Design Patterns for Empathic Learning Environments

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Outline

- introduction to empathy
- how empathy relates to design
- empathic design patterns
- quick exercise
- small group project to explore empathic design patterns by applying these concepts

Goals

- develop understanding of concept of **empathic design**
- develop understanding of **empathic design patterns**

Empathy

The **ACTION** of understanding,

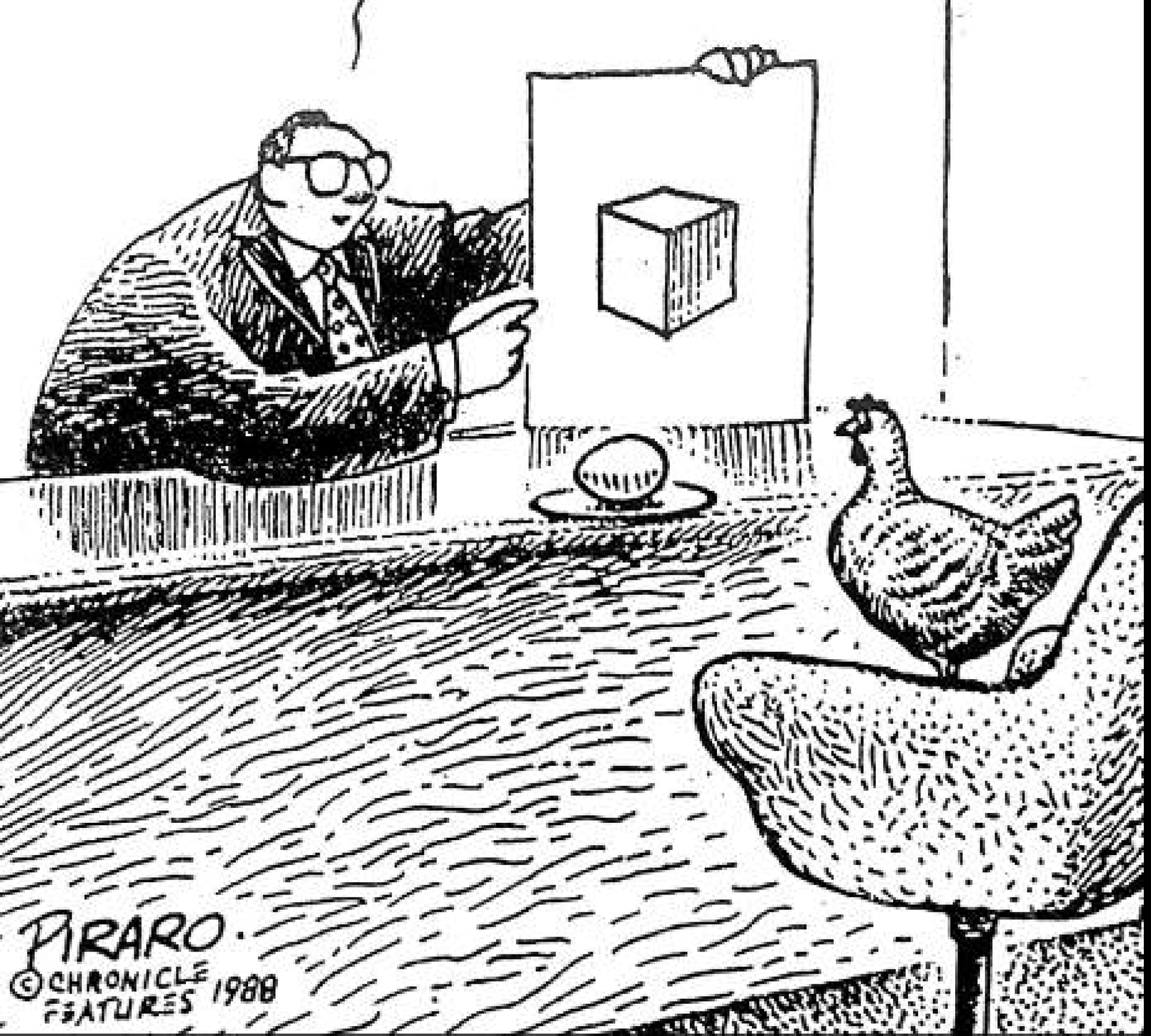
- being aware of,
- being sensitive to,
- and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.

