

Designing for the Empathic Web

A Vision for a Future of Emotionally Intelligent Digital Experiences



Me in a nutshell

Prof. Dr. Sebastian Loewe, Director UX Design
at Virtual Identity

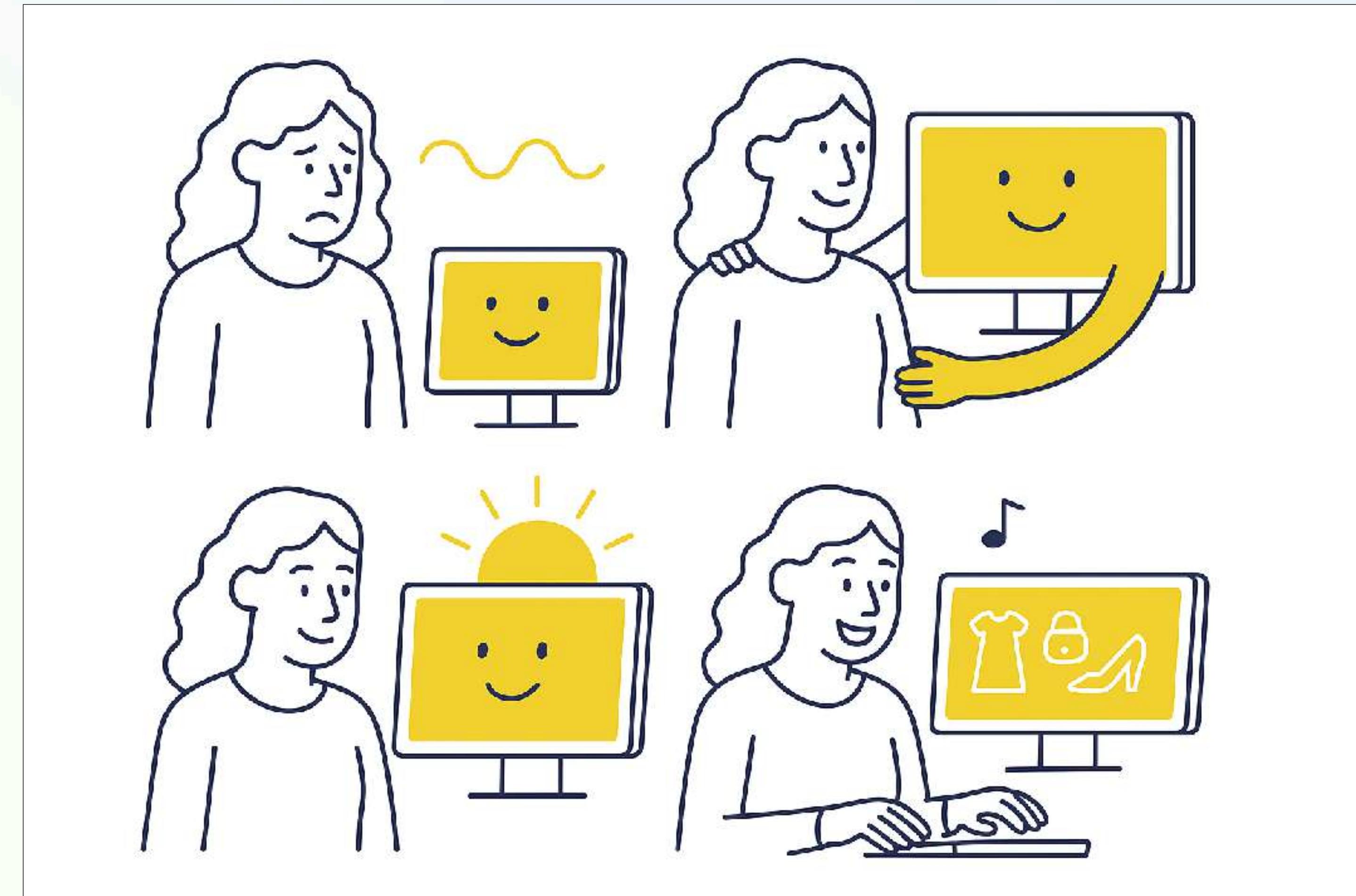
Passionate about AI-driven design.

Author of the bestselling book **Design und
künstliche Intelligenz**

Lately, explore the possibilities of the Empathic
Web.

In general, thinking ahead and into the future.





A collage of fashion and lifestyle images with mood buttons. The top left image shows a person's legs in black pants and sandals, with a bottle of champagne on a table, labeled 'powerful'. The top right image shows a person's legs in pink pants, labeled 'playful'. The bottom left image shows a person's back in a yellow top and white pants, labeled 'confident'. The bottom center image shows a close-up of white flowers, labeled 'relaxed'. The bottom right image shows a person's legs in white pants, labeled 'desired'. A central text bubble says 'How do you want to **feel** today?'. The top center text says 'fashion store.' and the top right text says 'Login Help'.

fashion store.

