

Step into my shoes

Anu Manohar - Research-based Project Proposal

Hypothesis

My aim is to help children see the world through the lens of disability and in turn build empathy in children

Problem Statement

Any child can be a victim of bullying or harassment, but research has shown that children with special needs are both more likely to be bullied or harassed and also more likely to be seriously harmed by it. In addition, children with special needs may be less likely to be able to seek help to stop it.

Types of disabilities

Physical -

Muscular Dystrophy, Epilepsy, Cerebral Palsy

Developmental -

Autism, Down Syndrome, Dyslexia

Behavioral or Emotional -

ADD, Bipolarized, Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Sensory Impaired -

Deaf or Limited Hearing, Blind or Visually Impaired

Current Challenges

- **In most schools, there is no disability awareness for children**
- **Children are not taught to be empathetic / there are no empathy building activities**
- **Bullying due to disability**
- **Lack of awareness about how others see the world**

Bullying

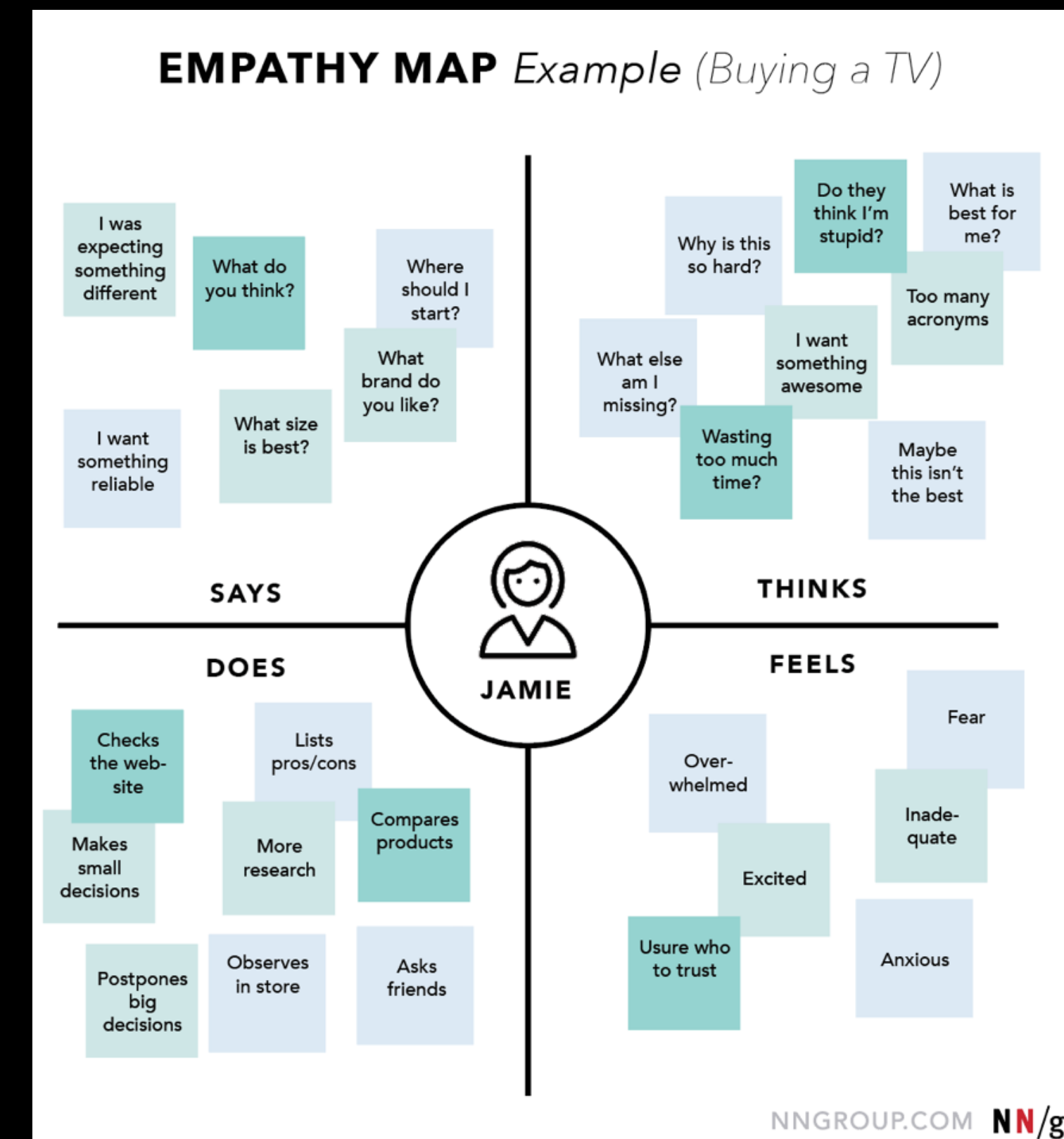
Though it is not as widely acknowledged, a smaller number of bullying instances consist of physical bullying; a greater proportion involves verbal and "relational" bullying. Relational bullying seeks to isolate the victim from friends or activities, and may actually be painful. Statements that focus on leaving a child out of a group ("You can't play with us." "Everyone is invited but you.") marginalize that child and minimize his self-worth.

