll out:

E.g. There should be enough number of toilets in each area.

They missed mapping the human consequences of the initiative:

E.g. People who are used to going to fields for defecation would resist using the toilets

Women feel their freedoms are getting affected by these measures.

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EXPLORATION

3

Practicing Imaginative Sympathy means –

Being able to identify and appreciate the ‘unsaid/ invisible needs’ along with the ‘said/ visible needs’ of people you engage with or serve

~20 min.

EXAMPLE 5 | PART B

Watch the video and examine the situation



Did you consider these invisible needs?

The **visible need** is that the customer needs a demand draft to send it to his father.

However, the **invisible needs the Bank employee is able to recognize are –**

- A need for a solution so that his father gets money on time regularly and doesn't face difficulties due to delays.
- A need for counseling on how to use a new service that the customer wasn't aware of.
- A need for reassurance that his money will be safe.

Let us look at two more examples from day to day interactions

EXAMPLE 5

When your brother says he is worried about finishing his syllabus on time



Some of the other invisible or unsaid needs could be-

- He is frightened of failing the tests,
- He needs help in understanding some basic concepts
- He needs some moral support and confidence boost.

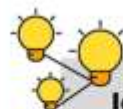
EXAMPLE 6

If someone new in the college approaches you for something ,



Some of the unsaid or invisible needs you can address could be-

- A need to feel included in a group
- Get a sense of belongingness
- Make friends in a new place



Identify 2 more every day interactions where you can show imaginative sympathy

-by appreciating and meeting both the visible as well as invisible or unsaid needs of people you interact with (e.g. family members, teachers, friends, etc.)

Open sharing

EXPLORATION

4

Practicing Imaginative Sympathy

45 min - 1 hr.

Imaginative Sympathy is a skill we can develop by practicing it more and more.

Here are 3 skills to keep practicing to develop imaginative sympathy –

- 1. Visualize an unknown person's situation**
- 2. Map the human consequences of any action or decision or project**
- 3. Map the invisible needs of people (beyond their visible needs)**

Lets do some quick practice exercises ➡



Did you consider these invisible needs?

Many users like to experiment, while **many are hesitant to try out places that are unheard of**. How can we help them build confidence to try out new places?

Many **users are worried about digital payments** unless they are reassured that their money is safe. Can we incorporate this into the payment cycle?

Users may get confused with so many options. Can we help them discover food-options that can satisfy their unique tastes & current moods (e.g. healthy & light snack, with less spice)?

Add more...



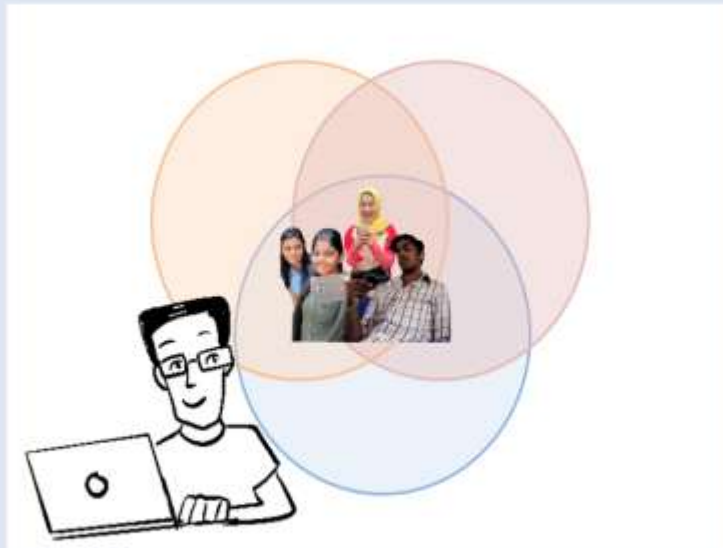
If you were part of this team designing the app, how would knowing these invisible needs influence your design? What more would you try to do?

Open discussions

In Summary,

Imaginative sympathy is a powerful practice that allows us to...

..become more user centric



As an engineer I am able to build products, technologies after understanding not just functional needs of users – but also their human needs and invisible needs

..become more human centered



As an official in authority – the policies I make, large scale initiatives I implement, are more impactful on the ground and genuinely benefit people at a human level.



