



THE DISRUPTIVE DESIGN GANG
SUPERPOWER
ACTIVATION KIT

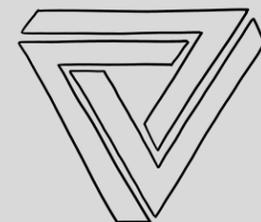
FOR CHANGE MAKING CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

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SUPER-5
-POWER-

THE POWER
OF ETHICS &
EMPATHY



Empathy is a feeling, whereas **ethics** are the social structures that **build civil society**.

The **human experience** is made up of many different factors – relational, ideological, historical, media exposure, corporation impacts, cultural forces, government influences, and more.

Ethics are not universal; different cultures and countries have **diverse ethical frameworks** that feed into the social norms. Thus, they **influence the citizens**, which in turn **influence the structures** that make up different societies around the world.

We are in a **dynamic relationship** with these elements, and it's often the **influence of the people over time** that ends up impacting what is seen as being ethical or not.

Ethics feed an **internal compass** that helps us direct our way through life, affirming our lifestyle choices and what is **inherently right and wrong for each of us**. Yet, because of **cognitive dissonance**, we can hold a different perspective to what our actions will be when **faced with an ethical dilemma**.

It's **critically important** that each person not only develops their own ethical compass but also **constantly checks in** to make sure it is **robust and relevant**.



Empathy helps us connect and understand the experiences of others. But, it is not a simple emotion.

Empathy is a **visceral experience** that all humans have the capacity to **build** and feel. It is expressed in **different degrees in humans**, depending on your life experiences and your own physiology.

There is a **long set of nerves** that run down the spine from the brain to all your primary organs – it's called the **Vagus Nerve** (meaning: wandering nerve). It's responsible for the butterflies you feel in your stomach when you are **in love** and the tension knots you feel when you are **stressed**.

It's also responsible for the **physical** feelings you get when you experience empathy for another person.

If you are very empathetic and see someone cry, you **may also get tears** in your eyes. Or, when someone is sick, you may also feel sick. This is what makes empathy a **visceral experience** – you physically experience the feelings of someone else.

The human ability to mimic, or mirror, others' emotional state makes sense from an **evolutionary perspective**. We needed to be sure that we were understood and cared for, and the best way to do that is to be able to **trigger a similar feeling** in someone else. But, **empathy is also how we build ethics**.

Empathy helps us **connect**, and it's also very important to gain **perspectives** and **understanding** of the world.



Scientists have found that **empathy is learned through personal experience**. Some people have a much lower vagal response, so they do not have a visceral experience when they see someone else in pain or suffering.

This raises all sort of question about **decision makers in levels of power and authority**. If you don't feel a physical response to someone else's pain, then you are at an increased risk to be able to inflict more pain on others.

Many people **avoid having hard conversations** and prefer to stick with what they know because it is **comfortable**; thus, we end up with ethical gaps. **Empathy is a powerful tool** to help bust through biases that inhibit ethical progress.

HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

1. Identify the ethics that guide your **personal decision making processes**, and check that they are relevant and unselfish.
2. Identify and distinguish between those that are **universal principles** and those that are **personal**.
3. Encourage **hard conversations** to build **knowledge, understanding, and empathy**.
4. Think about how you can **use your empathy** as a tool for positive change within your personal sphere of influence.





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