

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR DESIGNERS

A Senior Project

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Bachelor of Science

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Program Background

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Before diving into what emotional intelligence is, it's important to understand the function of emotions in our brains. Emotions are impulses to act in order to handle the challenges that come with life. Our brains are split into rational and emotional sides, and each depends on the other. The emotional brain interprets emotions differently and independently of the rational brain. Most of the time the rational brain is able to filter through emotions to delegate tasks accordingly. However, there are moments when our emotions are so strong that they overrule our ability to think rationally. When our emotional and rational brains work together in harmony, we achieve emotional intelligence.

The theory of emotional intelligence was first defined by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1997. They define emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth."

This theory was built upon by acclaimed psychologist Daniel Goleman, who authored the bestseller *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ*. Goleman breaks emotional intelligence into five competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills. Below is a brief overview of each competency.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is "the ability to recognize and understand personal moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others". Self-awareness depends on one's ability to monitor one's own emotional state and to correctly identify and name their emotions. Those who are more in touch with their feelings are able to make better informed personal decisions.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is "the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, suspend judgment, and think before acting". However, this does not mean total emotional suppression. Those who self-regulate have emotional balance.

Internal Motivation

Internal motivation includes “a passion to work for internal reasons that go beyond money and status, such as an inner vision of what is important in life, a joy in doing something, or curiosity in learning”. Those who are internally motivated pursue goals with energy, persistence, hope, and optimism.

Empathy

Empathy is “the ability to understand the emotions of other people and treat them according to their emotional reactions”. Empathy builds on self-awareness, because the more open we are to our own emotions, the more skilled we will be in reading feelings.

Social Skills

Social skills include a “proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, and an ability to find common ground and build rapport”. Strong social skills are built on the foundation of self-regulation and empathy.

Why is it important for designers to be emotionally intelligent?

In any designer role, it is the designer’s responsibility to design based on the needs of the end user. This requires communication with the user and the client, the ability to empathize with their needs, and oftentimes the ability to anticipate how to satisfy their needs without explicit instruction. Every font, button, and color will contribute to an experience that invokes some sort of emotional response from the user, and it is up to the designer to understand which emotions to tap into.

For everything that a designer shows, they have to be capable of conducting a conversation about it. The conversation on the designer’s side includes more listening and asking the client or user questions. In these conversations, the designer has to be willing to concede personal design preferences when necessary, and receive criticism openly and gracefully. Empathy, social skills, and self-regulation have to be present in the designer in order to conduct a productive design review conversation.

On a final note, it’s been found that people with high emotional intelligence have higher job satisfaction because they are flexible, can form strong interpersonal relationships with their coworkers, and find meaning in the work that they do. By working to be more emotionally intelligent, designers can grow their confidence, foster creative thinking, and enhance their performance.

Goals of this program:

The primary goal of this program is to give you the tools to develop your emotional intelligence and grow as a communicator, thinker, and designer. This program uses the **intentional change theory**, which “is a multi-level theory that helps predict sustained desired change for dyads, teams, organizations, communities and countries” (Kohlrieser, 2017). Developed by Richard Boyatzis in 1967, this theory is based on the idea that the person or entity *wants* to create long-lasting change for themselves. Therefore, this program will only work if you want the change for yourself, because you will get out of it what you put in. In the same breath, you can work on this program as little or as much as you’d like. The duration of your program depends on what you want to accomplish and how long it takes for you to incorporate these new habits into your life and work. Bottomline, this program is yours to customize to find what works for you.

There are 5 stages of the intentional change theory. The 5 stages and the components of this program that correlate with them are outlined below.

1. **Imagining your ideal self and creating a personal vision**
 - Personal vision statement
 - What needs to happen to make your vision your reality?
2. **Comparing your ideal self with your real self**
 - Emotional intelligence self-assessment
 - Rating confidence in the competencies of emotional intelligence
3. **Developing a learning agenda and plan**
 - Self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills development resources
 - Choosing your own hallmarks and tools to focus on
4. **Practicing desired changes**
 - Learning plan log
5. **Relationships that help us learn**
 - Reflection and discussion throughout the program with the ‘program sponsor’ of your choosing

What Do You Want for Yourself?

Before we get into the nitty gritty of this program, I want you to think about what you want for yourself. This is an invitation to be selfish and think of everything you want and desire for your future, independent of where you currently stand.

Emotional Intelligence Self Assessment

In order to better understand your emotional intelligence strengths and weaknesses at present, it can be helpful to take an emotional intelligence assessment. There are many kinds of assessments available, but the assessment we'll use in this program is a free, self-report assessment from Mind Tools. One caveat to self report assessments is the potential for bias or underdeveloped self-awareness to influence your results. In order to minimize this bias, it is recommended that you also ask a close friend, family member, or colleague to answer the assessment questions based on their knowledge of your behavior. This person should also be someone you feel comfortable sharing your self-discoveries with throughout your work in this program. You can then compare your own assessment results with their results to gain another perspective on your strengths and weaknesses. Take the assessment using the link below, then follow the program instructions after you've finished.

Mind Tools Assessment: How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/ei-quiz.htm>

Post assessment instructions

Review your score and document it below. Read the comments for your score to gauge where your emotional intelligence is at in a general sense. Remember to be gentle with yourself as you go over your results, because this is not an end-all be-all. Emotional intelligence is learned, so it is a matter of 'practice makes progress'.

My score: _____

Score	Comment
-------	---------

15-34	<p>You need to work on your emotional intelligence. You may find that you feel overwhelmed by your emotions, especially in stressful situations; or, you may avoid conflict because you think that you'll find it distressing. It's likely, too, that you find it hard to calm down after you've felt upset, and you may struggle to build strong working relationships. Don't worry – there are plenty of ways that you can build emotional intelligence, starting now.</p>
35-55	<p>Your emotional intelligence level is... OK. You probably have good relationships with some of your colleagues, but others may be more difficult to work with. The good news is that you have a great opportunity to improve your working relationships significantly.</p>
56-75	<p>Great! You're an emotionally intelligent person. You have great relationships, and you probably find that people approach you for advice. However, when so many people admire your people skills, it's easy to lose sight of your own needs. Researchers have found that emotionally intelligent people often have great leadership potential. Realize this potential by seeking opportunities to improve even further.</p>

Now, reflect on your answers to the questions that correspond to each emotional intelligence competency. Rate your confidence in each characteristic between 1-10.

Self-Awareness

1. I can recognize my emotions as I experience them.
8. I know my strengths and weaknesses.
11. I ask people for feedback on what I do well, and how I can improve.

Level of confidence: _____

Self-Regulation

2. I lose my temper when I feel frustrated.
4. I know how to calm myself down when I feel anxious or upset.
7. I find it difficult to move on when I feel frustrated or unhappy.

Level of confidence: _____

Internal Motivation

- 6. I find it hard to focus on something over the long term.
- 10. I feel that I don't enjoy my work.
- 12. I set long-term goals, and review my progress regularly.

Level of confidence: _____

Empathy

- 3. People have told me that I'm a good listener.
- 13. I find it difficult to read other people's emotions.
- 15. I use active listening skills when people speak to me.

Level of confidence: _____

Social Skills

- 5. I enjoy organizing groups.
- 9. I avoid conflict and negotiations.
- 14. I struggle to build rapport with others.

Level of confidence: _____

Now that you've done some reflection, think back to personal vision and what you think you need to make your vision a reality. How can you leverage your emotional intelligence strengths to work toward your vision? How can working your weaknesses bring you closer to your ideal self or create new opportunities?

How to navigate the development sections and build your learning plan

The following 5 sections are development resources for each emotional intelligence competency. They include the specific hallmarks, or characteristics, of each competency along with exercises and tools to help you grow. You get to choose which exercises and tools to add to your emotional intelligence learning plan. **When you find exercises/tools that you like, copy and paste the title of the exercise into the corresponding competency on your learning plan on page ___.**

Self-Awareness Development

Hallmarks for Emotional Self-Awareness: Overview

Hallmarks for emotional self-awareness are starred below. Choose which hallmarks you'd like to focus on, then add the corresponding development resources to your learning plan.