Disabled kids are susceptible to bullying because they don't fit in with the majority of kids. Children with special needs are especially vulnerable because they have less power than more typical kids. Traditional targets tend to be painfully shy, physically small, and not assertive; they lack motor coordination, are not good at sports, and often have learning disabilities, social challenges, and few friends. Bright kids—especially those who are socially awkward—may inadvertently cause bullies to be jealous of them, provoking behavior aimed at diminishing their worth.

Preventing bullying through empathy

The term “empathy” is used to describe a wide range of experiences. Emotion researchers generally define empathy as the ability to sense other people’s emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.

Empathy is a key part of being a responsible and helpful community member at school and elsewhere. For example, children who show empathy are less likely to bully. Empathy can also be a route to academic and career success, because it helps people understand and work with others. They are peaceful, productive, and positive places where all teachers can teach and all students can learn.



Activities for cultivating empathy

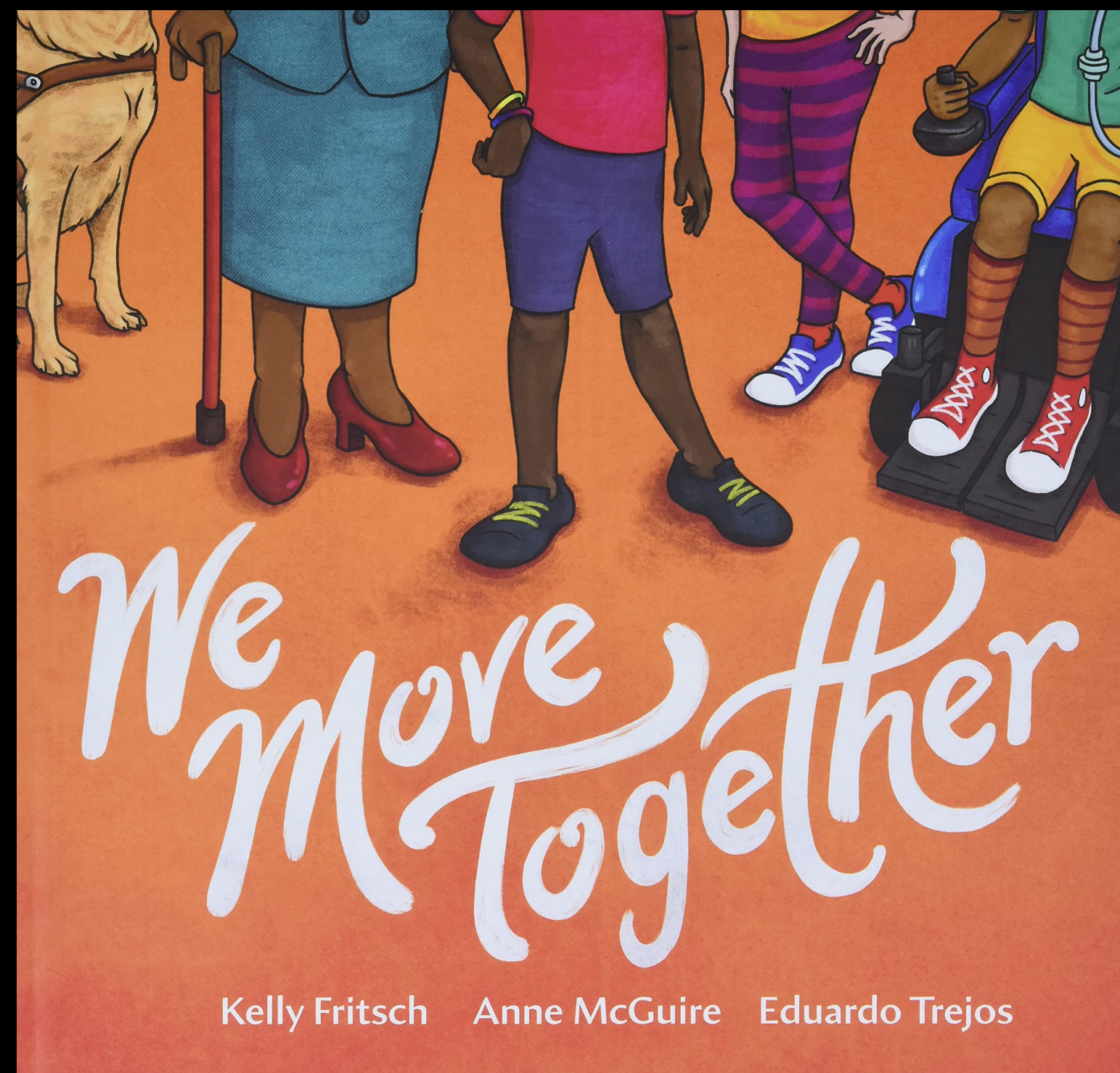
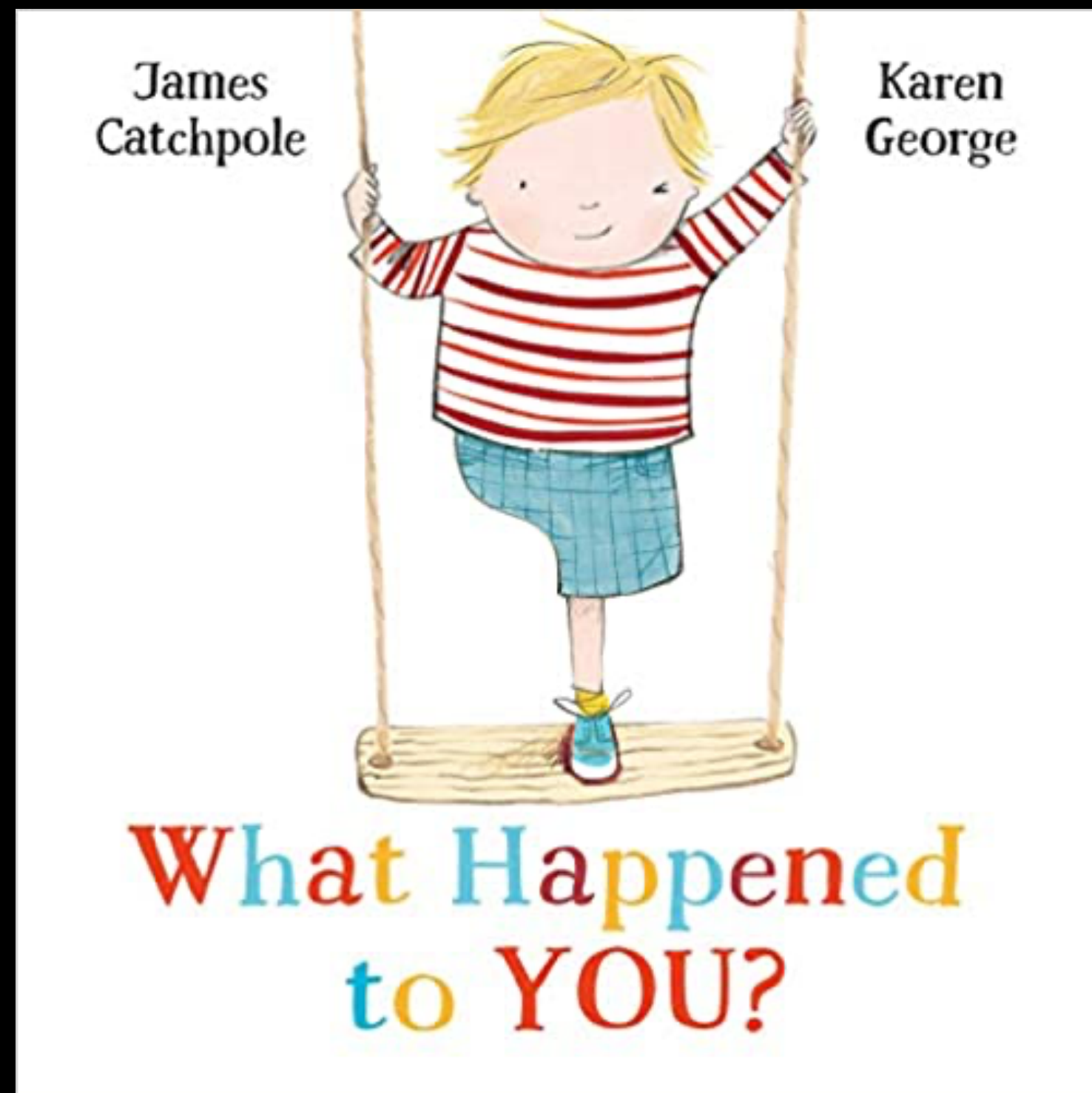
Active listening: Express active interest in what the other person has to say and make him or her feel heard.