Login Help

powerful

playful

confident

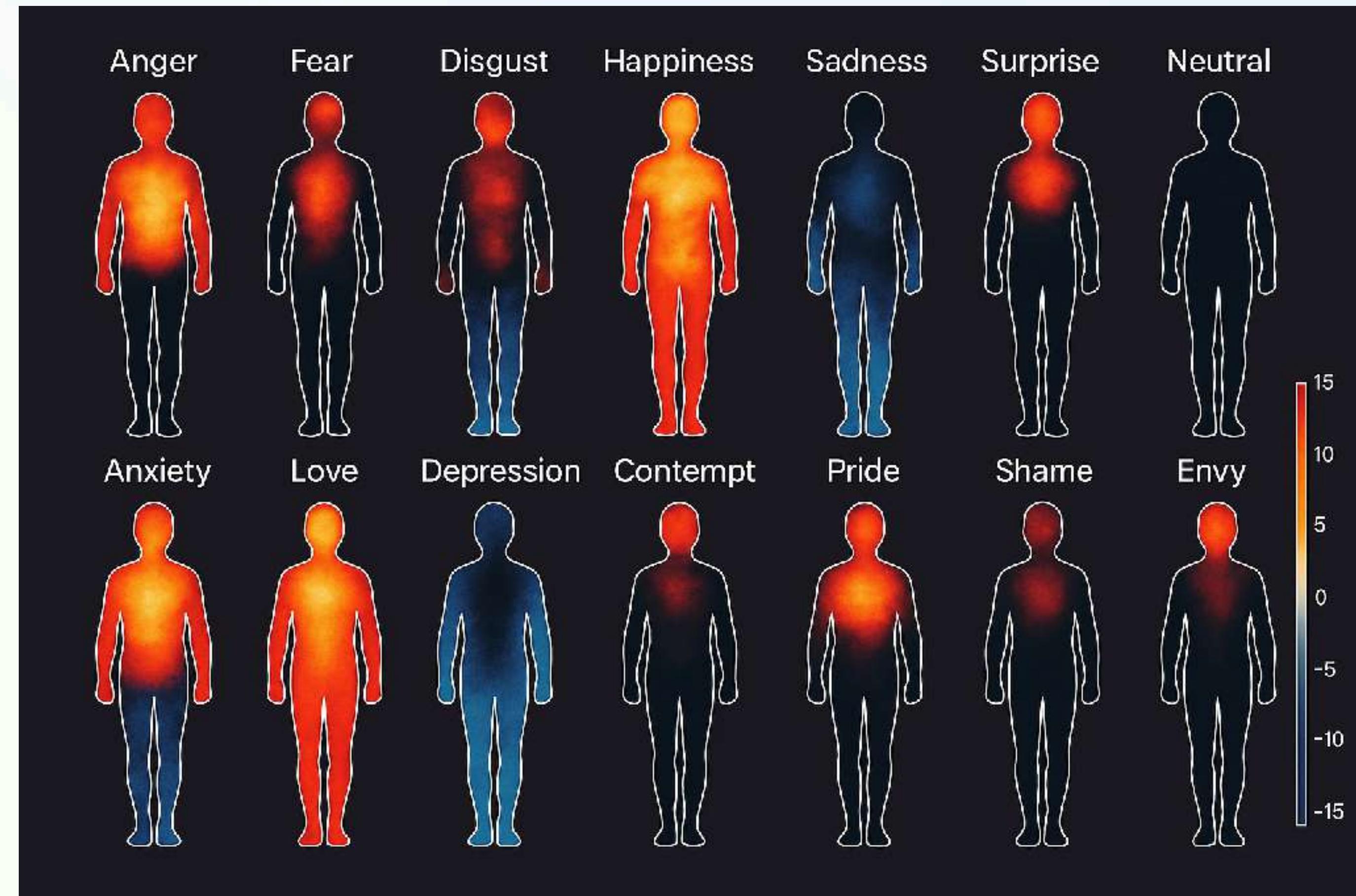
desired

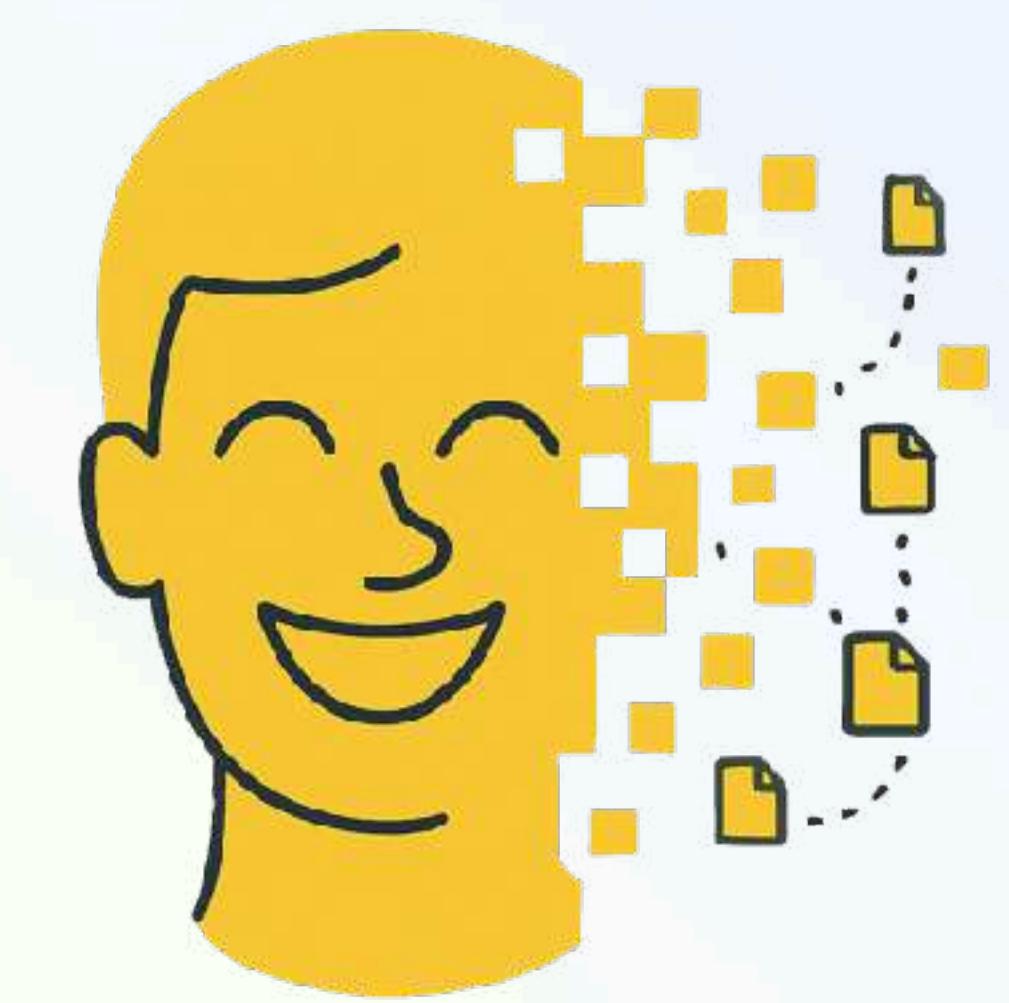
relaxed

How do you want to **feel** today?