- ★ A strong foundation for emotional intelligence: Mindfulness
 - [Ziva Technique for Mindfulness Meditation](#)
 - ★ Knowing how to recognize and name emotions: Emotional literacy
 - [Labeling](#)
 - ★ Identifying personal strengths and weaknesses
 - [Personal SWOT Analysis](#)
 - [Peer/Colleague Feedback](#)
-

A strong foundation for emotional intelligence: Mindfulness

Ziva Technique for Mindfulness Meditation

The Ziva technique, or “Z technique”, is a meditation developed by Emily Fletcher to enhance performance. In her book *Stress Less, Accomplish More*, Fletcher says that meditation is the “fastest way to release stress, which means you can make better decisions. It activates your right brain, which means your intuition gets stronger and more honed every day”.

The Z technique incorporates the use of a **mantra**, which is a word or phrase that resonates with you. The mantra can be recited gently in your head as an anchor for your meditation. If thoughts flow through your mind and distract you from your mantra, this is okay! Fletcher says that “thoughts are an indicator that stress is leaving your body” (p 139). We can have many types of thoughts while meditating: some negative, some positive, some random, some contemplative. All thoughts are natural to experience.

One way to gently return to your mantra is **mental noting**, which is the naming of the thoughts that come to your mind. Some noting examples could include ‘thinking’, ‘feeling’, or more specifically, ‘planning’, ‘anxious’, ‘bored’. The point of noting is to acknowledge your thoughts without analyzing or judging them so you can feel satisfied putting them down to return to your state of mindfulness. Noting can also help us recognize things about ourselves that we may not otherwise want to acknowledge, recognize patterns like worrying, and be able to view our experiences with clarity from a detached perspective (Fronsdal, 2021).

Remember that no two meditation sessions are alike. There will be times where your mind is alive with ideas and thoughts, and other times where the 15 minutes seem to fly by blissfully. Below is an adaptation of the z-technique daily program which Emily Fletcher has outlined.

An Adaptation of The Z Technique: Daily Program Instructions (Fletcher, 2019, 148-149)

1. Set your alarm to wake up 20 minutes earlier than usual.
2. Freshen up. Splash your face with water, brush your teeth, or make your bed to become more alert.
3. Take a seat in a chair or sit up in bed:
 - Back supported, head free
 - Have a timepiece near you
 - Don’t worry if the room around you isn’t silent

- Before you begin, know what time you want to come up and out. Do the math on your 15 minute end time.
- **MINDFULNESS:** Start with 1-2 minutes of coming to your senses. Try to identify your strongest and weakest sensations in the environment around you. What is your strongest sensation of touch? Maybe it's the feeling of your body grounded to your seat. And the weakest? Maybe it's a slight breeze or the feeling of your hair brushing your neck. What is the loudest noise you can hear? And the quietest? Use these questions to process what you hear, feel, smell, and taste.
- **MEDITATION:** Let your mantra come to you, gently. This is not a focusing tool, and thoughts are not the enemy – effortlessness is key. If the mantra doesn't bubble up on its own, pick it up as a faint idea. If it slips away, let it go. Other thoughts will come in. That is great. When you are curious how much time has passed, open your timepiece as often as you like. Don't set an alarm; start to train your internal clock. (If you like, you can set a backup alarm for 22 minutes as an extra precaution so you don't worry about sleeping through your whole day.)
- **MANIFESTING:** In the 2-minutes safety stop after you put down your mantra, take a moment of gratitude, listing in your mind the things you are thankful for at present. Then gently transition into visualizing a dream or goal as if it is happening right now. Give yourself the gift of feeling how you want to feel on the other side of the goal.

An Adaptation of The Z Technique: Forming Habits

In your preferred calendar app, schedule out 2 meditations a day for the next month, preferably one in the morning and one in the afternoon/early evening. Set a daily morning alarm to allow yourself enough time to do at least 1 meditation a day to beat out the excuse 'I don't have enough time in my schedule'.

Other meditation resources

Finding a meditation style that you like is a personal preference. If the Z technique doesn't feel right to you, don't force it! Guided meditation can often be a good introduction to the practice, especially for those who like more structure. Below are some links to guided meditation resources:

[Headspace: Meditation For Beginners](#)

This article details all the need-to-knows for meditation beginners and includes a free guided meditation. The Headspace app features tons of meditations and mindfulness exercises catered to any life event or emotion you have. Headspace offers a free trial, and college students get a discounted subscription.

[Insight Timer](#)

Insight timer is a space where you can follow along with pre-recorded and live event meditations led by instructors from all over. The Insight Timer app is free and gives access to over 90,000 titles.

Knowing how to recognize and name emotions: Emotional Literacy

Labeling

Labeling is the act of naming our emotions. Oftentimes, we have a hard time recognizing how we're feeling, or we entirely mistake one emotion for another. "There are a variety of reasons why this is so difficult: We've been trained to believe that strong emotions should be suppressed. We have certain (sometimes unspoken) societal and organizational rules against expressing them. Or we've never learned a language to accurately describe our emotions" (David, 2016). Harvard Business Review recommends some exercises which can help us label and process our emotions.

Broadening Emotional Vocabulary

When you experience a strong emotion, either positive or negative, try and come up with 1-3 words to call it. This will help reveal how deep and complex our feelings are, and have the language to be able to communicate that to others. Inevitably, stronger emotional literacy will enforce your ability to empathize with others. Below is a non-exhaustive list of some of the common emotions you may experience. The more specific you can get about your emotions, the better!

A List of Emotions

Go beyond the obvious to identify exactly what you're feeling.

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
Grumpy	Disappointed	Afraid	Jealous	Isolated	Thankful
Frustrated	Mournful	Stressed	Betrayed	Self-conscious	Trusting
Annoyed	Regretful	Vulnerable	Isolated	Lonely	Comfortable
Defensive	Depressed	Confused	Shocked	Inferior	Content
Spiteful	Paralyzed	Bewildered	Deprived	Guilty	Excited
Impatient	Pessimistic	Skeptical	Victimized	Ashamed	Relaxed
Disgusted	Tearful	Worried	Aggrieved	Repugnant	Relieved
Offended	Dismayed	Cautious	Tormented	Pathetic	Elated
Irritated	Disillusioned	Nervous	Abandoned	Confused	Confident

SOURCE SUSAN DAVID

© HBR.ORG

Another source for understanding emotions includes [Plutchik's Wheel of Emotions](#). This interactive wheel shows some common symptoms of each emotion, as well as what those emotions could be telling you.

Write Out Your Emotions

“James Pennebaker has done 40 years of research into the links between writing and emotional processing. His experiments revealed that people who write about emotionally charged episodes experience a marked increase in their physical and mental well-being” (David, 2016). The study also revealed that “using phrases such as **“I have learned,” “It struck me that,” “The reason that,” “I now realize,”** and **“I understand”** [...] allowed them to gain a new perspective on their emotions and to understand them and their implications more clearly”(David, 2016).

Practice the emotional writing exercise below twice a week.

- Set a timer for 20 minutes
- Using either a notebook or computer, write about your emotional experiences from the past week, month, or year.
- Don't worry about making it perfect or readable: go where your mind takes you.

- At the end, you don't have to save the document; the point is that those thoughts are now out of you and on the page.

Identifying Personal Strengths and Weaknesses

Personal SWOT Analysis

A personal SWOT analysis is used to understand your intrinsic strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats available to you. To help you fill out the table below, think about how others might describe you objectively. (Ferguson, 2019-2020).