Practising Imaginative Sympathy

Here are 3 skills to keep practicing to develop imaginative sympathy –

1

Visualize an unknown person's situation

2

**Map the human consequences
of any action or decision or project**

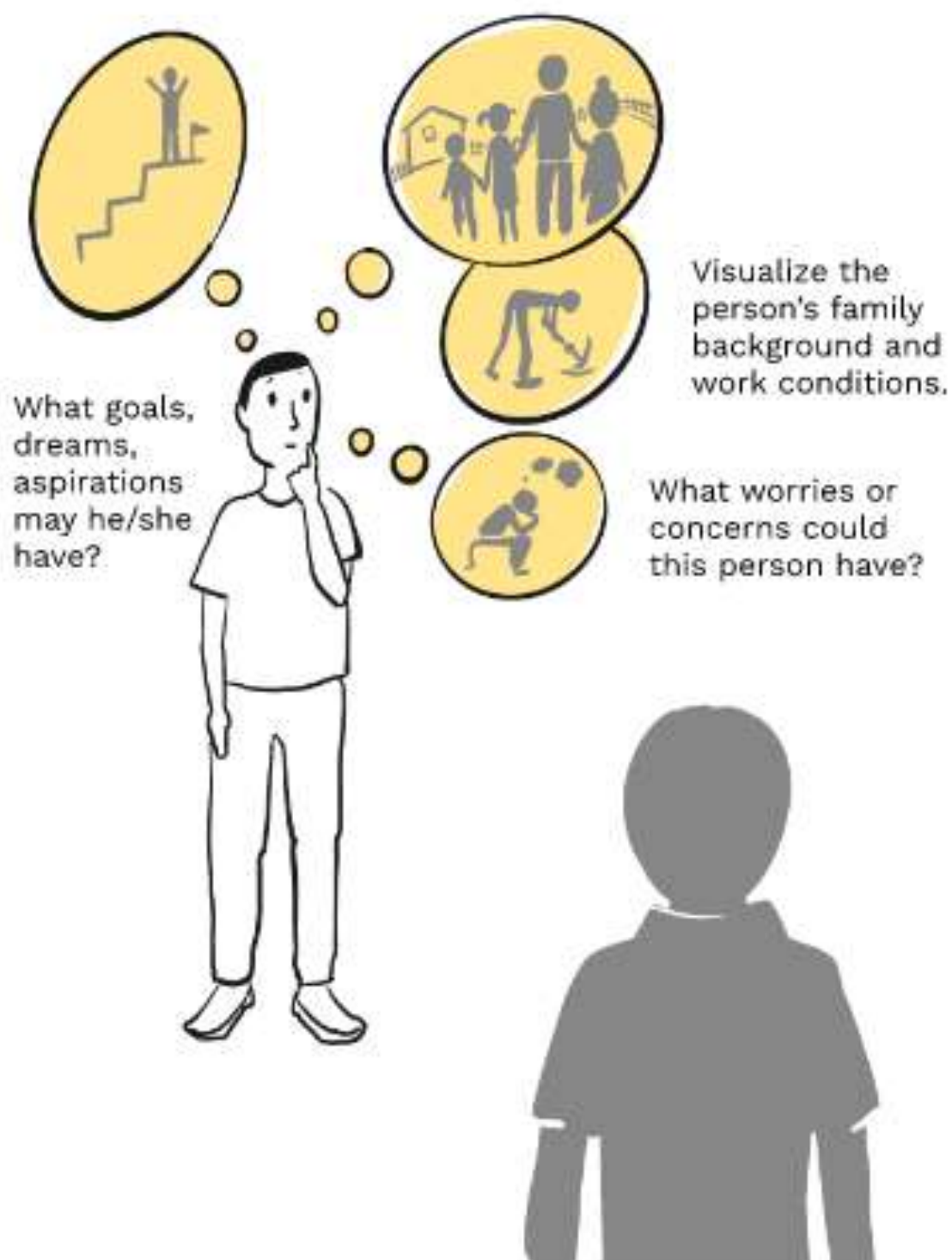
3

**Map the invisible needs of people
(beyond their visible needs)**

