

Male Contraceptive Initiative



Design Thinking Tools & Activities

Empathy Card Activities - Instructions

Introduction

Personas are incredibly useful tools in user-centered design, marketing, and other disciplines focusing on customers or “users”. A persona is a fictional character created to represent a user type that might use a site, brand, or product in a similar way. They are particularly useful during ideation activities for new products and services as they allow for the extrapolation of user preferences to inform attributes, thereby removing some of the ambiguity inherent in new product design. Male contraception is an especially ripe field of product design for persona generation and application given the lack of additional methods to date coupled with decades of knowledge around experiences with female methods.

These cards have been created to share a collection of personas representative of **Users**, **Beneficiaries**, and **Intermediaries** for the next generation of male contraceptives. These stakeholder groups are defined as follows:

- Users - This group is defined as the individuals that will take or utilize the next generation of contraceptives designed for men.
- Beneficiaries - This group includes individuals who will benefit from the next generation of male contraceptives without having to take or use these products themselves.
- Intermediaries - This group is composed of individuals that will neither take, nor directly benefit from the next generation of male contraceptives, but still have a vested interest in ensuring their development.

The personas within each stakeholder group are connected to broadly defined life stages that are representative of a man’s reproductive journey. These stages are **Learning**, **Exploring**, **Deciding**, and **Concluding**, and are defined as follows:

- Learning - The initial stage, this is when a young man begins thinking about sex and establishes the foundation of their understanding of sexuality and relationship dynamics.
- Exploring - The next stage involves a man getting to know their sexuality and experimenting with sex irrespective of relationship status and without a focus on conceiving a child.
- Deciding - The third phase finds a man at the juncture in life where he is considering life events like getting married and having children, or not.

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- Concluding - The final stage, this is when a man has ultimately completed their reproductive journey, whether that includes fathering children or not.

You can find the Persona Card decks at <https://www.malecontraceptive.org/personas-activities.html> and we encourage you to use these for this exercise. The intention of this activity is to step into the shoes of the various personas to role play different scenarios and prompts as a way of developing empathy for the different people impacted by the next generation of male contraception.

It is important to note that neither the personas nor the life stages are exhaustive. They are intended to be illustrative as well as provocative. There are blank cards in each persona deck for you to use to create new personas if you like.

The purpose is to create representations of different perspectives and use these to brainstorm about their lives and how male contraception impacts them. The hope is that through this exercise we can begin developing empathy for different perspectives and utilize these insights to help identify opportunities with respect to developing new male contraceptives.

We encourage you to reach out to us at contact@malecontraceptive.org with any questions or comments, as well as to share any outputs from your experiences using these cards.

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Set-up & Preparation

- Read the introduction to the group and discuss what personas are and why brainstorming is a useful exercise.
- Have the participants pair off in groups of two or three (depending on the game; see below).
- Have participants sit facing each other.
- Print out the sets of the Persona Cards, making sure to print the decks for Users, Beneficiaries, and Intermediaries.
- Print out a set of the Empathy Cards.
- Each player will need to draw a card or set of cards based on the game that they are playing (See following sections for gameplay suggestions).
- Encourage participants to be as creative as possible!

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Gameplay Option #1: Individual Personas

How to play:

- Pair off participants in groups of two.
- Have participants sit facing each other.
- Each participant is to choose one (1) card at random from the User Persona deck. Each participant spends a few minutes (5 maximum) reviewing their persona card and getting into “character”.
 - Participants will effectively roleplay using their assigned persona card as their character.
- Have one participant choose one (1) card at random from the Empathy Card deck.
- Each participant takes turns responding to the question or prompt as they think their character would respond.
- Allow for a conversation between the two “characters” before moving onto the next question or prompt.
- Continue asking questions or presenting scenarios for a set period of time or until the group begins to lose interest.
- Go around the room and ask each participant to share which persona they acted out, as well as to reflect on the experience.
- Repeat the process with the Beneficiary and Intermediary personas.

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Gameplay Option #2: Persona Pairs

How to play:

- Pair off participants in groups of two.
- Have participants sit facing each other. Have one participant choose one (1) card at random from the User Persona deck, and the other participant choose one (1) card at random from the Beneficiary Persona deck.
 - For this exercise, the participants' card pairing will be used as a proxy for an intimate, heterosexual relationship.
- Each participant spends a few minutes (5 maximum) reviewing their persona card and getting into "character".
 - Participants will effectively roleplay using their assigned persona card as their character who is in a relationship with the other character.
- Have one participant choose one (1) card at random from the Empathy Card deck.
- Each participant takes turns responding to the question or prompt as they think their character would respond.
- Allow for a conversation between the two "characters" before moving onto the next question or prompt.
- Continue asking questions or presenting scenarios for a set period of time or until the group begins to lose interest.
- Repeat the process with participants switching roles (i.e., the User becomes the Beneficiary and draws from that deck, while the Beneficiary becomes the User and draws from that deck).
- Go around the room and ask each participant group to share which persona pairing they acted out, as well as to reflect on the experience.

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Gameplay Option #3: Persona Groups

How to play:

- Pair off participants in groups of three.
- Have participants sit facing each other.
- Have one participant choose one (1) card at random from the User Persona deck, another participant choose one (1) card at random from the Beneficiary Persona deck, and the final participant choose one (1) card at random from the Intermediary Persona deck.
 - For this exercise, the User and Beneficiary card pairing will be used as a proxy for an intimate, heterosexual relationship, whereas the participant with the Intermediary card acting as an outside supporter for the couple.
- Each participant spends a few minutes (5 maximum) reviewing their persona card and getting into “character”.
 - Participants will effectively roleplay using their assigned persona card as their character who is in a relationship with the other character.
- Have one participant choose one (1) card at random from the Empathy Card deck.
- Each participant with the User and Beneficiary cards take turns responding to the question or prompt as they think their character would respond, with the participant with the Intermediary card providing assistance as they think their character would provide in each given scenario.
- Allow for a conversation between the “characters” before moving onto the next question or prompt.
- Continue asking questions or presenting scenarios for a set period of time or until the group begins to lose interest.
- Repeat the process with participants switching roles until every participant has the opportunity to take on the role of a User, Beneficiary, and Intermediary.
- Go around the room and ask each participant group to share which persona pairing they acted out, as well as to reflect on the experience.

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Gameplay Option #4: Play as Yourself

How to play:

- Pair off with a friend, family member, or partner.
- Sit facing each other.
- Have one participant choose one (1) card at random from the Empathy Card deck.
- Each participant takes turns responding to the question or prompt.
- Allow for a conversation before moving onto the next question or prompt.
- Continue asking questions or presenting scenarios for a set period of time or until you begin to lose interest.
- Ask each participant to reflect on the experience.