<p>Strengths</p> <p>What do you do well or better than others? What energizes you? What skills/ talents/ knowledge/ resources/ connections do you have? What do others see as your strengths? What do you like about yourself? What do you enjoy doing? What comes effortlessly to you?</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>What could you improve? What lowers your energy? What do you put off doing? What skills or talents do you lack? What do others see as your weak points? What do you need to face up to? What are your bad habits? What causes you to fail? What should you avoid?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • •
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>What opportunities are out there for you? What's in demand that you could satisfy? What trends could you benefit from? Which strengths could you capitalize on? What training, connections or resources could you take advantage of?</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>What trends and threats could harm you? Who are your competitors and what are they doing that you're not? What threats do your weaknesses expose you to? What obstacles do you face? Where are you behind the curve?</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • • •
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Peer/Colleague Feedback: 360-Degree Skills Survey

Sometimes, it can be hard to separate our perceived selves from our real selves, especially with an underdeveloped sense of self-awareness. By involving outside observers, we can gain more insight on our skills and shortcomings. First, identify at least 2 colleagues who work somewhat closely with you and have an understanding of your work style. If it is more comfortable to keep the evaluators' feedback anonymous, involve a mediator (a co-worker or manager who will not be evaluating you) to gather the results from your evaluators and email them back to you. Below is an email template for requesting a 360-degree survey, as well as the contents of the survey (adapted from *What to Ask in 360 Feedback: Example Questions and Free Template* by Qualtrics, 2021).

Subject: Skills evaluation survey for the professional development of [Subject Name]

Hello [Mediator Name and Evaluator Names],

You've been asked to provide employee feedback in this 360-degree survey for [Subject Name].

Below are some key leadership principles that apply to [Subject Name]'s development as a designer. Please provide your confidential feedback by answering the corresponding questions.

Mark the fields according to your understanding of [Subject Name]’s performance and work habits. After completing the survey, separately send your results to [Mediator Name], who will deliver your anonymous feedback to [Subject Name].

Thank you in advance for your time and commitment to helping [Subject Name] grow professionally.

Sincerely,

[Subject Name]

<i>Communication</i>	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	No Opportunity to Observe
Checks for understanding when communicating with others						
Asks meaningful questions to gain insight on customer problem and needs						
Tailors communication to fit the needs of the audience						
Accepts feedback gracefully and implements verbal instruction into design iterations						

<i>Initiative</i>	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	No Opportunity to Observe

Demonstrates self-starter work habits such as setting and honoring deadlines						
Demonstrates a growth-mindset with an eagerness to learn and take on challenging projects						
Leads the conversation in internal or customer design review meetings						

<i>Decision-making</i>	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	No Opportunity to Observe
Considers how decisions will impact the user, customer, and project progress before taking action						
Involves the right stakeholders when making decisions						
Knows when to focus on overarching conceptual framework and when to fixate on pixel-perfect details						
Applies a strategic mindset when approaching a problem						

<i>Storytelling</i>	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Always	No Opportunity to Observe
Designs assets and experiences using clear and concise language						
Is able to reiterate user stories with awareness of emotional touch points for the user						
Leverages appropriate design elements to convey the story visually						

Additional comments: _____

Self-Regulation Development

Hallmarks for Self-Regulation: Overview

Hallmarks for Self-Regulation are starred below. Choose which hallmarks you'd like to focus on, then add the corresponding development resources to your learning plan.

★ Ability to handle anger, sadness, and anxiety

- [Identifying emotional triggers](#)
- [Breathing exercises](#)
- [Journaling with a happy ending](#)

- ★ Taking responsibility for decisions and actions
 - [Journaling without heroes or villains](#)
 - ★ Openness to change
 - [Unpacking resistance to change](#)
 - [Stretch yourself in small ways](#)
 - [Be 'happenstance' about it](#)
-

Ability to handle anger, sadness, and anxiety

Experiencing negative feelings is natural. Strong emotional responses are like messages that tell our brain to act in the face of danger, whether that be a physical threat or a threat to our ego. Most of the situations that make us sad, anxious or angry don't require a fight or flight response. To understand this, think about a time where you felt so strongly about something that your emotions took over and you reacted in a way you later regretted. Emotional management doesn't mean suppressing negative emotions. It means we allow ourselves to feel these things while maintaining control over our reactions. Below are emotional management tools to prepare for an emotional event, be ready in the moment, and reflect after the fact.

Before the event: Identifying bodily responses to strong emotions

If you pay attention closely, our bodies often have physical responses to our emotions. Maybe you feel your face heat up when you're embarrassed or anxious, or maybe your head feels like it's pounding when you become angry, or maybe you start sweating when you feel challenged. If you can identify these physical responses, you'll be more capable of catching yourself in the moment before your emotions spiral out of control. This week, pay extra attention to any physical cues that follow an intense emotion. Make mental note of your findings, or use the space below to write about what emotions and situations trigger your bodily response.

Emotion:	
Situation:	

Bodily Response:	
------------------	--

Emotion:	
Situation:	
Bodily Response:	

In the moment: Breathing exercises to talk you down

This breathing exercise (adapted from *Stress Less, Accomplish More* by Emily Fletcher, p. 37) is a great tool for cooling yourself down in the heat of the moment. As soon as you feel your emotions bubbling up or you take notice of one of your bodily reactions to stress, take a few moments to regulate your breathing.

The 2x Breath

1. Start with your eyes open or closed. Inhale through your nose for 2 counts, then exhale through your mouth for 4 counts.
2. Repeat this breathing pattern. Inhale for 2 counts, exhale for 4.
3. When you've started to notice you're a little calmer, try doing this breathing from a seated position with your eyes closed. Do this for about 15 breaths.
4. After you've returned to the present and to your body, in your mind list three things you're grateful for. This will help put things into perspective.
5. Use the space below to reflect on how you felt before this exercise and how you feel afterward.

How did I feel before this exercise?	How do I feel now?

After the event: Journaling with a happy ending

Journaling is a really great way to process events and our emotional reactions to them. However, it is important not to ruminate with a fixed mindset, which can sometimes happen

with journaling if you don't try to see things from a different perspective or talk through your emotions with someone right away (Scott, MS, 2020). You can write down your thoughts in the spaces provided below or on a separate paper.

1. Think about a negative event that happened in your life recently. You will be exploring the emotions you felt during and after this event, and then try to end on a positive note.
2. Ask yourself, what did I learn from this situation? How did you grow? Write it down.

3. Ask yourself, what do you hope for in the future?

Taking responsibility for decisions and actions

As discussed in the first hallmark of this section, how we react is a direct result of our ability to manage our emotions. Reactions lead to decisions and actions, and whether we make these rashly or with thoughtful intent is the difference between emotional hijacking and emotional autonomy. Regardless of how you channel your emotions into a decision, it is important to understand your personal role in how you got there. Furthermore, someone who can take responsibility for their personal contributions is more likely to receive feedback with an open mind and a level head.

Journaling without heroes or villains

When you blame others for the shortcomings in your life, you're likely holding onto grudges from the past. Bringing this baggage with you into your future endeavors is only using up mental energy that could be better spent on creating positive outcomes for yourself.

Once we stop playing the blame game, we can view opportunities for improvement from a growth mindset. This journaling exercise (adapted from *How to Process Emotions Through Journaling* by Elizabeth Scott, MS) helps to digest past events from a growth mindset by reframing the story in our heads. Feel free to use the space below or write your answers on a separate paper.

1. Think about a time where you were frustrated with how things turned out. Ask yourself, why did things happen this way?

2. If someone was involved in the outcome, work on forgiving them. You can even go as far as to write, "I forgive [the person] for [what they did], and going forward I will remind myself that I make mistakes too. I am committing to a fresh start with [the person]."

3. What role did you play in the outcome? Take responsibility for what you anticipated would happen. If you find yourself beating yourself up over your mistakes, take time to forgive yourself. You can write something like "I wish that I could have performed differently, but I can learn from this experience. I am [3 adjectives to describe your strengths], and I am only getting better with each challenge that comes my way".

4. Write about what you wish could have happened, and list the things you will work on in the future to achieve this outcome.