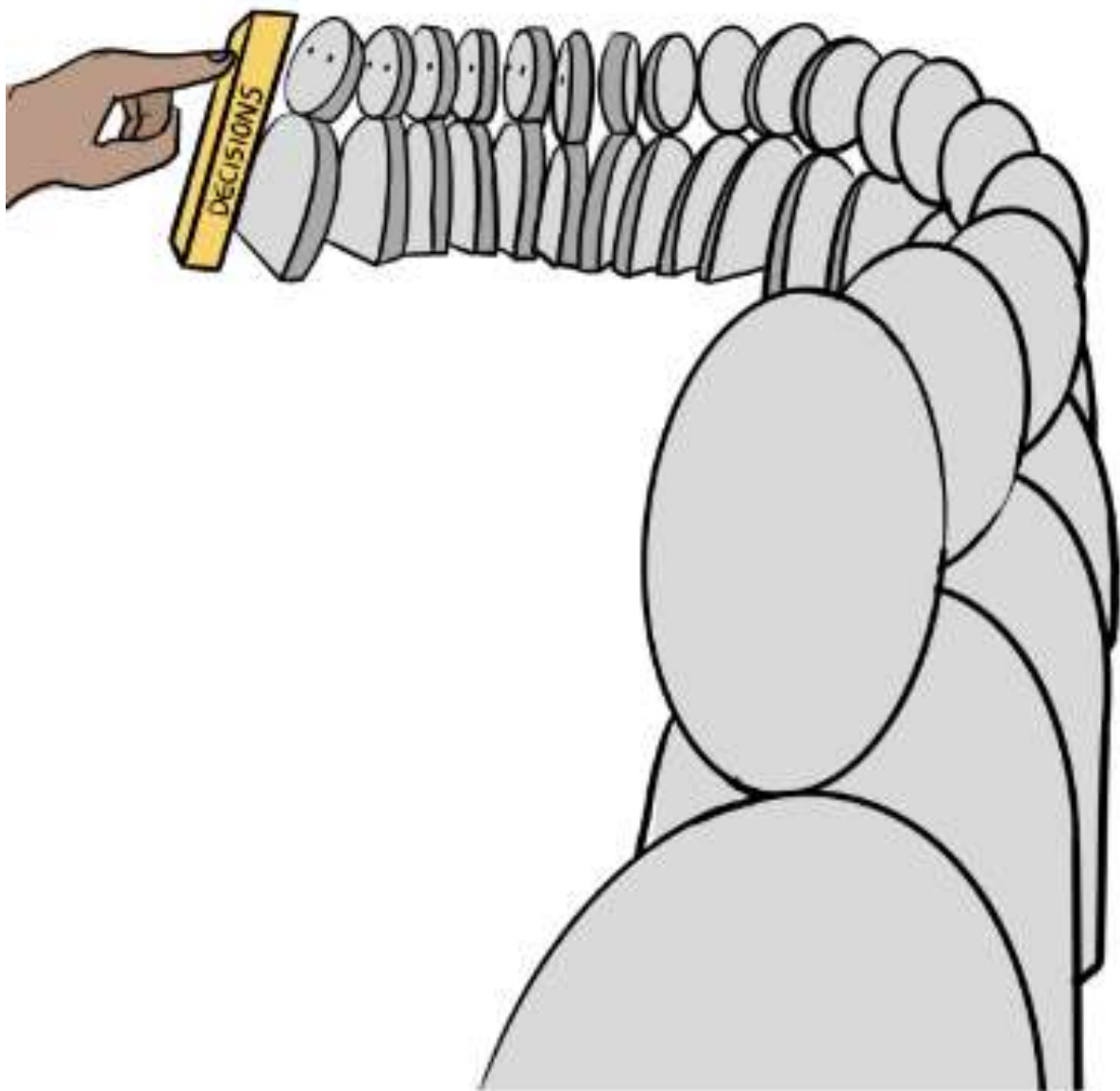
Let us look at each
one of them →



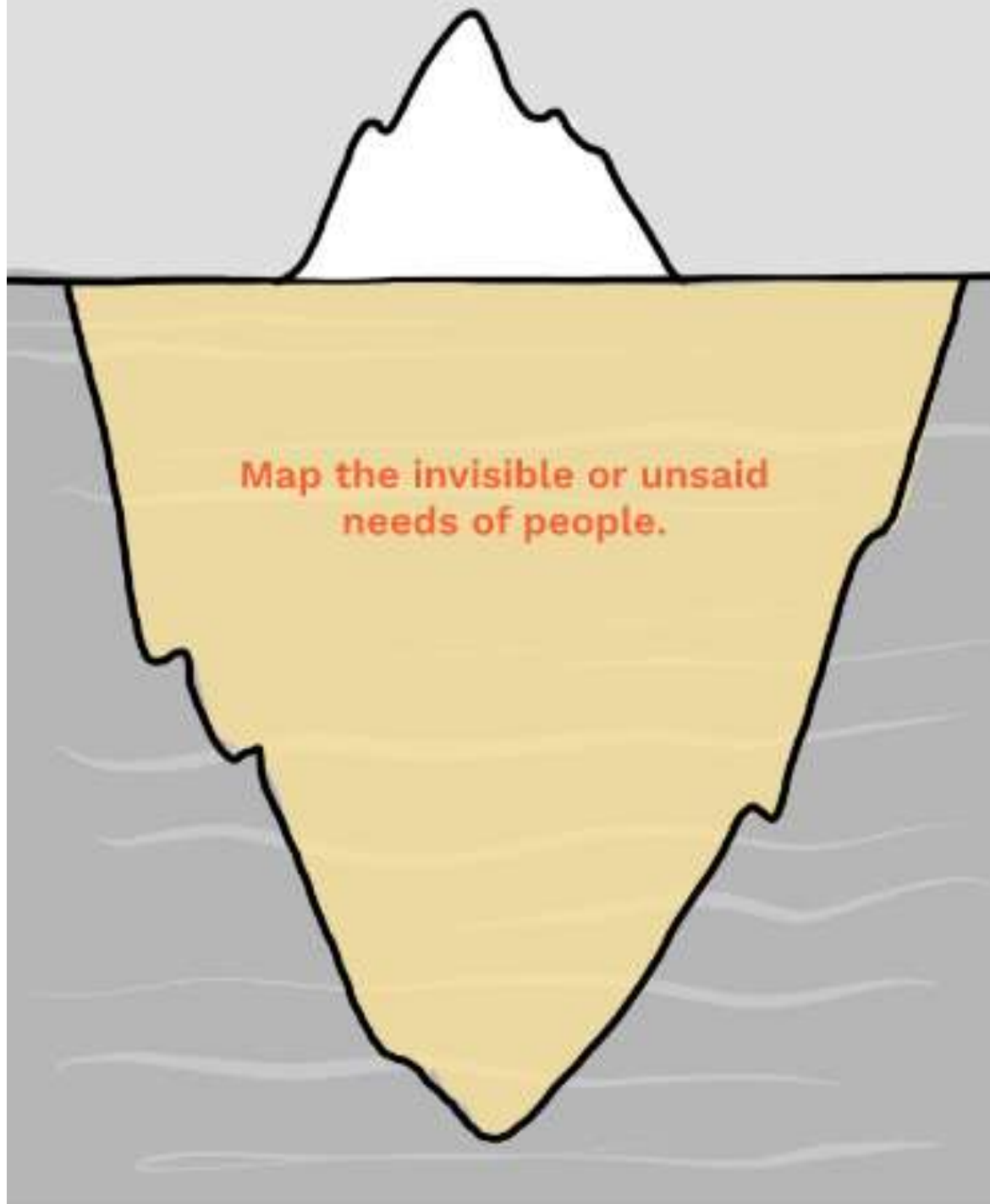
1. Visualize an unknown person's situation