NOT an emotion

A **SKILL** that can be learned

Empathy

- Perspective taking
- Hard science
- Brains are wired for empathic connection - mirror neurons



Empathy

Emotional

Intellectual / Cognitive

Somatic

Importance

What's in it for me?

Improve relationships with:

- other people
- natural environment
- built environment

Next Generation / 21st Century Skill

Empathy in Design

EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN

- users and experiencers
- physical, cognitive, social

USER CENTERED DESIGN

- we direct people for functionality
- empathy in details, ***nudge*** people – choice architects nudge people's behavior based on how they/we behave – **need to understand** how people behave, community/group-think/influence.

EMPATHIC DESIGN

Holistically relational – physical, cognitive, and ***emotional***

Relational

Humans establish **emotional relationships** with both living and inanimate things

Relationships require **interaction**

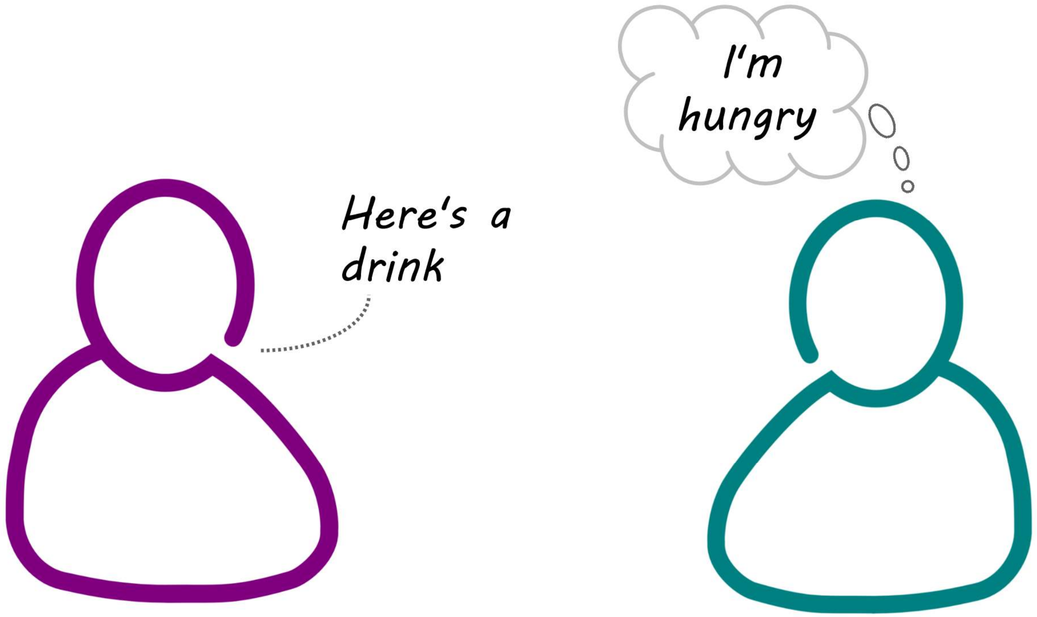
Relational

“People will never forget how you made them feel”
– Maya Angelou

“How does it make me feel?”