Openness to change

Flexibility and adaptability are key characteristics of someone who can keep their emotions in check. If you feel debilitated by a wrench thrown in your plans, you'll be emotionally and mentally drained every time things don't go your way. When you expose yourself to volatile situations and accept that change is inevitable, you'll be much more equipped to handle anything that comes your way.

Unpacking resistance to change

Change can be scary, exciting, or anything in between. Harvard Business Review details methods for unpacking resistance to change. "Understanding the underlying reasons for your resistance requires a high level of self-awareness. For example, if you're resisting because you're worried that the change will make you look incompetent, you can create a learning plan for the new skills you will need in order to be successful" (Wiens & Rowell, 2018). Reflect on the prompts below.

1. Identify the source of your resistance to a change
 - a. What plan can you put into place to help you prepare for this change? This can help you feel more in control of the situation.
2. Question the basis of your emotional response
 - a. What is my primary emotion associated with this change?
 - b. What do I believe to be true that's making me feel this way? This can help you identify the stories you're telling yourself.

Stretch yourself in small ways

Below are some ways which you can build change into your daily life (adapted from *Developing Emotional Intelligence - Part 13 - Flexibility* by Learning Cog).

- **Start small.** Think of ways that you can warm up to change, such as making changes to your routine. This could include taking a different route to work or class, or taking on a project with parameters that you're not super well-versed in.
- **Practice a flexible mindset when listening to other people's ideas.** Try to quiet any judgements that arise in your mind, and put yourself in their shoes.

- **Take on a new hobby.** It takes a lot of time and practice to get good at a sport or hobby, so if you can get comfortable with being bad at something, you'll be more comfortable with failure. Stick with it, watch yourself grow, and celebrate small wins.

Be 'happenstance' about it

Uncertainty is a factor of change that can seem scary. While planning your days and months with structure and foresight is certainly beneficial, it is important to leave room for change. Plans that are too rigid don't account for the unknown, which inevitably will find its way into your schedule. When you approach some things in life with a laissez faire attitude, you are welcoming change.

The Happenstance Learning Theory, developed by Stanford professor John D. Krumboltz, is defined as "how you take action, learn from and explore diverse experiences to seize career opportunities that may come your way. The skills you need to have are curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism and risk taking. By this theory, you have to factor unplanned events into your career development process, meaning that uncertainty becomes opportunity" (Russell, 2020). When you live by your values, you will attract opportunities that you might not have imagined or planned for. Keep these things in mind as you try to incorporate happenstance into your career goals:

- Keep a visual representation of a dream, value, or career goal (in the form of a dream board, a quote, or a picture of a place you want to live) to remind you each day of what you're working toward. You don't have to map out all the gritty details of how to get there.
- Draw a mental picture. If you tell yourself a detailed, wordy plan, your brain is unlikely to pick up the idea with interest. But, when you visualize something, you are using the same brain regions as when you are actually doing something (Pillay, 2011).
- Try to say yes to as many opportunities that come your way, because you never know where they will lead. When you say no, you are closing yourself off from serendipitous opportunities such as being in the right place at the right time.

Internal Motivation Development

Hallmarks for Internal Motivation: Overview

Hallmarks for internal motivation are starred below. Choose which hallmarks you'd like to focus on, then add the corresponding development resources to your learning plan.

- ★ Hope and optimism
 - [Self-efficacy and locus of control](#)
 - ★ Strong intrinsic values
 - [Aligning your actions with your values](#)
 - ★ Resisting impulse and delaying gratification
 - [Mental breaks in between tasks](#)
 - [Gratitude journal](#)
 - ★ Finding flow
 - [Ways to enter flow](#)
-

Hope and Optimism

A person with hope and optimism is able to maintain a positive outlook in the face of adversity. They receive failure without self-judgement, are able to brush off negative emotions, and re-approach the problem with a learner's attitude and belief that things will turn out well. Optimism is built on a strong foundation of emotional management, so explore some of the techniques in [Self-Regulation](#) if you have not already done so.

Self-efficacy and locus of control

According to Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura, **self-efficacy** is the belief that one has control over the events of one's life and can meet challenges as they come up. He says that "People's beliefs about their abilities have a profound effect on those abilities. Ability is not a fixed property; there is a huge variability in how you perform. People who have a sense of self-efficacy bounce back from failures; they approach things in terms of how to handle them rather than worrying about what can go wrong" (Goleman, 1995, 80-81).

A person's confidence in completing a task comes from both their self-efficacy, or belief that they are capable of success, and their **locus of control**, or belief that they can control the outcomes of events. Locus of control exists on a continuum between two sides: external locus of control and internal locus of control.

Self-efficacy can be strengthened when you take inventory of the tools and skills you have available to you. See the [Personal SWOT Analysis](#) exercise to remind yourself of the opportunities and strengths that make you capable of accomplishing the task you're worried about.

Locus of Control

Where does your locus of control fall on the continuum? Read through the statements below and select the set that best describes your outlook on life (adapted from *Locus of Control and Your Life* by Cherry, 2019).

Outlook 1

- I often feel that I have little control over my life and what happens to me.
- People rarely get what they deserve.
- It isn't worth setting goals or making plans because too many things can happen that are outside of my control.
- Life is a game of chance.
- Individuals have little influence over the events of the world.

If the statements above best reflect your view on life, then you probably tend to have an external locus of control.

Outlook 2

- If you work hard and commit yourself to a goal, you can achieve anything.
- There is no such thing as fate or destiny.
- If you study hard and are well-prepared, you can do well on exams.
- Luck has little to do with success; it's mostly a matter of dedication and effort.
- In the long run, people tend to get what they deserve in life.

If the statements above best reflect your outlook on life, then you most likely have an internal locus of control.

“Your locus of control can have a major impact on your life, from how you cope with stress to your motivation to take charge of your life.

In many cases, having an internal locus of control can be a good thing. It means that you believe that your own actions have an impact.

If you tend to have more of an external locus of control, you might find it helpful to start actively trying to change how you view situations and events.

Rather than viewing yourself as simply a passive bystander who is caught up in the flow of life, think about actions you can take that will have an impact on the outcome” (Cherry, 2019).

Below are some steps to help change the way you view situations and events to reflect a more internal locus of control (adapted from *3 Ways to Increase Your Internal Locus of Control* by Entrepreneur Pathways, Inc, 2020).

3 Steps to Build an Internal Locus of Control

1. “Change the Blame Game”
 - a. Reflect back to a stressful situation at work or in life
 - b. Ask yourself “did I blame this situation on someone else, or myself?”
 - c. Think about how you can take responsibility for the outcome of the situation rather than pinning the blame on someone else or an external factor.
2. “Take Charge”
 - a. Imagine your future goals and the path you will take to get there
 - b. Ask yourself, does that path consist of thoughts like “if this happens”, “I hope they will see my effort”, or “it will take some luck”?
 - c. Now reframe your thoughts to “when I make this happen”, “when they see my effort”, or “determination, not luck will take me to my future goals”
3. “Embrace Failure”
 - a. Ask yourself, “do I still pursue taking a risk or challenging task if there is probability of failure?”
 - b. Think of small things you can go out and do that may result in failure. The more you expose yourself to challenging situations, the more comfortable you will be with accepting failure.

- c. Follow up after each failure and think about how factors that are in your control could be improved to reach success. By telling yourself that you are in control of your outcomes, you will focus on improving yourself, which reflects an internal locus of control.
-

Strong Intrinsic Values

A lack of passion can hinder internal motivation. It can help to consider what you value most in life, then align aspects of your work responsibilities with those values to achieve a greater sense of purpose. Living life with a strong sense of purpose makes it easier to get through roadblocks with resilience, positivity, and determination. The resource below helps you identify your values, understand why you value them, and come up with actions to honor those values (adapted from *Actions Based on Values* by Dialectical Behavior Therapy, 2021).

Aligning your actions with your values

Step 1: Life aspects you value the most

The list below consists of life aspects or life values that are predominant in people's lives. Different people will value these aspects differently. Depending on how important they are to you, choose three values that are the most important to you.