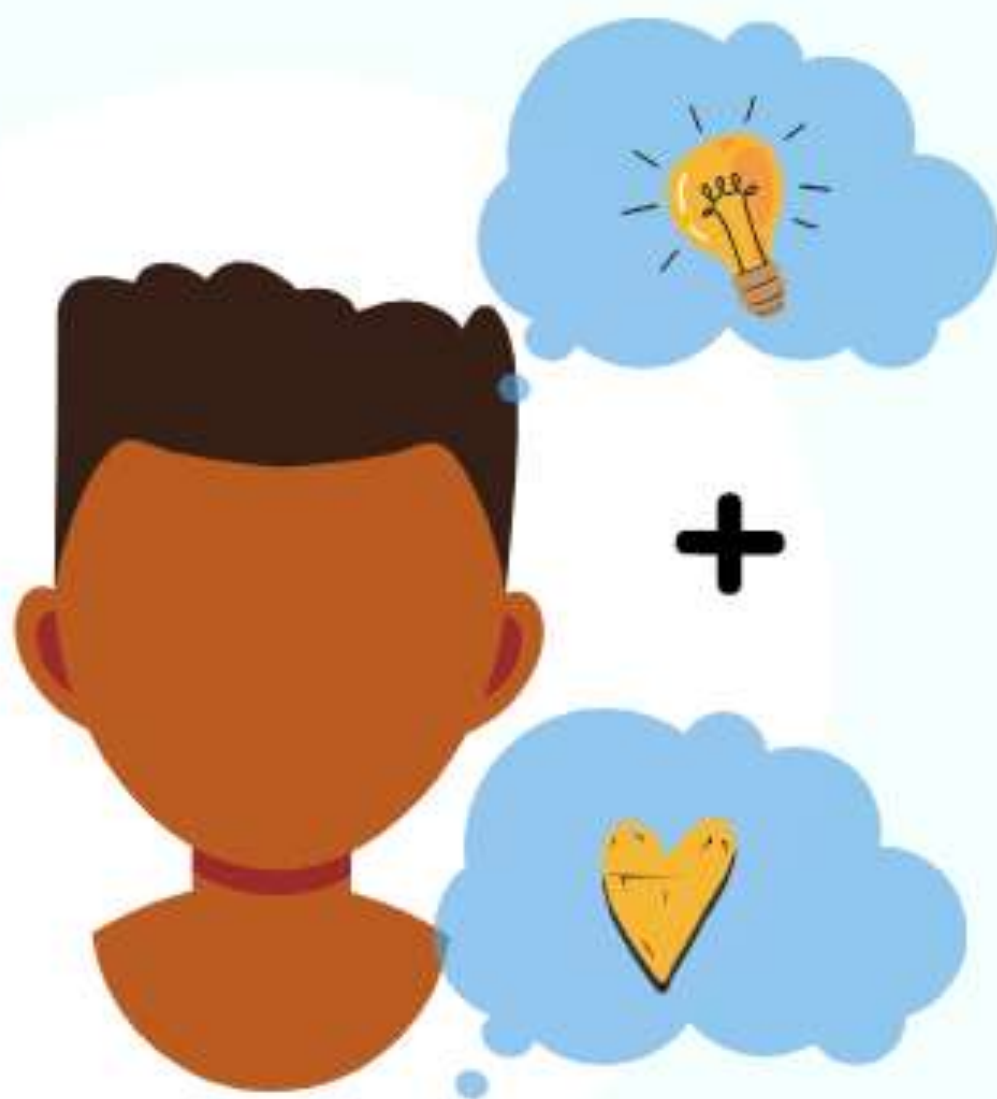


2. Before taking decisions or any action, don't just focus on the execution or technical aspects, but also **map the human consequences of it on the lives of others.**



3. Beyond the visible or said needs,





**What if we practice
Imaginative Sympathy?**



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#1 Have you seen this happen around you?



What are your first thoughts when you see this image...

(i.e. what is happening at the accident scene? Are people affected by the scene? What are they doing?)



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In the same situation, now consider this response...



What is the value and impact of this ordinary citizen's response?
(What is he/she doing differently than the other bystanders?)



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#2 Have you seen such designs around you?



What are your first thoughts when you see this image...
(i.e. what has gone wrong/is odd in this design?
What are the consequences of this design?)



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Consider this response...



What is the value and impact of this architect's response/ thought process? What is he doing differently? How will it help him improve his designs?



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#3 Have you seen this happening around you?



What are your first thoughts when you see this image

(i.e. what is happening in this scene? How is Arjun behaving? What is the consequence of his behavior?)



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Consider this response...



How is Karan's response different from that of Arjun? How would Karan's response impact his friendship with Preeti?



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In all these responses the person was able to imagine the concerns and challenges of the other person and visualize the consequences of their actions and decisions on their lives.

It helped him act with empathy and find concrete & human-centered solutions to these situations.

This is the practice of
Imaginative Sympathy



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Remember that, when you practice Imaginative Sympathy, you:

- Visualize an unknown person's situation and respond accordingly
- Focus on the human consequences of projects, decisions or actions on the lives of people, rather than merely focus on the execution or rollout
- Appreciate inter-dependencies, think of the larger impact of our actions
- Identify and appreciate the 'unsaid needs' along with the 'said needs' of people you engage with or serve