Platinum Rule

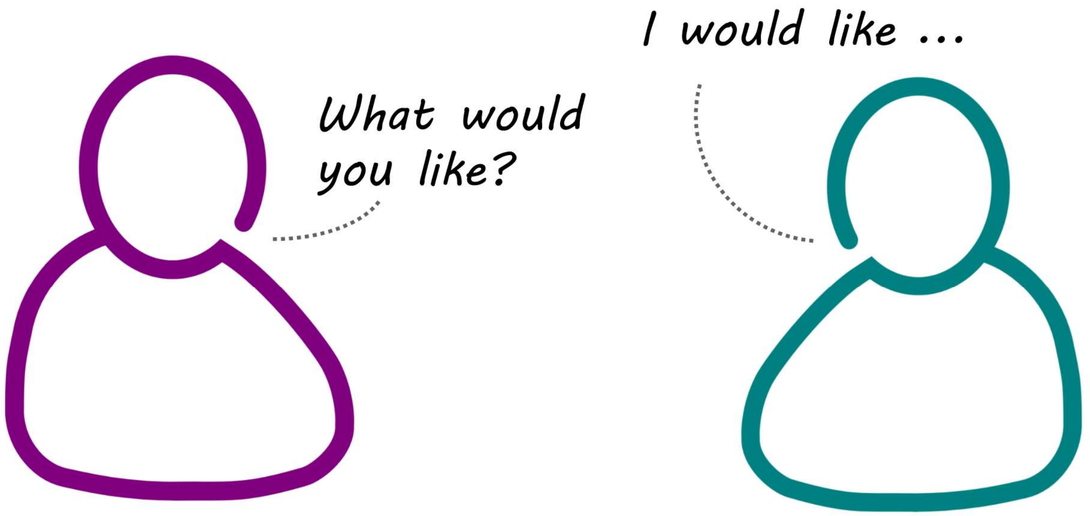
Good & healthy relationships



Golden Rule

ross parker 2023

Treat others the way you want to be treated



Platinum Rule

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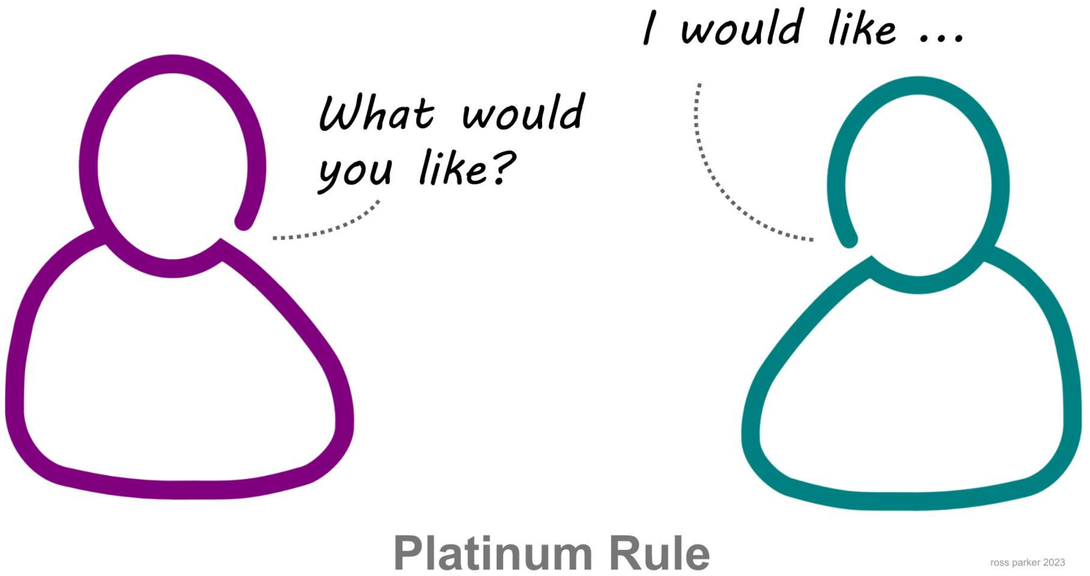
Treat others the way ***they*** want to be treated

Good & healthy relationships

Why can’t design do that?



Treat others the way ***they*** want to be treated

Relational

- **Interaction** – all relationships require this, real, perceived, or imaginary.

- **Importance** – functionally, educationally, socially/emotionally, physical health, sustainability, restoration.