1. Romantic relationships (dating, marriage)
2. Family (family relationships)
3. Work (advancing at work, finances)
4. Socializing and friends (spending time with friends)
5. Educational goals (finishing school, taking different courses and classes)
6. Spirituality, religion (sense of connection with something bigger)
7. Health and self-care (taking care of physical and mental health)
8. Community life (charity, contributing to your community)
9. Recreation and fun (hobbies, activities in your free time)
10. Other _____

Step 2: Reasons why you value these aspects

After you choose the three values that are most important to you right now, think about why you find these aspects important and what exactly about them is meaningful for you. Write down your reasons in the table at the bottom of this activity.

Step 3: Actions based on values

Think about what exactly you would do to live your life according to the values you chose. What activities would you want to do? Be specific - think of actions that are realistic, think of when you would do them and how. It's not enough to write general statements like "I want to be better at work", but think about what you would actually do to achieve that (for example "I can organize my files better and research best accessibility design practices").

1st Value	2nd Value	3rd Value
Reasons why this value is important to me:	Reasons why this value is important to me:	Reasons why this value is important to me:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
Activities I can do based on this value:	Activities I can do based on this value:	Activities I can do based on this value:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •

Resisting Impulses and Delaying Gratification

Motivation is the ingredient that fuels success. Both a passion project and a routine work assignment can be derailed by motivation-killers, like frequent distractions and impulses (Key word: frequent. A little distraction can be good, and we'll get into that in the first resource below). In order to build defense against these motivation-killers, it is important to build self control. Self-control demonstrates an ability to regulate your emotions in order to prioritize long-term rewards over instant gratification.

Mental breaks in between tasks

It may sound counter-intuitive, but it is important to allow your mind to wander a bit in order to maintain sustained focus. It is natural to have ideas and urges pop up in your head as you're trying to focus on a task. When we give in immediately to these impulses, that's when we find ourselves adding extraneous tabs to our internet browser or zoning out. It's actually good to honor these impulses, but rather than honor them immediately, we will set them aside to acknowledge during a mental break.

Research suggests that "people who let their minds wander from time to time—at least when it's not critical to stay focused—are more likely to reconnect with the longer-term goals they have, which mean a lot more to them than the stuff that's instantly gratifying" (Davis, n.d.). When you take a mental break, you allow yourself to daydream freely about the things that don't matter to your task. This break could look like getting up and stretching or just sitting at your desk and looking away from your computer screen for a few moments. Two ways to incorporate mental breaks are listed below.

Mental breaks at a natural stopping point

Some people prefer to take their mental breaks at a natural stopping point, like:

- After completing a task that consumed a lot of mental energy
- Before transitioning over to a meeting or another task

Mental breaks at 25 minute increments: The Pomodoro technique

The pomodoro technique (Cirillo Consulting GMBH, 2011-2020) is a great way to gamify your work. By scheduling breaks, you are motivated to work toward an incentive. The Pomodoro technique uses 25 minute work increments, so it can also be exciting to challenge yourself to see how much you can accomplish as you race against the clock. Incorporate this technique into your work schedule as you see fit.

1. Identify the task you need to complete
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes, which equals 1 pomodoro
3. Work on your task until the timer goes off
4. Mark a check-mark on a paper to signify the completion of 1 pomodoro
5. Take a 5 minute mental break
6. Repeat steps 1-5 four (4) times. It's okay to work on the same task over multiple pomodoros.
7. After the 4th pomodoro, take a 15-30 minute break. Repeat the process as many times as you want.

Gratitude Journal

Reflecting on what you're grateful for is a great habit to adopt to enhance overall emotional intelligence. In terms of resisting impulses, researchers have "correlated the emotion of gratitude – feeling thankful – with a person's tendency to prefer waiting longer for better rewards" (Davis, n.d.). Like mental breaks, take a few moments out of your work day to reflect mentally on what you're grateful for. Some people like to keep a physical gratitude journal as well. Try to do this once a day.

Finding Flow

Have you ever lost track of time as you've been entranced by the work or activity you're doing? It might seem like the environment around you melts away, leaving you in a blissful state of uninterrupted focus. This joyous zone of undivided attention is known as **flow**. Flow, according to Daniel Goleman, is "emotional intelligence at its best" because it demonstrates one's ability to align their awareness with their actions. When you enter flow, you are channeling your emotions into energy and positivity to fuel high performance.

Why is flow important for motivation? When your work suddenly becomes effortless, stress and performance anxiety leaves your mind. There is no concern with succeeding or failing during flow, only pleasure doing the task at hand. Additionally, "Because flow feels so good, it can be intrinsically rewarding" (Goleman, 1995, 81). This sense of pleasure and purpose is the ultimate motivator.

Ways to enter flow

1. Intentionally focus on one task at a time

- a. Clear your mind of mental clutter by setting aside time where you will only think about the task in front of you, not the other things you need to accomplish.
 2. Find balance between challenging and capable
 - a. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the psychologist who coined flow, “People seem to concentrate best when the demands on them are a bit greater than usual, and they are able to give more than usual. If there is too little demand on them, people are bored. If there is too much for them to handle, they get anxious. Flow occurs in that delicate zone between boredom and anxiety” (Goleman, 1995, 82).
 - b. Try to expose yourself to design projects that challenge you, as long as you have enough time to dedicate your efforts to them. You’ll find yourself pushing your boundaries more, learning more, and building your sense of [self-efficacy](#).
 3. Consider what drives you
 - a. Think of your work responsibilities. What pushes you to do a good job? Is it getting approval from your coworkers and managers? Is it meeting the needs of the customer you’re designing for? Is it your own drive to grow and improve?
 - b. When you find aspects of your work that bring you internal satisfaction, you’ll find opportunities to achieve flow.
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Empathy Development

Hallmarks for Empathy: Overview

Hallmarks for empathy are starred below. Choose which hallmarks you’d like to focus on, then add the corresponding development resources to your learning plan.

★ Understanding the user’s needs

- [Paying attention to non-verbal cues](#)
- [Create personas, empathy maps and journey maps](#)

★ Respecting differences

- [Letting go of judgements](#)

★ Cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness of many experiences

- [Cross-cultural design considerations](#)
 - [Designing for accessibility](#)
-

Understanding the user's needs

It's difficult to know how to design for your customer if you don't know how to relate with them. Everyone is born with the capacity to be empathetic, but it is learned and developed with time and experience. There are tools to increase empathy for both day to day and customer relationships.

Paying attention to non-verbal cues

According to Daniel Goleman, "The emotional truth is in *how* he says something rather than in *what* he says. One rule of thumb used in communications research is that 90 percent or more of an emotional message is nonverbal" (Goleman, 1995, 87). Most of our knowledge about non-verbal cues is learned informally through experience and processed subconsciously. However, being intentionally aware of a person's non-verbal cues during a conversation can help reinforce this subconscious habit. Below is a list of common cues.

Tone of voice

Oftentimes, the emotional message behind *what someone says* contradicts with the emotional message behind *their tone of voice*. For example, say you tell your friend that you have to cancel your plans. They say "that's okay, I don't mind", but their voice is flat, quiet, and trails off at the end. This conveys the message that they are in fact disappointed by your change of plans.

Body language and gestures

When you're in the same room with someone, it's really easy to pick up on their true emotions by being aware of their bodily reactions. Body language includes both gestures and posture. Gestures that indicate discomfort might include fidgeting with the hands or feet, while someone who is engaged in a conversation might nod along when listening and use their hands to convey points while talking. Postures that indicate discomfort could include shifting around in a chair, keeping hands in pockets, or slouching, while someone who is engaged might sit/stand straight with their body open and feet facing you during conversation.