Shared identity: Think of a person who seems to be very different from you, and then list what you have in common.

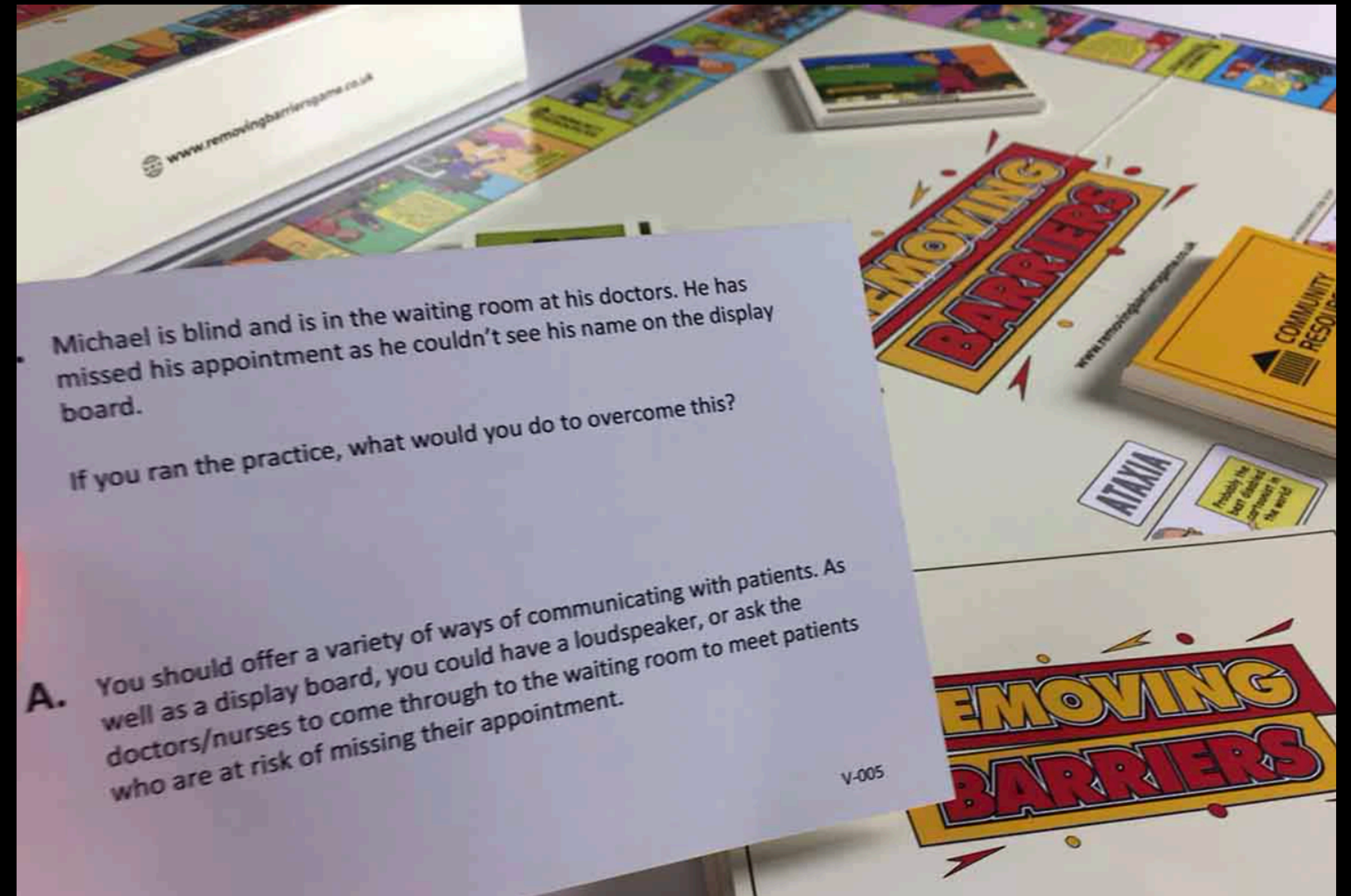
Put a human face on suffering: When reading the news, look for profiles of specific individuals and try to imagine what their lives have been like.