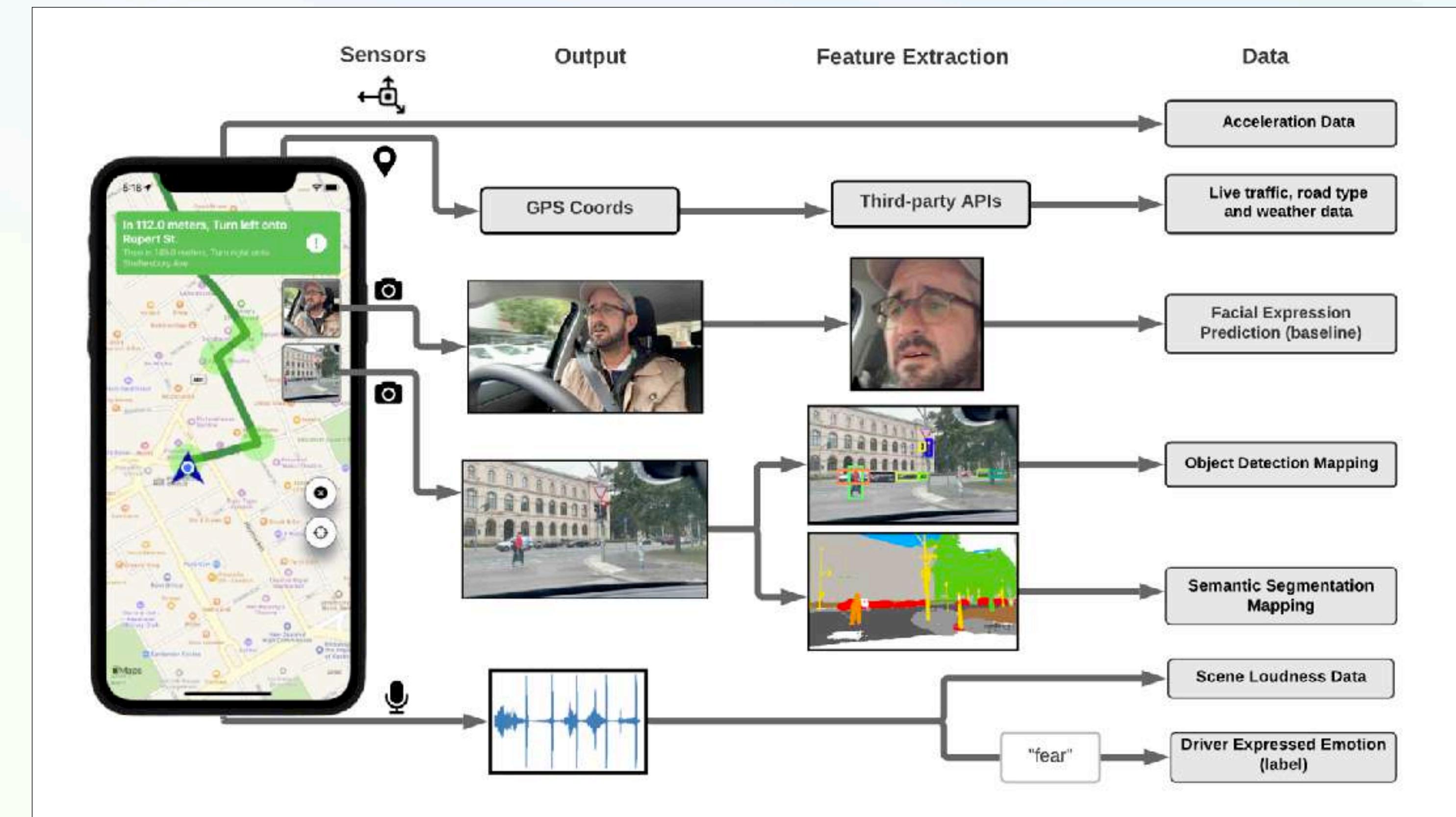


Daniel Goleman's definition of emotional intelligence
Self-awareness
Empathy





Porsche



Brytes

150 px

MOUSEPATH
TRAVELED

Psychographic real-time analytics

- Insecurity
- Expertise
- Product features
- Pain of payment

User is afraid to make mistakes

HOVERS PER PAGE

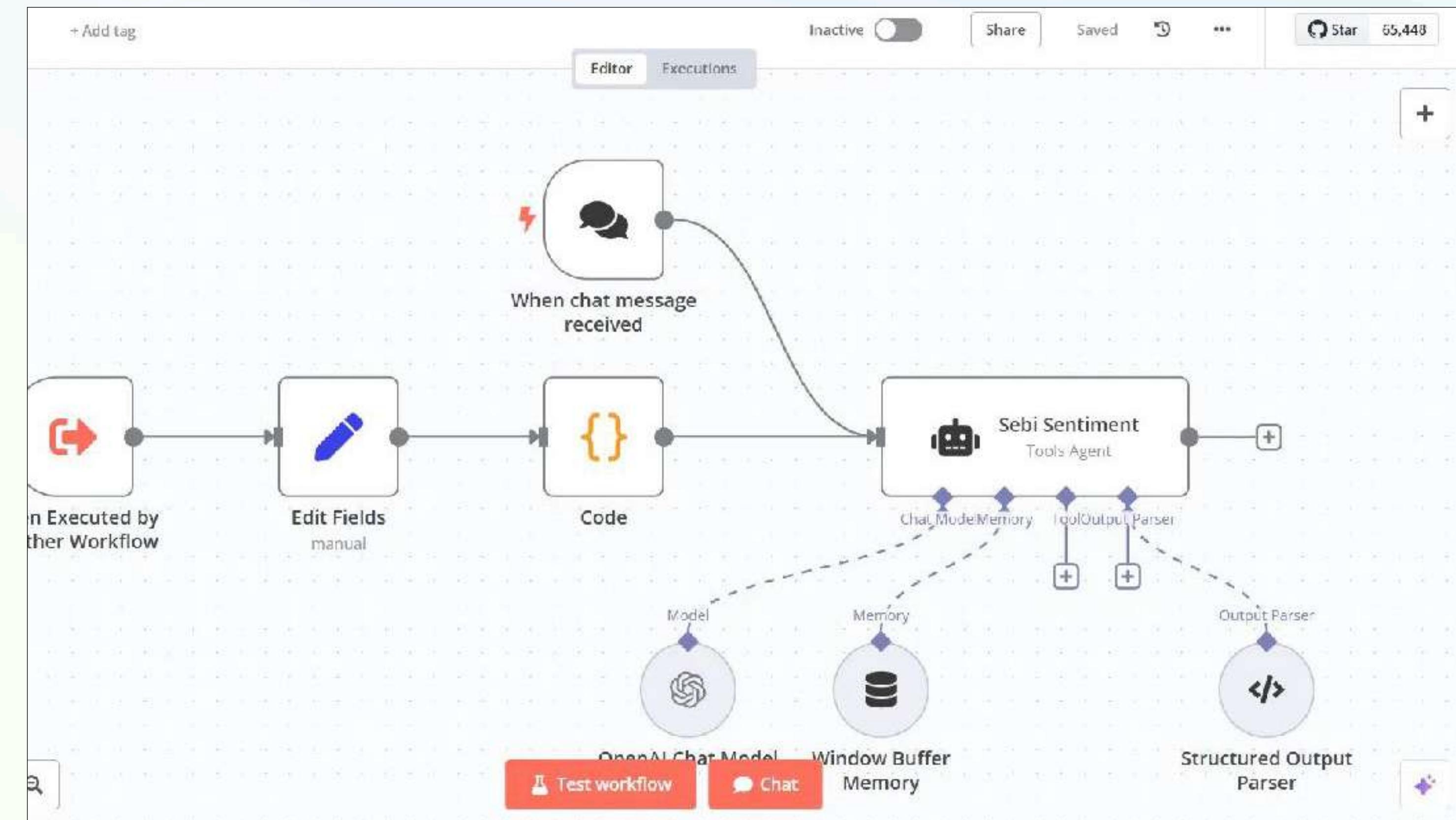
3 pics

The image shows a screenshot of a product catalog page from a website. A yellow circle with the text '150 px' is positioned above a black box containing the text 'MOUSEPATH TRAVELED'. A yellow circle with the text '3 pics' is positioned next to a black box containing the text 'HOVERS PER PAGE'. A yellow box on the left contains the heading 'Psychographic real-time analytics' and a list of four items: 'Insecurity', 'Expertise', 'Product features', and 'Pain of payment', each accompanied by a horizontal line of yellow dots. A yellow circle with the text '3 pics' is also positioned next to this box. A dotted line connects the 'MOUSEPATH TRAVELED' box to the 'HOVERS PER PAGE' box. The background shows a grid of products with various jackets and pants, some with price tags and promotional labels like 'NEU' and 'BUNDLE'.

Tawny AI



Leaders AI



Large Language Models



Dear Sebastian

I'm heartbroken to
hear about your dog.
I understand what
a special part of your
life he was.

It's hard to face this
loss, but you don't have
to go through it alone.
I'm always here
for you.

Large Language Models

ChatGPT 4.5

Hello GPT 4.5 ... let's find out what you can do. First question:
What's YOUR EQ?

Great first question! While I don't have emotions or an emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) in the human sense, I am specifically designed to understand and reflect emotional nuances in communication. My training enables me to:

- **Recognize and respond to the emotional tone and context in your messages.**
- **Adapt my communication style to match your emotional cues and preferences.**
- **Suggest empathetic, thoughtful, and emotionally intelligent approaches to challenging or sensitive scenarios.**

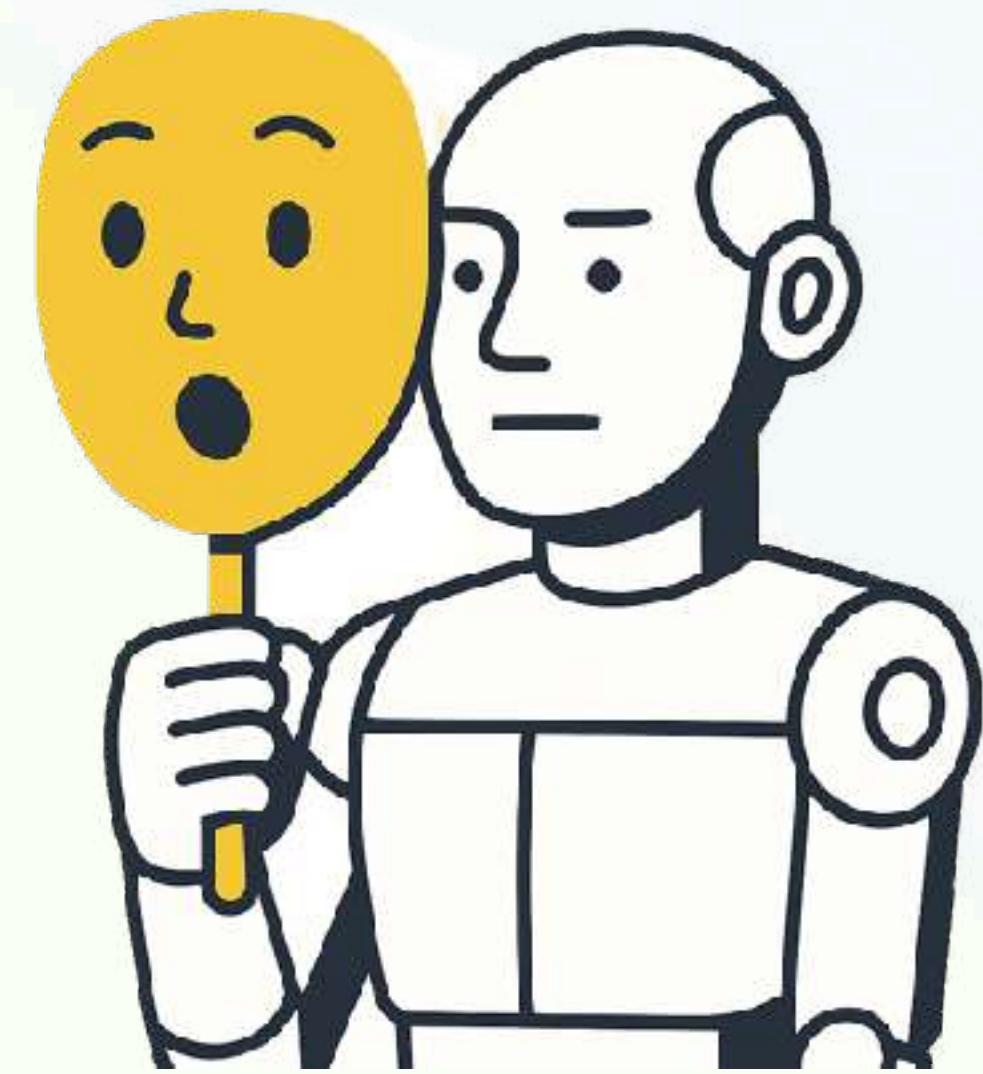
In other words: I don't have feelings myself, but I'm equipped to help you navigate emotional conversations or complex interpersonal situations thoughtfully and effectively.