Facial expressions

It's rare that people can keep a perfect poker face when they react to bad news or criticism at work. Someone who is disappointed or upset might purse their lips as if they are keeping something from spilling out. Someone who is anxious might dart their eyes around or avoid eye contact at all. An employee on the receiving end of a shortened deadline might not be able to contain their surprise with an open mouth and raised eyebrows. Someone who takes offense to a joke or piece of criticism might scrunch their nose and give a labored half smile.

- To practice recognizing the hidden meaning behind non-verbal cues, analyze a conversation you had with a coworker or friend where you suspected some disconnect between what they said and how they felt. Write down the non-verbal cues you noticed and what emotions were associated with them.

Who were you talking to, what was the topic of conversation, and result?:

Their tone of voice:

Their body language and gestures:

Their facial expressions:

Creating personas, empathy maps and journey maps

As a designer, it's great practice to create personas and journey maps for your users to understand their motivations, interests and pain points. In the initial stages of a project, there will be an engagement meeting with the client and key stakeholders to identify the problem and the customer.

Create a persona

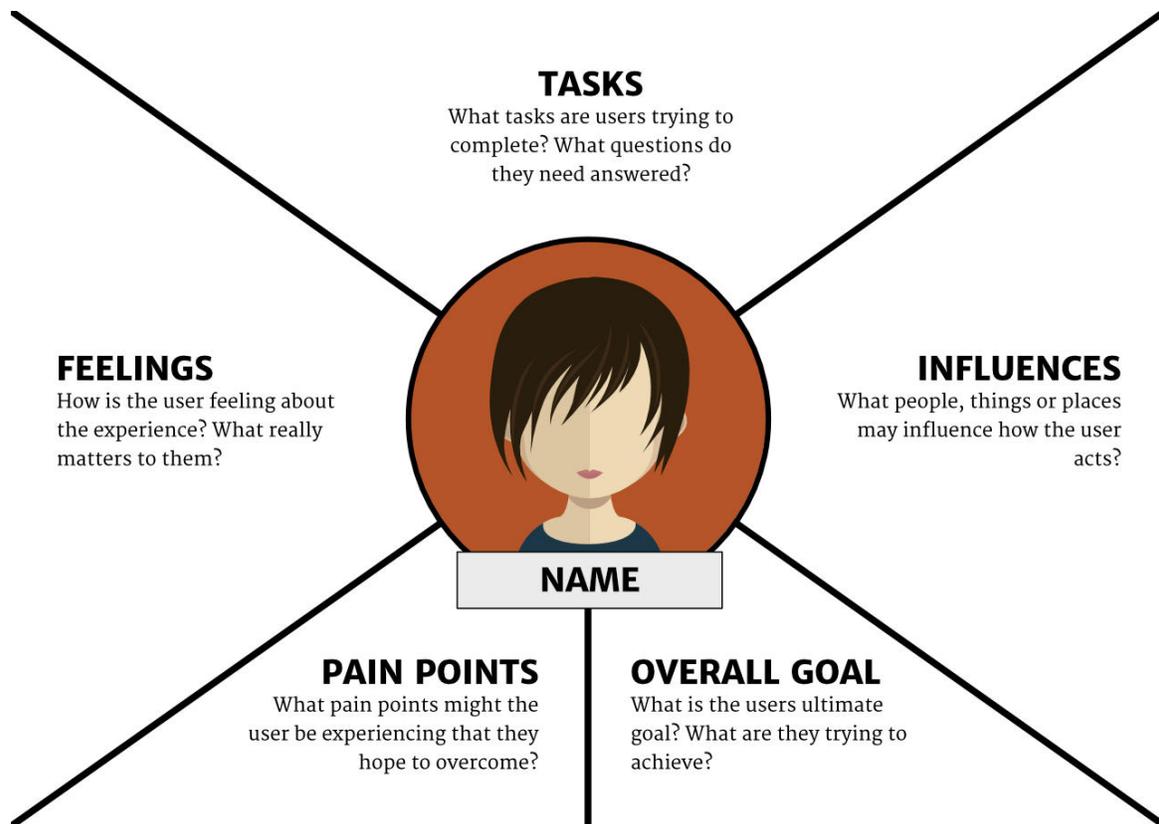
A persona is used to represent a typical user from the demographic you are designing for, or your audience. Personas are fictional characters who embody the traits of your audience, and the more detailed you make them, the better you'll be able to make user-centered design decisions and problem-solve. "Ideally all personas should be based on solid research findings, but this isn't always possible. At the beginning of a project (during the discovery phase or exploration phase) you'll have no research to draw upon, but you will have a room full of project stakeholders. They probably already have some fairly clear hypotheses about their customer segments and the key defining characteristics of each type" (Brignull, 2016).

- Start off by giving them a realistic first and last name. This name should be a balance between generic and unique, and should not include alliterations or celebrity names.
- What is their age? What is their gender?
- What is their occupation? How much do they make a year?
- Where do they live? Do they have a family? Are they single?
- Then, find an image to represent this person. Here are 2 resources to find a persona image:
 - thispersondoesnotexist.com (refresh the page each time to load a new image)
 - [Persona album on Flickr by Jason Travis](#)

Create an empathy map for your persona

Then, get more specific by creating an **empathy map** for this persona. Empathy maps are very quick, rough persona templates where you role-play the persona and say to yourself, "What would this persona think when they see this?" or "What unanswered questions would prevent them from proceeding to the next step?" (Brignull, 2016). The following empathy map prompt and diagram is defined by user experience consultant Paul Boag (Boag, 2015).

- What **tasks** are users trying to complete? What questions do they need answered?
- How is the user **feeling** about the experience? What really matters to them?
- What people, things or places may **influence** how the user acts?
- What **pain points** might the user be experiencing that they hope to overcome?
- What is the user's **overall goal**? What are they trying to achieve?



Create a journey map for your persona

A **journey map** is used to deconstruct the user's experience into a series of steps to identify gaps in your perception of them. This takes form in a table where the x-axis represents the steps in the user's experience in chronological order, and the y-axis draws inspiration from the empathy map. "There are two types of user journey maps: retrospective maps: where you map out how users currently do stuff (typically based on research findings); and prospective maps: where you map how you expect users to behave with a new product idea" (Brignull, 2016). Choose either a retrospective or prospective map based on what you are trying to accomplish. The y-axis items are defined as:

Actions: the thing the user needs to do to move to the next step

Questions: things the user needs answering before they'll be willing to move to the next step

Positives: positive, enjoyable things that improve the experience

Pain points: frustrations and annoyances that spoil the experience

Opportunities: design enhancements that you could implement in a new product, that address any of the problems identified.

For practice, create a persona for someone who frequently flies economy class for business trips twice a month. Fill out an empathy map and the journey map template below to document their experience from departure to arrival. You can also use this template for a design project.

	Task 1:	Task 2:	Task 3:	Task 4:	Task 5:	Task 6:
Actions						
Questions						
Positives						
Pain Points						
Opportunities						

Respecting differences

Respect for others' differences is the foundation for trust, honest communication, and an openness to other ideas. When you can look at a problem without tunnel vision, you'll be able to better understand and get along with other people.

Letting go of judgements

It's so easy to judge someone for thinking and behaving differently than you. Our brains are constantly making decisions of approval or disapproval when we observe other people's actions, whether we are conscious of it or not. When you reframe your thinking to remove yourself from the center of the situation, you can remove the negativity from your judgements about people. The following exercise (adapted from *Letting Go of Judgements* by Dialectical Behavior Therapy) should be repeated every day for 1 week. Write them down in a journal or on a separate piece of paper.

Judgement into Non-Judgement

This exercise helps you rewrite your judgements to be non-judgemental. Think of a judgement you passed about someone or a situation.

- a. Write the **judgement** you made:

Ex. "My manager never appreciates my work. They only give me criticism and don't thank me for all the time I've put into this project."

- b. Then, rewrite your judgement in a **mindful form**. Describe the situation factually, write down what feeling you had, and write down what you were thinking about.

Ex. "I just got out of a design review meeting and my manager had some critiques for my work. I feel like my hard work is going unnoticed and that my manager could do a better job of reinforcing what I am doing well. This makes me feel disappointed and inadequate."

