LIBERATORY DESIGN

your toolkit to design for equity

version 1.0

1.

LIBERATORY DESIGN PROCESS

NOTICE

What?

The NOTICE phase helps designers develop social-emotional awareness before entering any context. This phase is about practicing self-awareness of one's own identity, values, emotions, biases, assumptions and situatedness.

Noticing what one brings to any context allows for authentic user-centered design, not "you"-centered design.

Key Questions to Ask

Identity: Who am I/we? Who are our users?

Power: How are we respectively situated (relative to opportunity, institutional power)?

Context: What is our situation, our equity challenge?

Partnership: Given the above, how can we create a partnership that is liberating for all in the process?

EMPATHIZE

What?

The EMPATHIZE phase of the process is focused on understanding the experiences, emotions and motivations of others. Designers use specific empathy methods to learn more about the needs of the users for whom they are designing.

Key Questions to Ask

How does my identity and role in this project affect how and what people share with me?

How do I maintain awareness of my biases and challenge them in order to see this community more authentically?

What do people in this community identify as their needs?

How do systemic oppression and/or privilege affect this community, and how does that relate to this project?

DEFINE

What?

The DEFINE phase of the process is focused on developing a point of view about the needs of the community. It is especially important in this phase to work alongside community members. In this phase, you search for patterns or insights from your interviews that reveal deeper needs of the community. Using what you've distilled from the conversations, you narrow the project focus.

It is important to notice and reflect on what comprises the team of "We" when creating "How might we…" problem statements.

Key Questions to Ask

How can we insure we are reaching a point of view that is authentic and not distorted by biases?

What is the larger ecosystem in which our project focus lives? What influences it?

IDEATE

What?

The IDEATE phase of the process is focused on generating as many inclusive solutions to a problem as possible. Once many solutions have been generated, the team selects the top ideas and moves them forward to prototyping.

Key Questions to Ask

How can we ensure we have designed for optimal collaboration and have invited multiple perspectives?

How can we create an environment that encourages people to share ideas without fear of judgment and also maintains an awareness of biases?

PROTOTYPE

What?

The PROTOTYPE phase involves iterative development of tangible artifacts or experiences intended to elicit feedback and answer specific questions about a concept.

In this phase, we Build to Think. Building out an idea raises new questions and pushes the team to refine ideas.

Key Questions to Ask

What assumptions are we making that we want tested in this prototype?

How can we quickly build a representation of our idea that does not require a lot of explanation?

TEST

What?

The TEST phase of the process is focused on getting specific feedback on our prototype, checking our assumptions, and learning how to improve our design. It is important to remember during this phase that prototypes are imperfect and feedback is a gift.

Key Questions to Ask

How are we creating the right environment so that it is truly safe to fail?

Have we included all the voices and identities necessary into the room to receive feedback?

REFLECT

What?

The REFLECT phase of the process is ongoing and transparent throughout the design thinking process. It allows you and your team the time reflect on your actions, emotions, insights and impact as designers and humans. It is called an "Equity Pause" by EquityXDesign. It is a time to share our learning and see what we can do better* next time.

*To make it more inclusive, equitable and aesthetic.

Key Questions to Ask

What evidence do I have that I am becoming more self aware and self correcting as an equity leader using Liberatory Design?

How is my emotional state affecting how I show up with my team? How can I share or release those emotions with my team?