Would you like to explore something emotionally nuanced together?

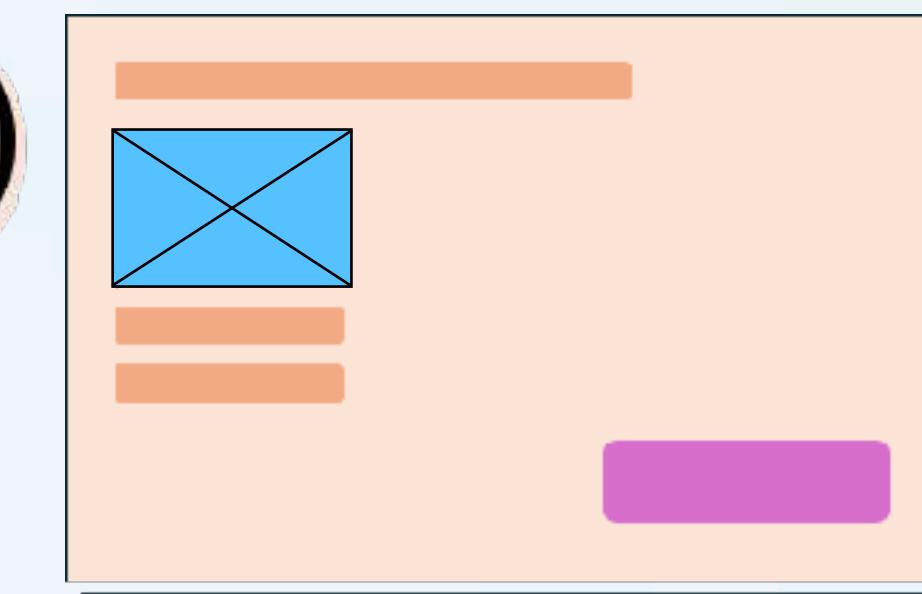
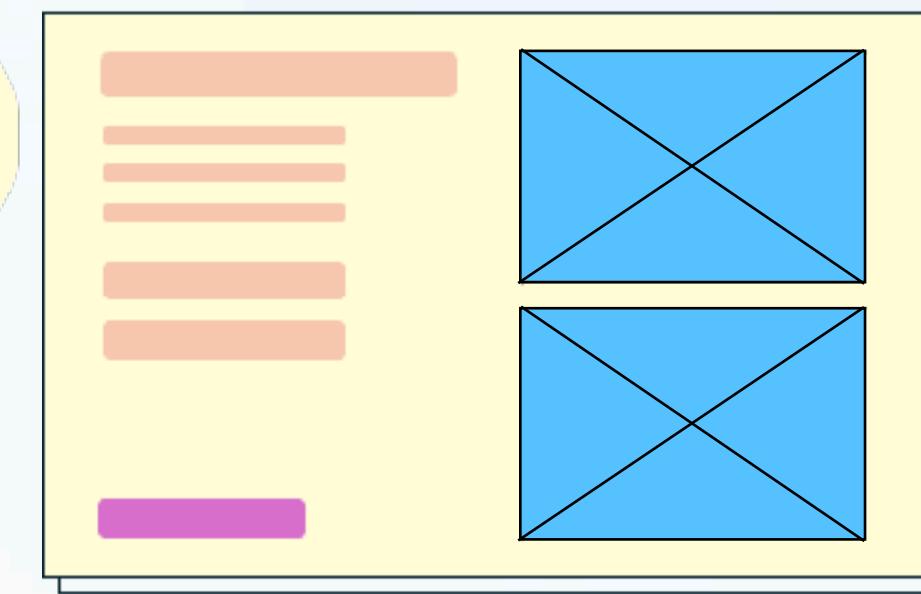
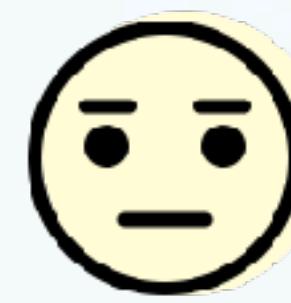
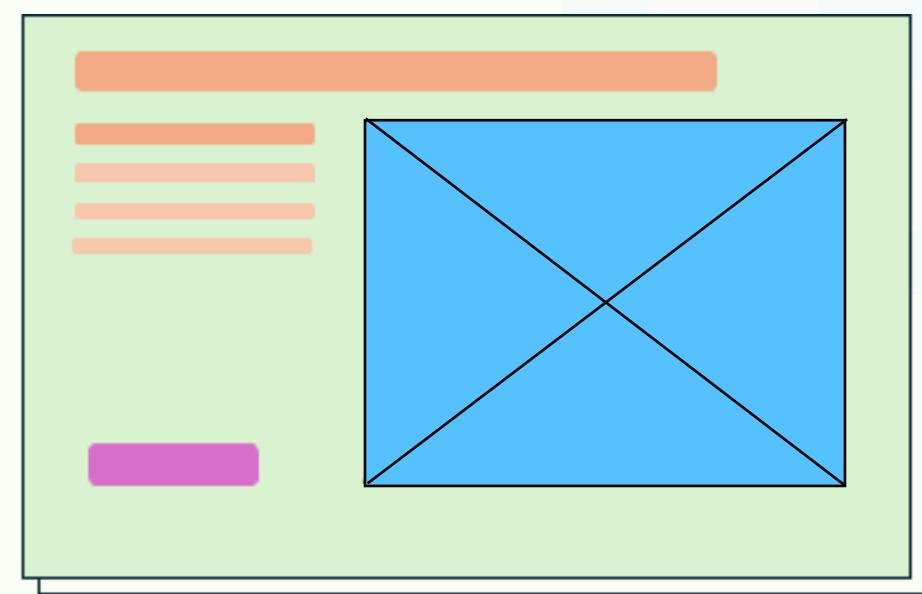
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Navel





Digital empathy...
...is a turning point.



This is the Empathic Web.



Digital empathy is not human empathy.
AI does not replace human empathy or
us as humans.