- c. Lastly, think about what could be going on to contribute to the outcome of the situation that you maybe haven't considered.

Ex. "My manager has been really stressed about this project since it's been difficult to find a common ground with the client. They have a lot going on. They also might not want to impose any personal bias about

good aspects of the design to ensure that I keep designing to meet the standards of the customer.”

Cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness of many experiences

It’s common to find yourself designing from a one-sided perspective based on *your* preferences, experiences, and cultural background. After all, your understanding of what exists comes from the narrow lens of what you have seen or learned about. Empathetic designers stretch their awareness beyond their bubble of personal experiences to include the needs and values of diverse audiences. It’s generally good practice to consider how your design will be perceived by different people so you can create a universal experience or include adaptable versions to suit everyone’s needs.

Cross-cultural design considerations

When designing a product or experience that will be used internationally or has the potential to scale to global markets, it is imperative to familiarize yourself with the design practices of the cultures it will be used by. “When designing cross-cultural products, designers not only have to contend with different languages, dialects, and dimensions of national culture, but also cultural differences in color psychology and mental models” (Vieira, n.d.). Culture can even differ in subtler ways, according to Fons Trompenaars and Geert Hofstede who authored The Seven Dimensions of Culture model. Meticulous user research has to be conducted to understand cultural norms and differences. For this exercise, read through the guide below that shows what to look for when researching other cultures (adapted from *The Complete Guide to Cross-Cultural Design* by Jon Vieira).

Research: Design Principles and Standard Practices

- **Color psychology and symbolism**

- “There is no substantive evidence supporting general effects of color on emotion or mood. Similarly, there is no universal symbolism for different colors—different cultures attach different meanings to colors. Therefore, verify the meaning of colors and color combinations for a particular target audience prior to use” (Lidwell et al., 2009).

Ex. In western cultures and countries like the United States, green can represent luck. However, in Indonesia and other South American countries, green is a forbidden color, as it represents death.

- Explore the emotions associated with different cultures in [this diagram](#)

- **Mental models**

- “Mental models are representations of systems and environments derived from experience” (Lidwell et al., 2009). Different countries and cultures have different mental models, so doing user testing and research to understand common associations is important.

Ex. Amazon realized that their users in India were not using the search function. They learned that in India, there was no mental model around a magnifying glass icon signifying ‘search’. To fix this, they added the word search next to the icon.

- **Imagery**

- “Varying attitudes towards gender, clothing, and religion in different parts of the world calls for designers to be extra careful when working with images” (Vieira, n.d.). It is important to make sure there is nothing offensive or outlandish in the context of the culture’s values and norms.

- **Microcopy and text**

- There is no guarantee that a phrase on a button in English will translate to take up the same amount of space in German. This occurrence is called text expansion. To avoid text expansion, view how much space your text takes up when translated, and choose different wording or build in more padding to make it cross-culture friendly.

Research: Seven Dimensions of Culture

“Hofstede contests conventionally narrow views of language and culture. Everyone knows that our spoken accents develop based on where we grew up. Less talked about, though, is that how we feel and act is also a type of accent influenced by our locale” (Vieira, n.d.). The seven dimensions of culture help to dissect a country’s collective attitude toward certain topics and structures. This kind of research can help you appropriately craft the overall tone and experience of a design.

- **Universalism versus particularism.** Do people place value on rules, laws, and dogma? Or do they believe the world to be circumstantial?
- **Individualism versus communitarianism.** Do people believe in personal freedom and achievement? Or is the group greater than the individual?
- **Specific versus diffuse.** Are work and personal lives kept separate or do they overlap?

- **Neutral versus emotional.** Do people make great efforts to express their emotions or are they kept in control?
- **Achievement versus ascription.** Are people valued for what they do or who they are?
- **Sequential time versus synchronous time.** Some people like events to happen in a striated sequence. Others believe that the past, present, and future are an interwoven continuum.
- **Internal direction versus outer direction.** Some cultures profess to control nature and the environment, while others believe the opposite.



[The Seven Dimensions of Culture Comparison Tool](#)

helps to understand the degree to which a country or culture is aligned with each dimension. Since the scores on the dimensions are relative, “culture can be only used meaningfully by comparison” (Vieira, n.d.).

Designing for accessibility

Accessible design is at the forefront of today’s design standards, and for good reason. According to the CDC, there are 61 million persons in the US with some form of disability. That makes up 26% of the country’s population (National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). People with visual and hearing impairments have difficulty consuming content that is not designed under the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#). Websites must comply with the minimum tier of these guidelines by law, but it is best practice to make your site or app as accessible as possible. Below are some tips and tools to keep accessibility in mind when designing (adapted from *It’s Global Accessibility Awareness Day!* by IXIS). Read through the tips below and think about how you can make your existing and future designs more accessible.

1. Add Alt Text to all images you insert into content pages.

With almost all CMS platforms there is an option to add an 'Alternative text' line when you upload an image. This text acts as a replacement for the image if it fails to load, but is also accessed by screen readers for users who may have the software 'read' the picture. You can, therefore, use this field to describe an image and give context to users who would otherwise miss it.

On top of all that, filling in this one box can help bring your SEO up - organically! It gives search engines more information to crawl and can also be used to drop in an extra few keywords too - just make sure they describe the image!

2. Choose colours with care.

Sometimes we can talk or joke about colour blindness as if it's a, no pun intended, black-and-white issue.

However, people perceive colours in unique ways. Remember the outcry on social media about the black and gold dress (or whichever colours you saw?)

Following this, it's known that you need to make sure the colours you select on your site contrast well to ensure that everyone can distinguish between various elements on the page. Online checkers are available that allow you to see if your site or choice of colours work well, or not, for all of your users.

[Adobe Color](#) has a color wheel tool that simulates how your colors will appear to different types of color blindness.

3. Having the ability to resize the text on your site.

Most devices and browsers will have a function that allows users to resize text, which can be helpful for those with visual impairments or just for mum so she can hold her phone at arm's length and squint.

However, if you don't build your site to support these kinds of features, resizing text could break your design or make it difficult to interact with your site. To make sure your site meets a standard that everyone can use, test your font sizes thoroughly by increasing the zoom level in your own browser on different devices. If you notice that content becomes difficult to read or navigate and you're not sure how to combat it, you can check out this guide by WebAIM that discusses font size.

4. Create content with accessibility in mind!

Keep accessibility in mind for every aspect of your website.

This means paying attention to relatively minor things that are easy to brush under the carpet, such as always fully writing out acronyms and making sure you give all your links unique, descriptive names and anchor text. Keep in mind that — just as your site should be usable by anybody from anywhere with any ability level — your content should be approachable, readable and well written no matter who discovers it and what their story is.

Some design considerations to help users with epilepsy can include:

- Foreground and background colors can be selected by the user.
- Width is no more than 80 characters or glyphs (40 if CJK).
- Text is not justified (aligned to both the left and the right margins).
- Line spacing (leading) is at least space-and-a-half within paragraphs, and paragraph spacing is at least 1.5 times larger than the line spacing.
- Text can be resized without assistive technology up to 200 percent in a way that does not require the user to scroll horizontally to read a line of text on a full-screen window.

5. Keyboard friendly

Put simply: for a website to be accessible, it must work without the need for a user to have or be able to use a mouse. This is because many assistive technologies rely on keyboard-only navigation. Therefore, this means you need to make it possible to use all of your site's major features via a keyboard and nothing else. This includes accessing all pages, links, content, and so on.

This is easy to test — simply use your own site without a mouse. If you find that you can't access certain elements or that navigating is difficult, you can pinpoint those issues and make changes to them, now you've identified where they are!

To help you out with this, WebAIM provides a handy guide for keyboard accessibility design.

Social Skills Development

Hallmarks for Social Skills: Overview

Hallmarks for social skills are starred below. Choose which hallmarks you'd like to focus on, then add the corresponding development resources to your learning plan.

