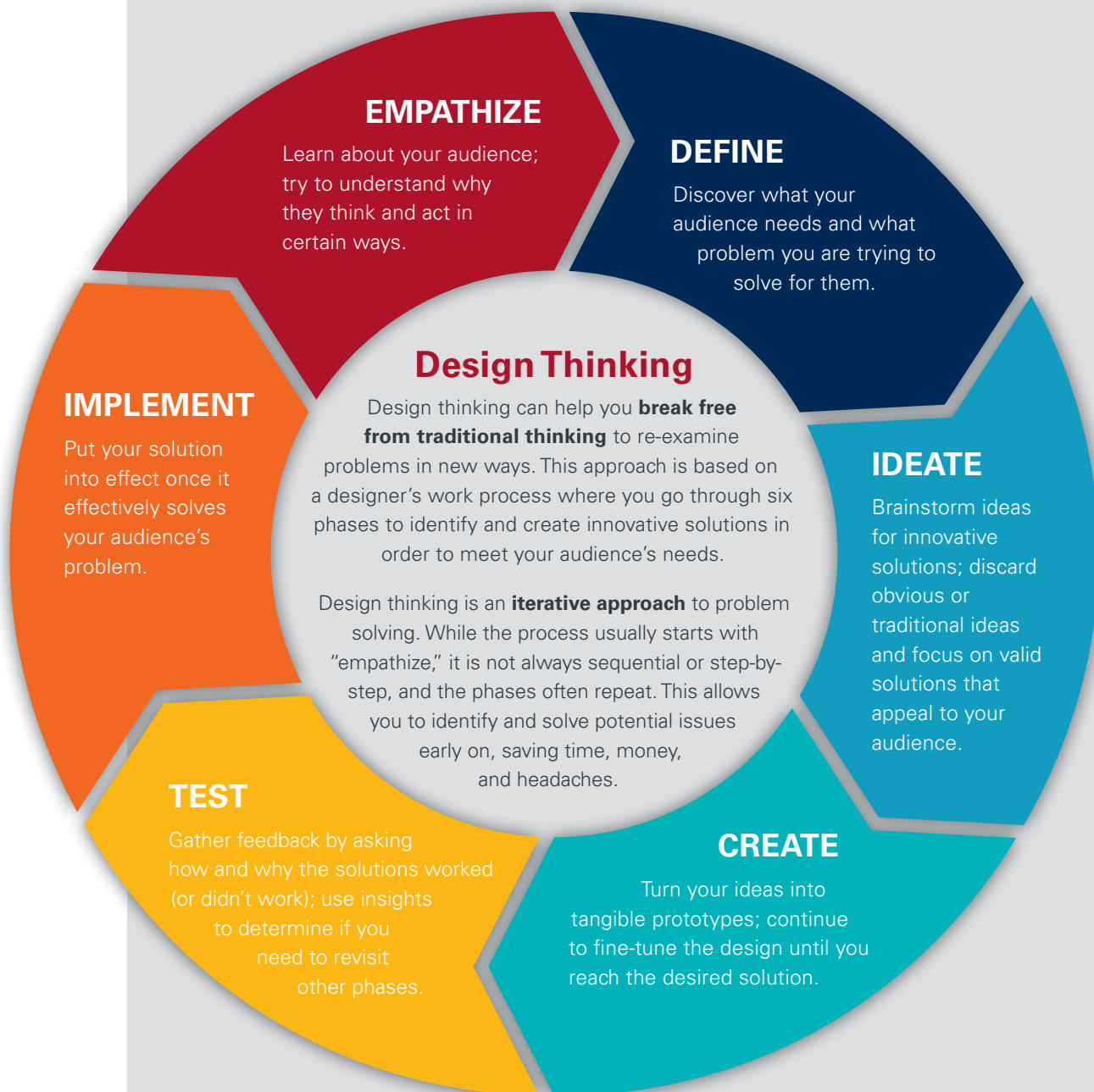# HARNESS THE POWER *of* DESIGN THINKING
to Retool How You Solve Problems

Many of the changes and challenges facing modern day health care and its systems cannot be solved with strictly linear or analytical approaches. Health care professionals and leaders are required to exercise different kinds of thinking for better outcomes.