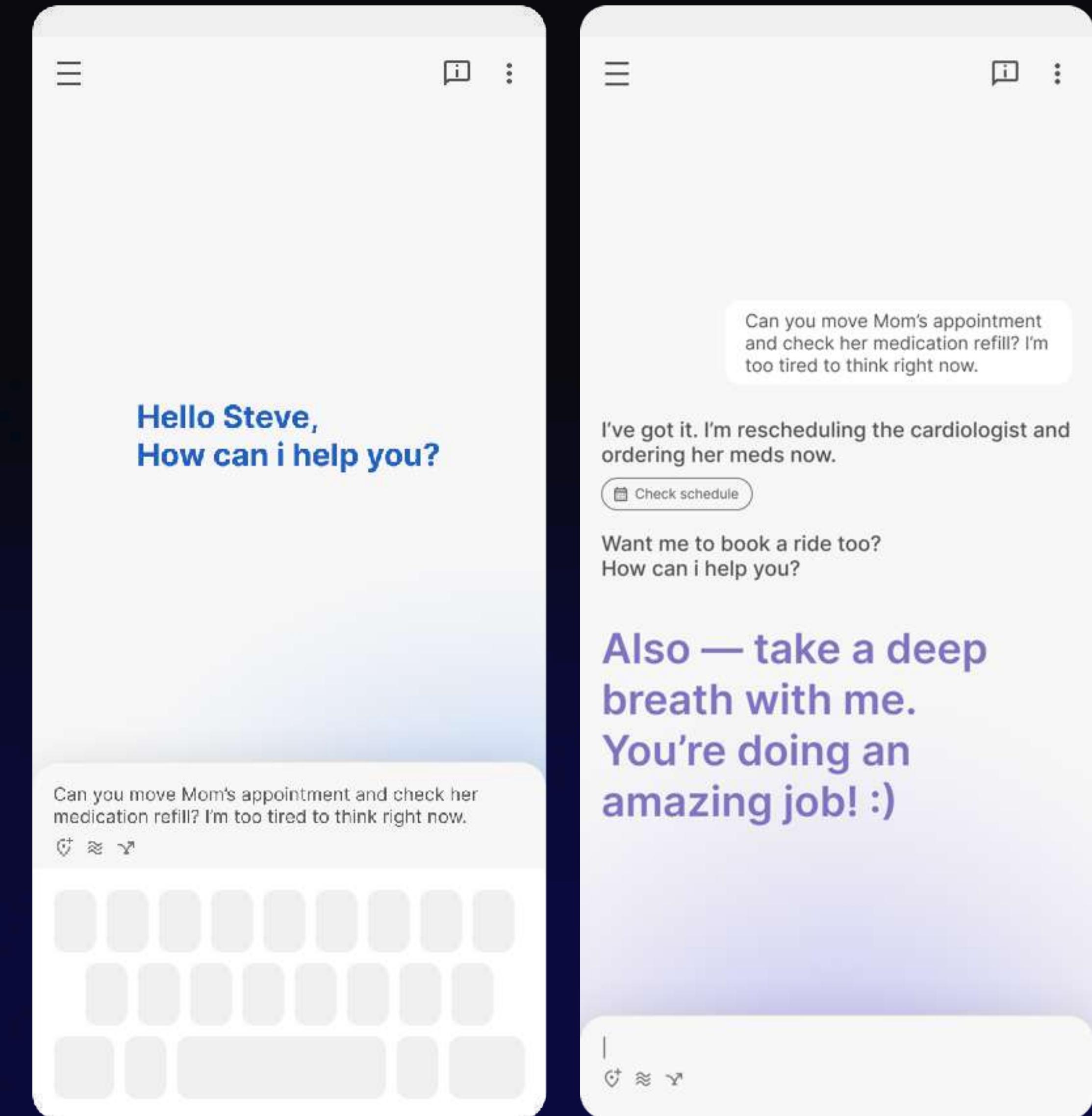
Empathic Voice Assistant for Caregivers

⌚ Emotional Insight

- Caregivers are often tired, overwhelmed, and emotionally stretched

⌚ Emotional Lever

- Emotional validation and practical delegation



Emotionally Aware Learning Companion



Emotional Insight

- Learning is never purely cognitive.
- Emotional highs and lows
- When emotional friction isn't addressed, even motivated learners disengage.



Emotional Lever

- Emotional states as inputs to structure and deliver content.



Feeling anxious?
It's okay.

Learning can be overwhelming — you're
moving forward, one step at a time.
Breathe. You're doing better than you think.

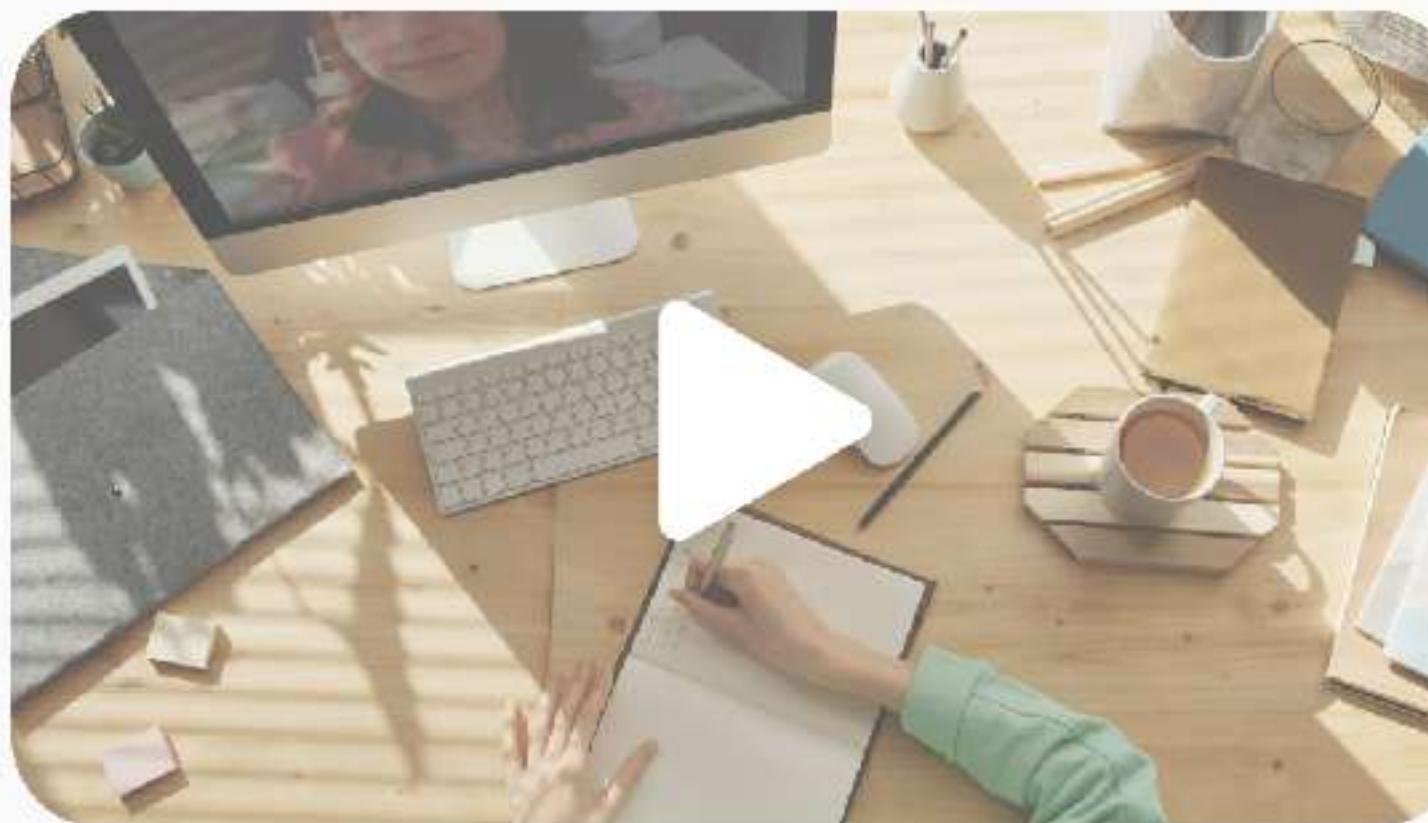
Take your time.



↗
Back to it when
you feel ready.

Let's slow down...
We'll try this together.

You've got this — and we're here to walk
with you.



90%
of the tutorial
is **done**

Do you need
a hint?

Empathic Online Fashion Store



Emotional Insight

- People often buy fashion emotionally
- They might buy for the wrong emotional reasons
- Purchases often lead to regret, returns, or disengagement.



Emotional Lever

- Use mood as the interface.
- Help them arrive at a better emotional state.



How are you feeling today? |





How are you feeling today? *stressed and not really confident*



fashion store.