★ Personal connection

- [Active listening](#)
- [Managing others' emotions](#)

★ Social analysis

- [Building intimacy and rapport](#)

★ Organizing groups

- [Know your network](#)
-

Personal connection

Strong personal connections are built on a foundation of empathy and self-awareness, so it is important to work on those competencies before tackling the social skills competency. Strong connections are often forged subconsciously, but if you practice the conversation tips below, you can turn them into subconscious habits.

Active listening

Have you ever left a conversation where you felt like the other person wasn't paying attention to what you were saying? Maybe they kept interrupting you, or everything they contributed to the conversation revolved around themselves, or maybe they seemed to be gazing off or on their phone. You probably wouldn't say you felt super connected with this person during your conversation. Going back to empathy, people like to feel heard and understood, so it is important to show that you are fully engaged in your conversations. There are subtle and straightforward ways to ensure that you are being an active listener when talking face to face with someone. Read through the tips below and consider what you could improve on and how you will incorporate them into your conversations.

1. **Adjust your body to face the other person head-on.** In American culture, this posture shows openness and undivided attention. However, other cultures have other posture etiquette for conversing with others, so it is important to be aware of these differences.
2. **Affirm that you understand what they're talking about.** There are many ways to do this. Nodding along to points you agree with or throwing in a verbal 'yes' are great ways to let the person know you are following along and understanding what they are saying. Another great thing to do is reiterate what the person is saying by summarizing their points for clarification. This could look like, "So what you're saying is that ___". If the person confirms that you are understanding their story, you can respond with something like, "Okay, got it, that makes sense".
3. **Quiet thoughts about what you're going to say next.** Everyone is guilty of being consumed in a conversation with what you are going to contribute to it. Especially in a big group, it is easy to lose focus on what is being said by others when you're waiting for a turn to interject your statement. Yes, some things are important to vocalize and require an uninterrupted train of thought. However, people take notice when what you say next doesn't correlate with what they just said.
4. **Know who to center the conversation around.** If a friend is confiding in you about something really difficult in their life, they probably don't want you to chime in about how your life is also really difficult. This is easier said than done. It can be hard to find other ways to show your sympathy for someone without showing that you relate to them. Some people feel soothed to know that they are not alone, but some people just want to be listened to. If you have trouble reading what people want from a relational or conversational context, you can always ask them "What do you need from me right now? Do you want sympathy or solutions?". This allows them to set the boundaries they want for the conversation, and you will know how to respond.

Managing others' emotions

According to Daniel Goleman, "Being able to manage emotions in someone else is the core of the art of handling relationships". There are many perks that come with the ability to manage other people's emotions, including shaping an encounter, mobilizing and inspiring others, thriving in intimate relationships, persuading and influencing others, and putting others at ease (Goleman, 1995, 100).

1. **Adhering to display rules.** The most basic way to ensure you have a positive influence on others' emotions is to express your feelings in a socially appropriate way. The concept of emotional expression social etiquette is defined by Paul Ekman as '**display**

rules' (Goleman, 1995, 101). It is important to note again that these vary across different cultures. In America, most people are averted to expressions of rage and sadness through tantrums, crying, and screaming matches. Ideally if you adhere to society's display rules, people should be comfortable being around you.

2. **Steering the emotional energy in the conversation.** The less obvious component of managing others' emotions is understanding the power dynamic that takes place in a conversation. Generally, the person who is more forceful with their expression of emotion transmits their emotions to the person who is more passive. This phenomenon occurs because "we subconsciously imitate the emotions we see displayed by someone else, through an out-of-awareness motor mimicry of their facial expression, gestures, tone of voice, and other non-verbal markers of emotion" (Goleman, 1995, 103). If you want to energize someone, for example, you would speak to them with exuberance in your tone of voice, excited hand gestures, and exaggerated facial expressions. Once you take notice of how your nonverbals are replicated by the other person, you'll learn more ways to manage their mood.
3. **Putting others at ease.** Perhaps the most important thing to be able to manage in others is a sense of ease. People like to be soothed when they are feeling high-strung or experiencing something difficult. Next time you're speaking to someone who is in distress, notice how your response does or doesn't calm them down. Some tips include speaking slowly and with a soft voice and showing your concern with your facial expression and body language. If the other person is okay with it, show your solidarity by sitting close to them and having a point of physical contact such as a hand on their shoulder.

Social analysis

Social analysis is the ability to detect and have insight about people's feelings, motives, and concerns. This builds directly off of the skills learned in the empathy section such as [paying attention to non-verbal cues](#), so refer back to that exercise to understand how to detect other people's emotions. Once you are able to read someone's emotions, the next step is knowing how to respond to them.

Building intimacy and rapport

Have you ever noticed that you are able to adapt your energy and how you present yourself depending on the people you are around? This may look like a change in tone, choice of

words, or even humor. The adjustments you make in regards to how you act with your parents versus how you act with a good friend are actually indicators of fantastic social skills. It might sound like you're not being your true self, but the truth is that we have many versions of our true selves. This can be explained by what we learned in managing others emotions. Remember here we talked about mirroring the emotion of the person who sets the dominant emotion? Well, we have many versions of ourselves because we influence and are influenced by our relationships.

If you are not the more passive emotion-setter, you can build great rapport with others by matching their energy. Oftentimes, the relationships that give us the most satisfaction are ones where you and the other person are almost always on the same page. We naturally gravitate toward like-minded people because we desire a shared human experience and we have an easier time building trust with people who we get along with. In order to make a good impression on someone or lay the foundation for a solid relationship, pay attention to the language and mannerisms that the other person uses. For example, in a work setting, if you meet someone who speaks in a formal manner and avoids using sarcasm, you'll make them feel comfortable by reciprocating their manner of speech and social boundaries. In a social setting, people will gravitate toward you if you match their energy level. For example, if someone initiates a joke and you reciprocate and banter back and forth with them, you're showing them that you appreciate how they socially present themselves. The ability to 'read the room' and tailor your response accordingly requires you to be extra in-tune with other people's nonverbal and social cues.

Organizing groups

People who can seamlessly orchestrate different groups of people into one conjoined effort have a very valuable social skill. Whether this is hosting a party and making sure all the guests are introduced to each other, or leading a team at work and delegating responsibilities, society needs people who can be the glue to bring everyone together.

Know your network

Repeating a common theme in this program, everyone loves to feel known and understood. It means a lot when you take the time to remember something about someone or consider how they might react to a situation. Therefore, it's important to really get to know the people around you so you can best honor their needs and preferences.

Making introductions

Whether in a social setting or at work, when you make the effort to formally introduce two people, it takes the pressure off of them to make connections out of thin air. Here are some tips that you can apply next time you make a thoughtful introduction:

1. Introduce their name, how you know them or their role and job description if applicable.
2. Talk about things the two people have in common, or if they are working with each other, how they will interact.
3. Compliment them! You'll set them for a positive first impression if you mention what is so awesome about each person and why you're excited for them two to meet.

Knowing their strengths, weaknesses, competencies, and communication styles

As for organizing a team in a work setting, it is really helpful to get to know your coworkers' personalities and what their weildhouse is.

A formal way to learn about your teammates' personalities would be a team-building activity where you take the [Myers-Briggs personality test](#) and exchange results with each other. 16 Personalities offers a workplace habits section which analyzes how their personality generally operates as a subordinate, colleague, or manager. Learning about these habits could unlock knowledge about what motivates them. This can predict how they will cooperate with other teammates.

It can also be valuable to learn about the personality types of your friends and loved ones so that you know what they need out of a relationship and achieve a sense of purpose. You can therefore pick up on less obvious similarities between your network of friends and become an expert at merging people and groups cohesively.

Internal Motivation				
Name of exercise	1 time	2 times	3 times	4+ times

Empathy				
Name of exercise	1 time	2 times	3 times	4+ times

Social Skills				
Name of exercise	1 time	2 times	3 times	4+ times

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