EMPATHIZE
Learn about your audience; try to understand why they think and act in certain ways.

DEFINE
Discover what your audience needs and what problem you are trying to solve for them.

IMPLEMENT
Put your solution into effect once it effectively solves your audience's problem.

IDEATE
Brainstorm ideas for innovative solutions; discard obvious or traditional ideas and focus on valid solutions that appeal to your audience.

Design Thinking

Design thinking can help you **break free from traditional thinking** to re-examine problems in new ways. This approach is based on a designer's work process where you go through six phases to identify and create innovative solutions in order to meet your audience's needs.

Design thinking is an **iterative approach** to problem solving. While the process usually starts with "empathize," it is not always sequential or step-by-step, and the phases often repeat. This allows you to identify and solve potential issues early on, saving time, money, and headaches.

TEST
Gather feedback by asking how and why the solutions worked (or didn't work); use insights to determine if you need to revisit other phases.

CREATE
Turn your ideas into tangible prototypes; continue to fine-tune the design until you reach the desired solution.

Additional Resources
Liedtka, J. (2018). Why design thinking works. *Harvard Business Review, 96*(5), 72-79.
Lockwood, T., & Papke, E. (2017). *Innovation by Design: How Any Organization Can Leverage Design Thinking to Produce Change, Drive New Ideas, and Deliver Meaningful Solutions.* Red Wheel/Weiser.
van de Grift, T. C., & Kroeze, R. (2016). Design thinking as a tool for Interdisciplinary education in health care. *Academic Medicine, 91*(9), 1234-1238.

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Design Thinking Process

Empathize

Empathy is the first step of the design thinking process. Without empathizing with the customers, organizations cannot understand their needs and requirements. User surveys and personal contacts with the customers of the organization will result in gaining insights into their mindset and priorities. Empathize forms the main ideology of design thinking as it transforms the business and the corporate requirements into human requirements. This stage of the design thinking process is all about eliminating any pre-defined assumptions and notions that the organization has about its customers and collecting ideas from them even though they are not properly defined.

Define

The second step of the design thinking process focuses on defining the ideas collected from the customers of the organization. Some of the ideas or information collected in the empathize stage may not be clear or defined properly by the users. These ideas need to be defined concisely so that all the stakeholders of the organization can understand the customer needs. These defined problems will be formulated into a problem statement that the design teams will use to find the solution in the later stage of the design thinking process.

Ideate

Ideating is the process of generating ideas to solve the problems mentioned in the problem statement. In this stage, design teams will collaborate with the product or software development teams to ideate. This step of the design thinking process requires teamwork and effective communication between cross-functional teams to succeed in formulating feasible ideas. Every member should be allowed to voice their opinions and given the chance of supporting their arguments. This will result in the proposal of several ideas, among which some innovative ideas will stand out and lead to the success of the design thinking process.

Prototype

Those innovative ideas can then be developed further with the help of the product or software development team into a working model of the real product or service known as a prototype. These prototypes do not need to be of high quality as they are not the final product and require testing.

Test

Testing is the fifth stage of the design thinking process, however, since this process is non-linear it is not technically the final step. Prototypes of the product created will be rigorously tested by the design and product development teams along with a select group of users. They will provide feedback on the prototype which will again be used by the design and product development teams. Therefore, the final product that will be available to the customers of the organization will effectively fulfill their requirements and meet the objectives of the organization as well.

Conclusion

The non-linear nature of the design thinking process makes it possible for design teams and the entire product development team to re-visit each step at any stage of the product design or development process. Each step feeds the other in the design thinking process. Thus, making it a constant loop of learning and formulating ideas. Organizations use design thinking to create goods and services that can handle the demands of the contemporary world.

Wicked problems that our world is currently facing like climate crisis, plastic pollution, garbage disposal, and many more can be solved with the help of the design thinking approach. Therefore, Learning about this innovative approach of design thinking will help individuals participate in the creation of several life-changing solutions. Moreover, this will have a positive impact on the present world population and the future generation.