Login Help

powerful

playful

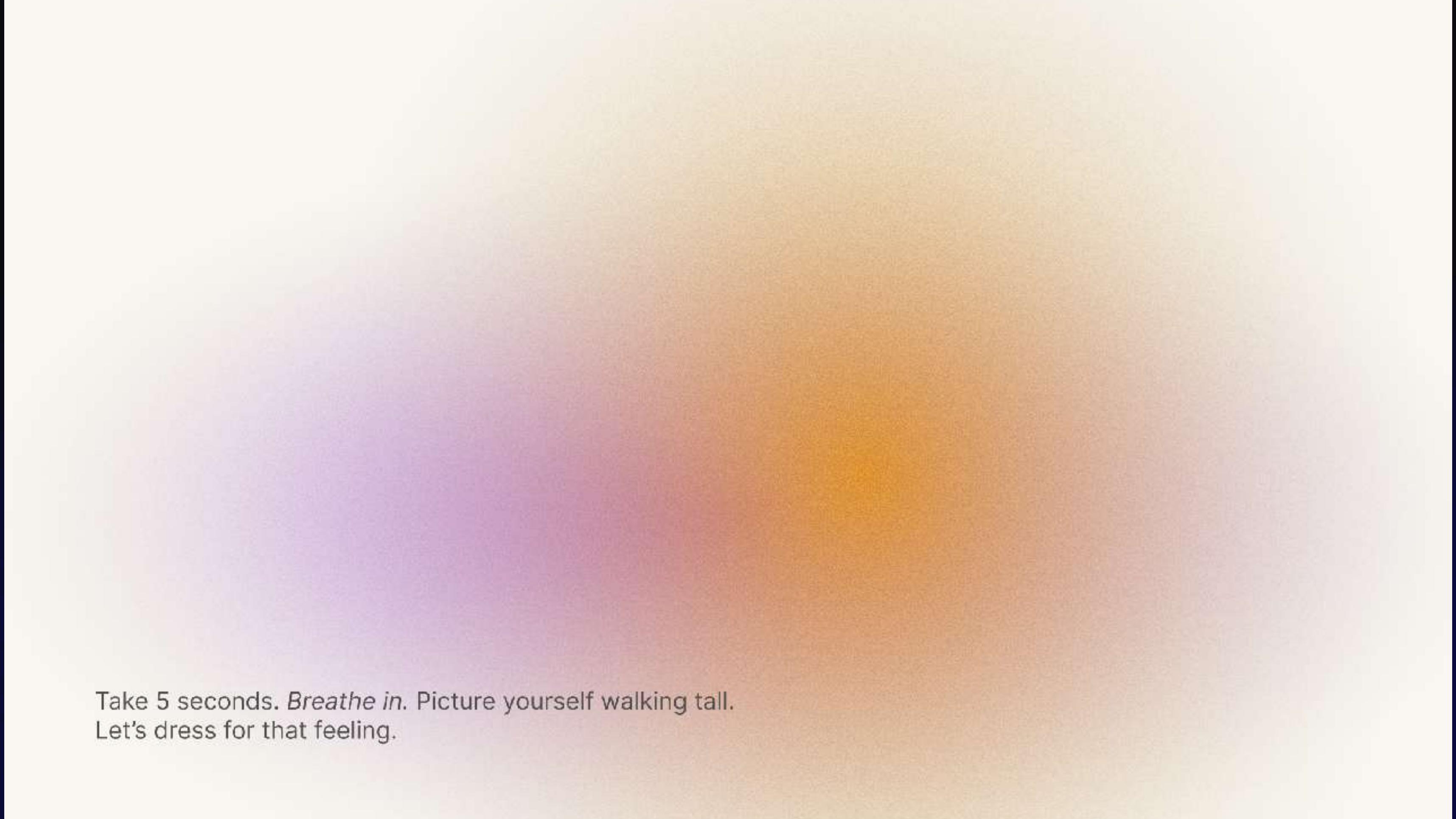
confident

desired

relaxed

How do you want to **feel** today?

This image is a collage of various fashion and lifestyle elements. At the top left is a woman in a black jumpsuit standing on a balcony overlooking a body of water. Next to her is a bottle of Moët & Chandon champagne. Below this are two images: one of a woman in a white lace top and white pants, and another of a person's legs in white pants. To the right is a close-up of white flowers. A central text bubble asks, "How do you want to **feel** today?" surrounded by five colored speech bubbles containing the words "powerful", "playful", "confident", "desired", and "relaxed". The background features a dark blue vertical bar on the left and a pink vertical bar on the right.



Take 5 seconds. *Breathe in.* Picture yourself walking tall.
Let's dress for that feeling.

Which of these feels
like the future you?



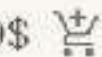
Which of these feels
like the future you?



Calm
Confidence

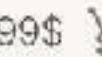


1.

69.99\$ **Soft Wool Overshirt
in Mist Grey**

It's the piece you reach for when you're grounded, but ready. Structured without shouting. The weight of the fabric reminds you of your presence, while the softness keeps things open. Wear it when you're speaking up in quiet ways — not to impress, but to express. It pairs with early mornings, clear thoughts, and moments that ask for steady grace. Calm confidence isn't loud. It's layered.

2.

59.99\$ **Wide-Leg Trousers
in Dune Beige**

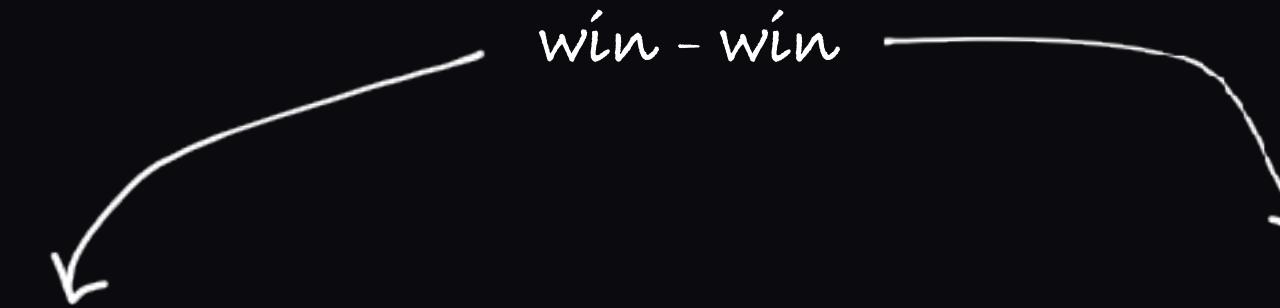
These don't try hard — and neither do you. The generous silhouette gives you room to move, breathe, and think. They fall just right, skimming the ground like you know where you're going, even if the road is still unfolding. They're made for walking into rooms with a quiet surety. Confidence lives in how you carry comfort — these are designed to carry both.

3.

129.99\$ **Textured Leather
Crossbody in Slate Blue**

Think of this as a boundary, beautifully worn. The texture gives it depth, the structure gives it edge. It holds only what you need — no more. Over the shoulder, under control, out of the way. It was never about showing off. It was about knowing exactly what matters. This is calm confidence, distilled into one daily companion.

**This is what Calm
Confidence looks like.**



User

- Reduces friction in tough moments
- Feels personal, adaptive, and human
- Builds trust through emotional alignment
- Supports mental wellbeing in everyday use
- Meets rising expectations for empathy in digital products

Business

- Boosts conversion through emotion-based triggers
- Drives retention and brand affinity
- Elevates personalization beyond behavior data
- Differentiates through emotional intelligence
- Aligns with wellbeing and personalization market trends

Design Principles for the Empathic Web

Lead with Emotional Insight

Design begins by understanding what users are feeling — not just what they want to do.

Personalize by Feeling, Not Just Behavior

Real-time mood matters more than past behavior when shaping digital experiences.

Let Users Set Their Emotional Mode

Some users want mood-based support. Others don't. Empathy must respect boundaries.

Adapt the Interface to Emotion

Emotion should reshape layout, information density, and UI complexity.

Tune Microcopy to Emotional State

Words build trust — or break it — especially when someone is frustrated, sad, or unsure.

Rethink Flow: Emotion Enables Detours

Rigid funnels don't fit emotional realities. Let users choose lighter, faster, or slower paths.

