Introduction to Design Thinking
The Creative Journey Exercise

Intended Use: Exercise used to introduce key concepts of design thinking, creativity, and innovation. Best used on the first day of a course or first day of a unit focused on human-centered design. Demonstrates how teams will work together to solve problems over the course of the project or semester.

Supplies Needed:
- Place students in groups of 4-5 students
- Sticky Notes
- Markers
- Whiteboard space

Step 1: Icebreaker Activities

"Take one sticky note and answer the following question: *What is your favorite movie?*"

"Take two stick notes and answer the following question: *What are your two favorite movie genres?*"

"Take three sticky notes and answer the following question: *What are your three favorite hobbies or interests?*"

One at a time, each student presents their six sticky notes to the group. Each student should go to the whiteboard space and place their sticky note on the board and explain why they wrote each sticky note. In addition to providing the basis for the activity, this also serves as an icebreaker activity for the group if they have not already worked together.

Teaching Points
- ➢ When we gather information, we must explain it to others
- ➢ Everybody gets a chance to participate in the conversation

Step 2: Road Trip

"On your whiteboard, sketch the outline of the United States. We are going to design a route from [insert city here] to [insert city here]. Do some research and determine your route. Using red marker on your map, show how you would get from City A to City B."

More than likely, students did a quick google search and draw a line representing the route a car would travel from City A to City B.

Teaching Points
- ➢ There is more than one way to get there – there is not one correct answer
- ➢ These routes created by groups likely show minimal creativity

"Now, let's design a more creative trip. Design thinking places empathy at the center of the creative process. To design a more creative trip, we need to start by empathizing with the people going on the trip. One tool to do this is to understand what JOB the travel is doing in the LIFE of the PERSON."

"Take a look at your hobby and interests list (approx.. 15 sticky notes). Organize those items by themes, and write a headline that summarizes that theme in a short phrase or even a single word."

Examples might include: scenic, nature, speed, spend time with others, to serve other people, raise money for a cause, recreation, health, education, food, history, sports, music, parks, etc.

"Now take one of those themes that you think will lead to a creative trip, and design a trip around that theme. Design a route that allows the person to maximize the enjoyment of that hobby or interest."

Teaching Points
➢ The process of "going wide" to consider many options (hobbies and interests) is called ***divergent thinking***: It opens our mind to many possibilities...The process of opening yourself up to as much information and creating as many choices as possible without limiting yourself.
➢ The process we just engaged in is called synthesis – making meaning out of lots of possibilities. The process of condensing and narrowing your findings or ideas and making choices on how to move forward is called ***convergent thinking***.

"Now let's get more creative. Select a creative mode of transportation for your travels. How might mode of transportation affect your route, stops, and itinerary?"

Students might select: RV, prop plane, time travel, horseback, cycling, hoverboard, or any number of modes of transportation.

Teaching Point
➢ Considering mode of transportation is called a "solution enabler" – It helps put a constraint on your thinking to help spur creativity.

"Now let's get more creative. Go back to your favorite movies and movie genres. Select one of those and combine it with one of your hobby/interest themes to create a final, creative route.

For example, students are now talking about how they can do the route on bicycle for someone focused on nature/scenery while in a science fiction film.

Teaching Points
➢ The activity of combining two things stretches your thinking and forces you to make connections you would not have otherwise considered. This is one of many different tools we will introduce you to that helps you improve your creative problem-solving skills.
➢ The purpose is to get you thinking actively, not plotting correct answers on a graph. The activities we ask you to do help you DISCOVER new insights and COMMUNICATE with your teammates. We are always trying to understand our users and their problems.

"Finally, sketch the perfect Instagrammable moment from this trip."

Teaching Point
➢ Communicating visually through storytelling is a core mindset in design thinking.

Summary of Key Concepts

- There is not a single correct answer – either with the problem you identify or with the solution you develop.
- Over the course of the semester, we are going to stretch your thinking in different ways. We are going to ask you questions you haven't considered. This doesn't mean your initial thinking was wrong, it just means we are pushing you to think from a new perspective. When you come up with an idea or a direction we are going to come in and ask you to change your thinking. Remember, this is about learning and seeing possibilities, not deriving a correct answer.
- The process we went thru today mirrors the design thinking process. The first activity resulted in groups "googling" the answer – *get me from point a to point b and I'm done*. Then we added empathy to the process and that helped you get more creative. Finally, we forced you to make seemingly random connections between concepts and you ended with very creative trips.
- Completing each assignment does not mean you've got a finished work of art. Your ideas are always a work in progress. Each assignment is only a snapshot of what you are thinking at that moment in time. We want you always learning, always growing, and being willing to change your mind.
- Being stuck or feeling uncomfortable is a pre-requisite to being successful with design thinking. Being stuck is where the breakthroughs happen.
- Never be satisfied with "an answer" (or a single direction, a single problem-space, etc.) – always be thinking with a "1A 1B mindset"