- **Role of design** – consider the holistic experience – including emotion

Design for emotion

Joy

Clair

Engagement

Inactive

Active

Reactive

Interactive

Engagement

2-way engagement

ask

give choice

FORMALITY	casual	semi-casual	semi-formal	most formal
PERMANENCE	temporary	medium term	long term	permanent
INVITATION TO ENGAGE	high	more	some	low
STORYTELLER	experiencer	community	user	designer/owner
COMMUNICATION STYLE	interactive	responsive	reactive/reflective	pre-programmed tone-deaf
EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM	guide on the side	group presentation	display/present	sage on the stage
ENGAGEMENT	Interactive	Reactive	Active	Inactive

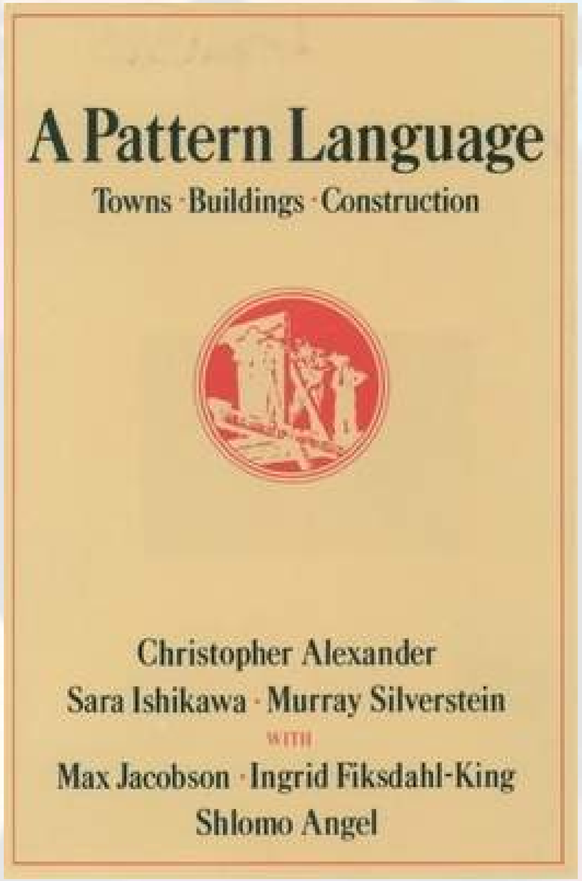
Empathic Design

Embrace empathy — PROCESS

Exhibit empathy — OUTCOME

Encourage empathy — BEHAVIOR

Design Patterns



Sheltering roof

Six foot balcony

Garden wall

Corner doors

Staircase as stage

A recipe book for good design - **patterns** are the **ingredients.**

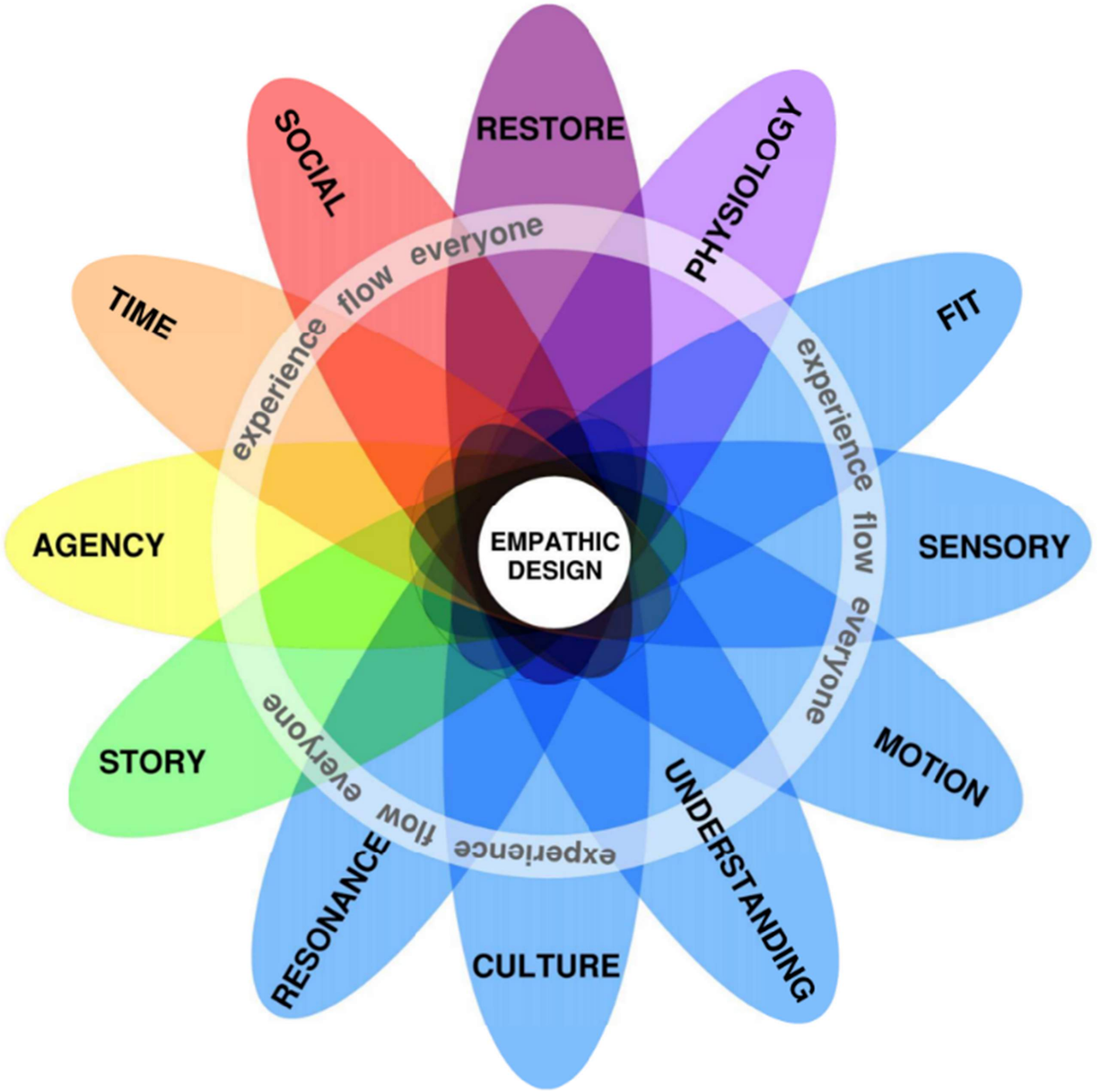
Patterns can be **broad approaches** or bite-size **prescriptive pieces.**

Exhibiting & Encouraging Empathy

PATTERNS:

components
of interacting

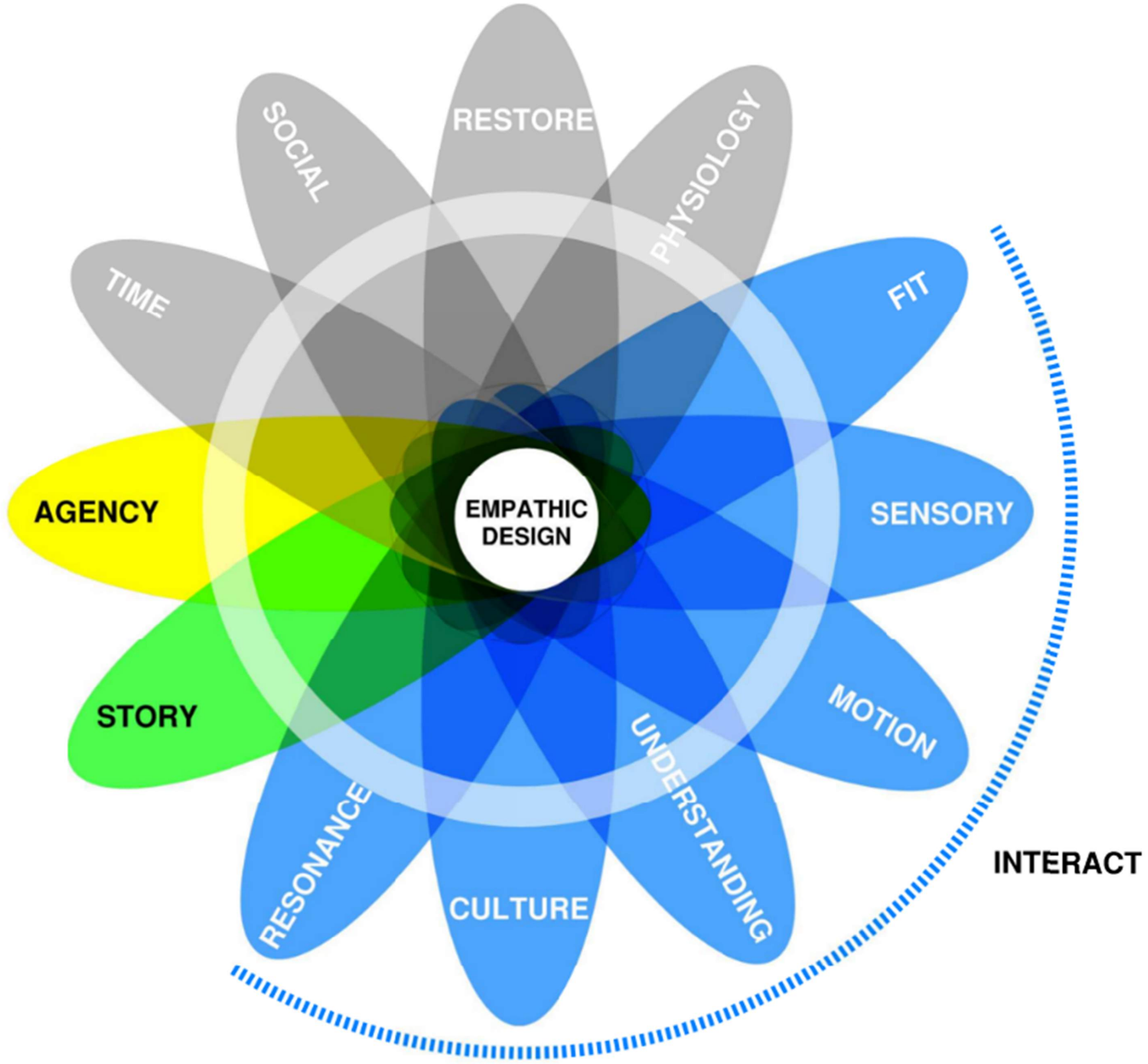
DESIGN ELEMENTS:
display, transparency, adjacency, safety, physical, sensory



Exhibiting & Encouraging Empathy

PATTERNS:

- INTERACT
- STORY
- AGENCY



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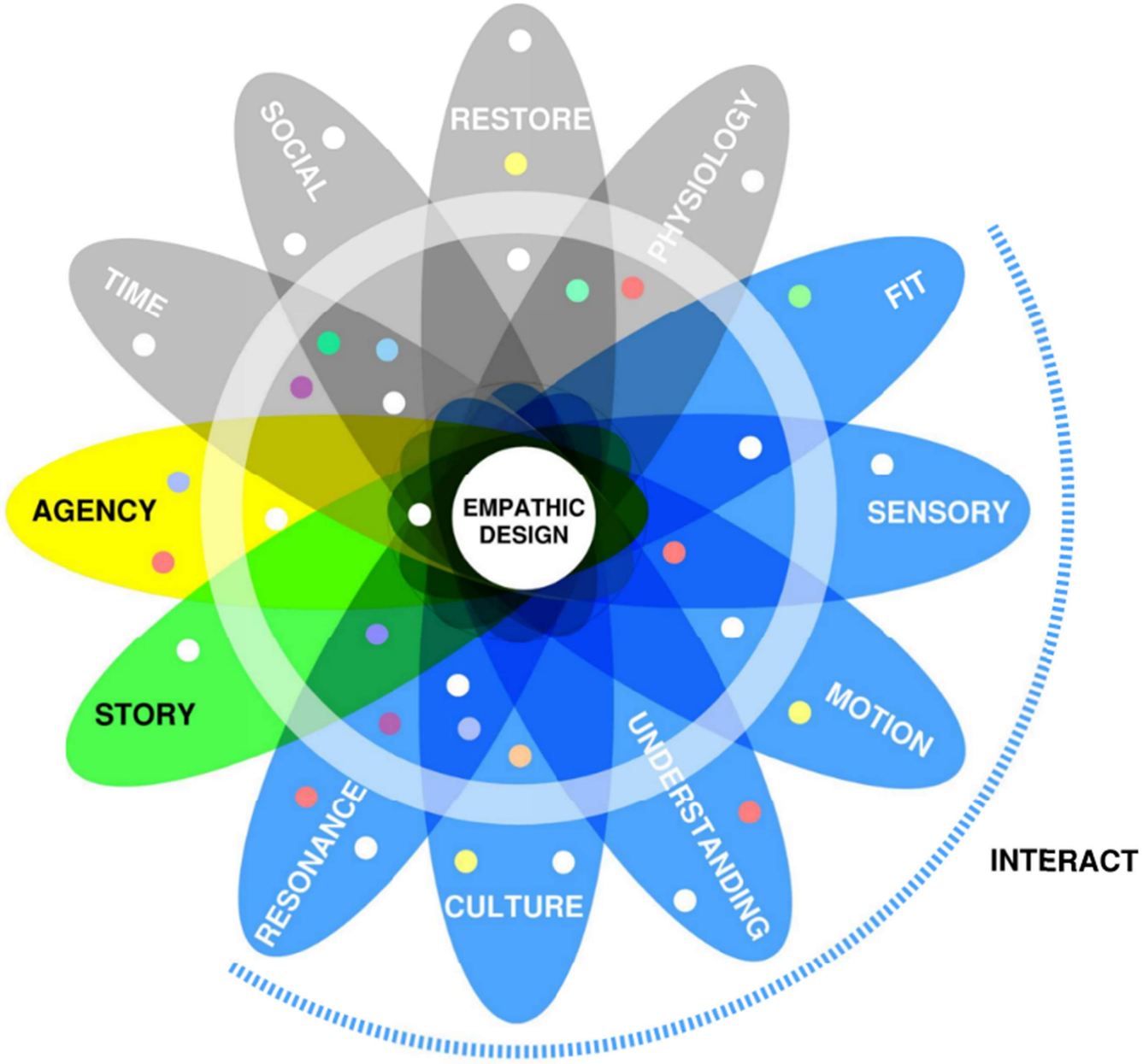

Pattern - INTERACTION

- **Fit** ergonomics, proxemics
- **Motion** occupants, design elements, equipment/art, natural elements
- **Sensory** physical (vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste)
- **Cognition** understanding (layout, wayfinding, paths, signage...)
- **Emotion** “how does the design make me feel?”
- **Culture** relevance, personal, community?

Pattern - STORYTELLING

Stories appeal to our senses and our emotions, not only drawing our attention more easily, but also leaving an impact on us as audiences. We learn by both hearing and telling stories and practicing through stories.

- What story is the design **telling** me?
- What is my **reaction** and **action** to the story being shared?
- What story do **I bring** to the design?
- Does the design **invite me to tell** my story?
- What's its **response** to me sharing?

Pattern - AGENCY

- Invitation – begins with welcome, but goes beyond
- Modify my environment - engage, interact, manipulate, personalize (display, messaging, flexibility, comfort…)
- Movement – am I able to move as I wish? (ergonomics, travel…)

Exhibiting & Encouraging Empathy

PATTERNS:

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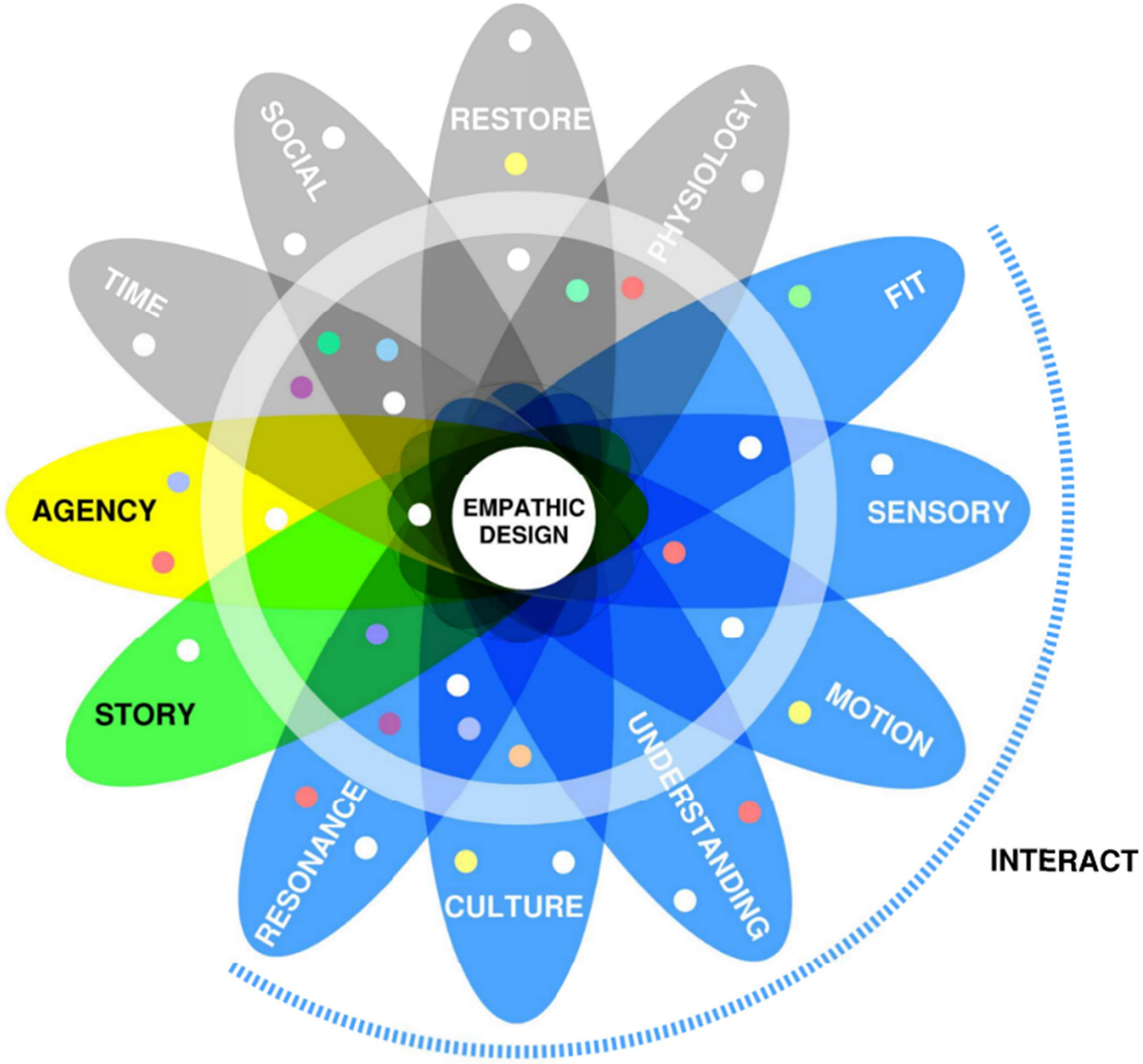
- STORY
- AGENCY



APPLE

Look in the bag
on your table

CONNECTION – developing empathy through experience

Physical – sensory

Cognitive - understanding

Contextual – perspectives, history

Emotional Response: how do you care for the apple?

Google search:
why does exposure to nature develop empathy
https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/nurtured-nature

What if we approach design the way we do our food?

Design A Playhouse

- **INTERACT**
- **STORY**
- **AGENCY**

Design A Playhouse

- INTERACT
- STORY
- AGENCY

How would I want to be treated?

How do I design interaction with nature?

Approach design as I would my food.

DESIGN A PLAYHOUSE

Consider ways to INTERACT, to personalize.

What STORY does the design want to tell, and what stories do the kids want to tell?

How do we give the kids AGENCY to interact, change, personalize their environment and tell their own stories?

How would I want to be treated?

How do I design interaction with nature?

Approach design as I would my food.

ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

CHICAGO LearningSCAPES 2023

THANK YOU!

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