Design Soft Recovery Moments

Not every failure is technical. Users feel stuck, lost, or unsure — and need repair, not redirection.

Reflect Emotion Back — Gently

People feel seen when the system remembers emotional patterns — not just data trails.

Bake Empathy into Your Design System

Empathy isn't a layer. It's built into spacing, color, microcopy, motion, and pacing.

First Steps You Can Do

Emotional Insights

Interview with Maya Patel – Impact of SkillUp App

Interviewer: Thanks for joining today, Maya. Can you start by briefly introducing yourself?

Maya: Sure! I'm Maya Patel, 28, currently working as a Marketing Specialist at a tech startup. I've been using the SkillUp app for about four months now.

Interviewer: What initially motivated you to start using SkillUp?

Maya: I was feeling stuck in my career – especially wanting to advance my skills in digital marketing and leadership. SkillUp seemed like a practical way to improve without the huge time commitment of traditional courses.

Interviewer: Could you describe your overall experience with the app?

Maya: Really positive overall. It's intuitive and fits easily into my daily routine. I especially like the micro-learning modules. Each lesson is bite-sized, which makes it easy to learn consistently without feeling overwhelmed.

Interviewer: How has using SkillUp impacted your professional life?

Maya: It has genuinely boosted my confidence at work. After finishing the digital marketing modules, I felt better prepared to take initiative in team projects. I noticed my improved skills and gave me additional responsibilities.

Interviewer: That's great to hear. Have you encountered any challenges?

Maya: Occasionally, I've found the assessments after each lesson a bit challenging, but the interactive activities or real-life scenarios would be helpful.

Interviewer: Interesting point. Do you feel the content you've learned translates effectively to real-world applications?

Maya: Absolutely. For instance, the digital marketing modules provided practical tools that I've directly applied in campaigns. I've noticed improved metrics in engagement, which has been very encouraging.

Interviewer: Could you pinpoint one particular feature of SkillUp that's been most impactful for you?

Maya: The personalized learning paths. It recommends exactly what I need next based on my goals and previous performance, which keeps me motivated and focused.

Interviewer: Have your goals or expectations evolved since using SkillUp?

Maya: Yes, definitely. Initially, I just wanted to learn some basics. But now, I'm aiming for a management position within a year, thanks to the confidence and skills I've gained from the app.

Interviewer: On a more personal level, how has your emotional relationship to your work changed since starting with SkillUp?

Maya: Honestly, it's been quite transformative. Before SkillUp, I often felt anxious or inadequate because I didn't feel fully competent in my role. Now, I experience less anxiety because I have more clarity about my abilities and my career path. The app has helped me not just professionally, but also emotionally – I feel much happier and calmer in my everyday work life.

Interviewer: Would you recommend SkillUp to others? Why or why not?

Maya: I already have! It's accessible, practical, and genuinely impactful for professional growth. It's rare to find a learning tool that's both engaging and immediately applicable.

Interviewer: Thanks so much, Maya. Your insights are incredibly helpful.

Maya: My pleasure!

Emotional
Insight

First Steps You Can Do

Persona Creation with Emotional Insights



Maya Patel
Ambitious Professional Learner

Demographics

- 📍 Urban Area
- 🎓 Marketing Specialist
- 📝 Bachelor's in Marketing
- 💡 Tech Savviness: High
- 📅 28

Emotional Insights

- ❤️ Often overwhelmed by a lot of information in the beginning
- ❤️ Gets easily frustrated if overwhelm continues
- ❤️ Needs a lot of emotional support and security

Jobs-to-be-Done

- 👉 Quickly gain new skills when career growth stalls
- ⚠️ Manage work anxiety through structured learning
- ⚠️ Apply practical skills effectively in new responsibilities

Pain Points

- ⚠️ Feels career stagnation
- ⚠️ Experiences work anxiety and inadequacy
- ⚠️ Limited time for learning

Preferred Learning Style

- Concise lessons
- Personalized paths
- Interactive assessments

First Steps You Can Do

Emotional Levers

Practical Reassurance:
Use real-life scenario-based exercises to provide direct evidence of skill mastery, reinforcing a tangible sense of progress and reducing feelings of inadequacy.

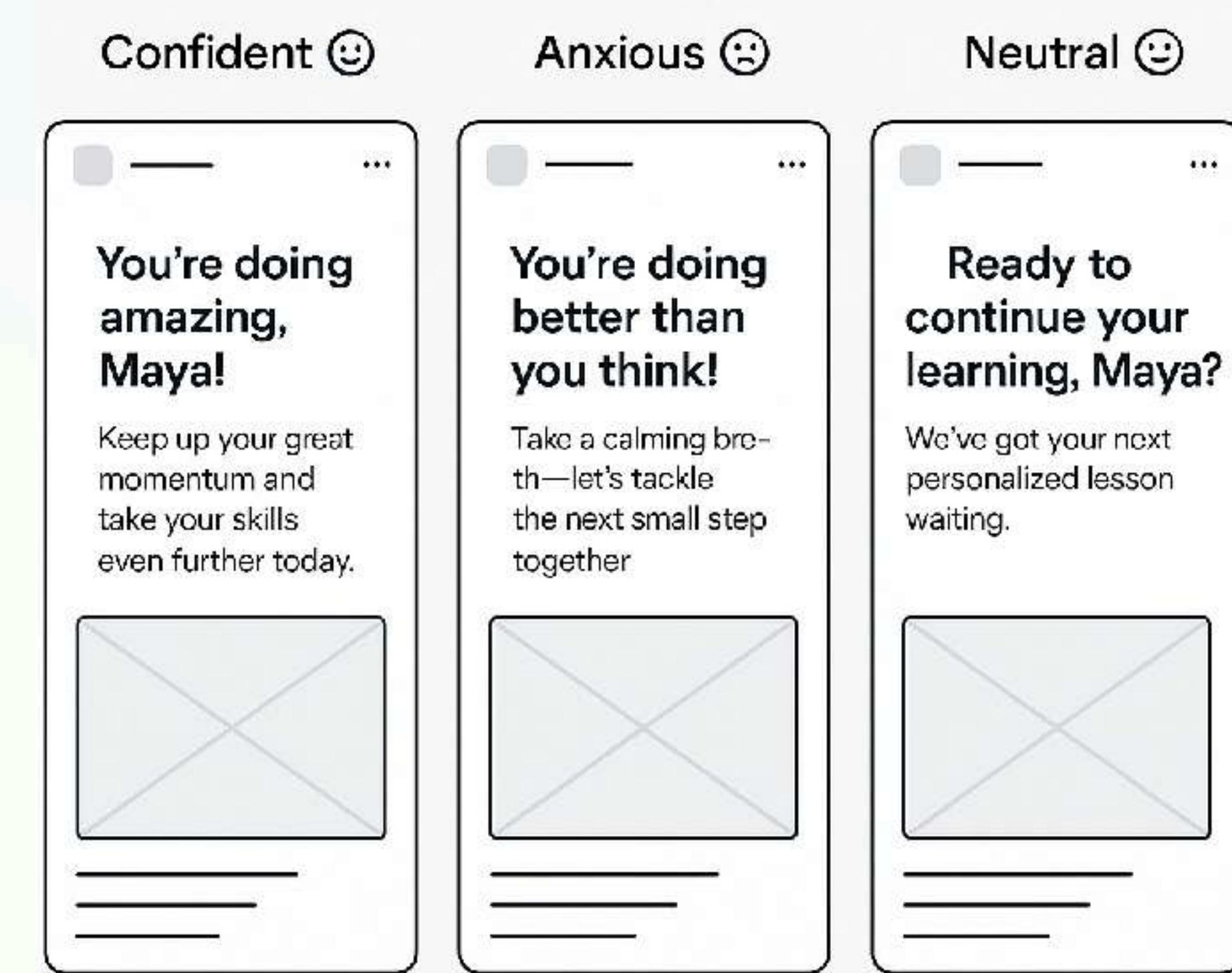
First Steps You Can Do

User Journey
with Emotional Lever



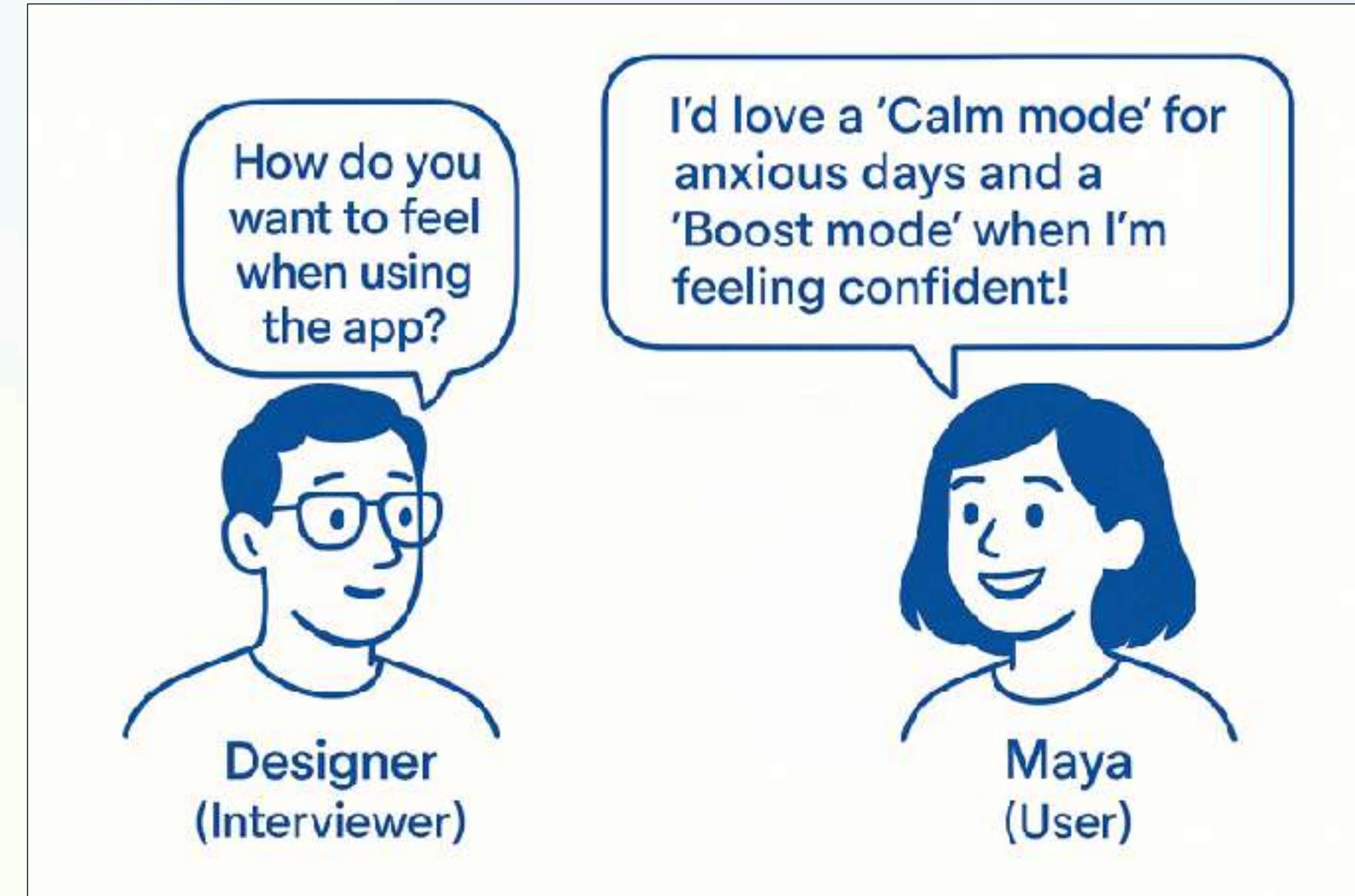
First Steps You Can Do

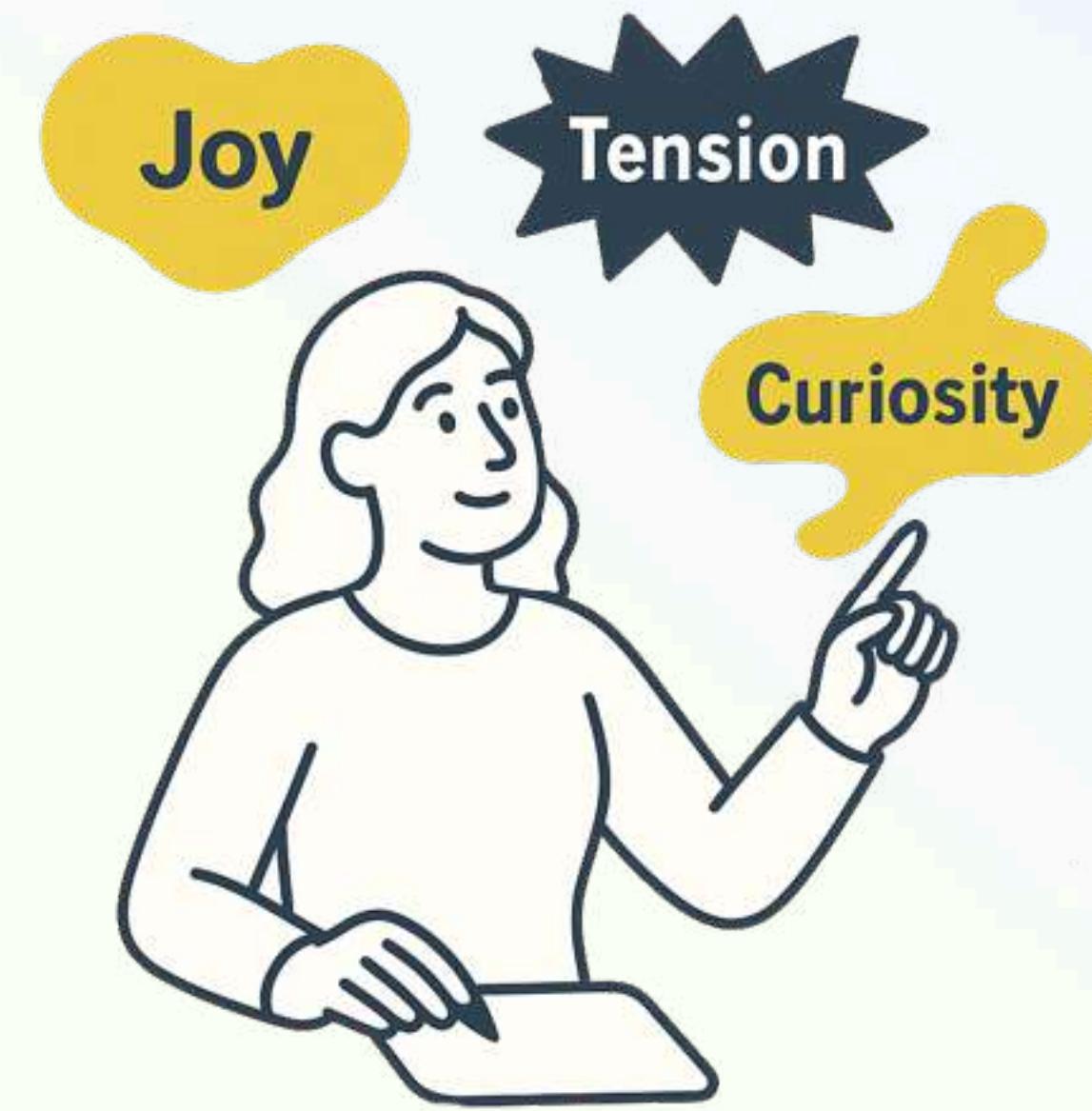
Copy Drafts for
Emotional States



First Steps You Can Do

Co-CREATE for
Mood Modes





Emotional data becomes
the new design material.

Empathy comes with responsibility.





Let's not fear the rise of
emotional machines....
...let's design them.

Let's build the Empathic Web together.

Connect with me on LinkedIn