Eliciting altruism: Create reminders of connectedness.

Examples



Examples



Project Proposal

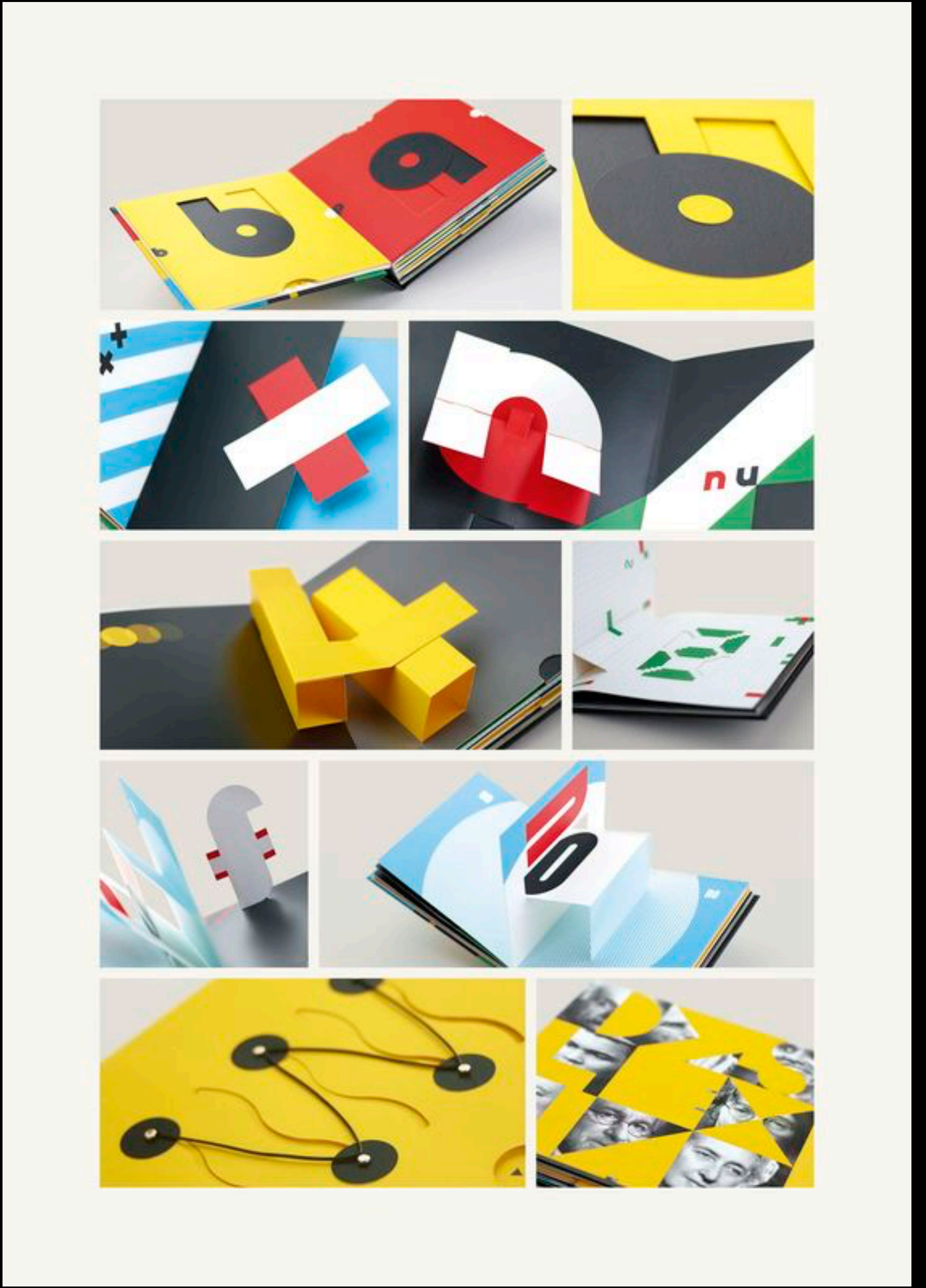
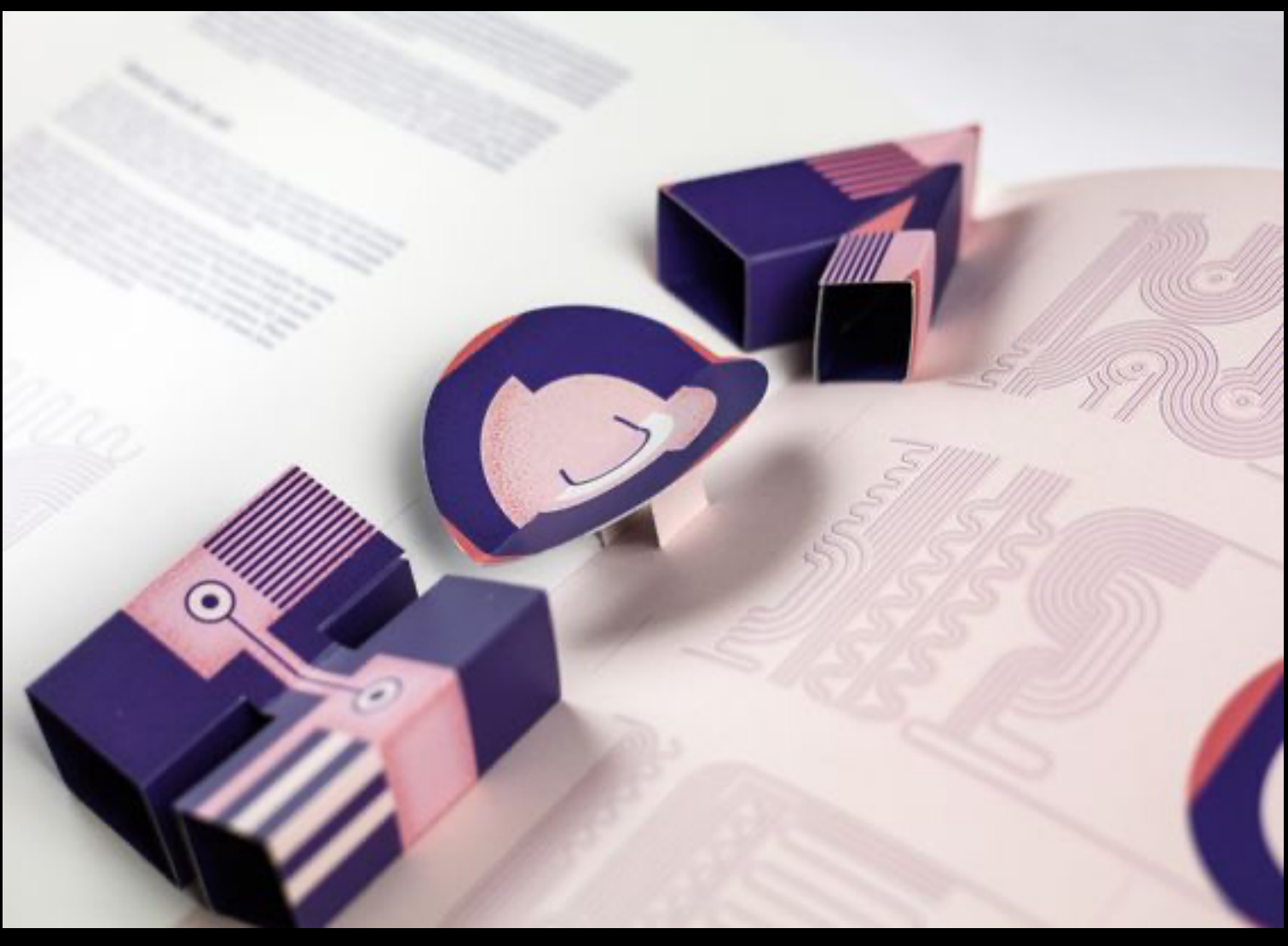
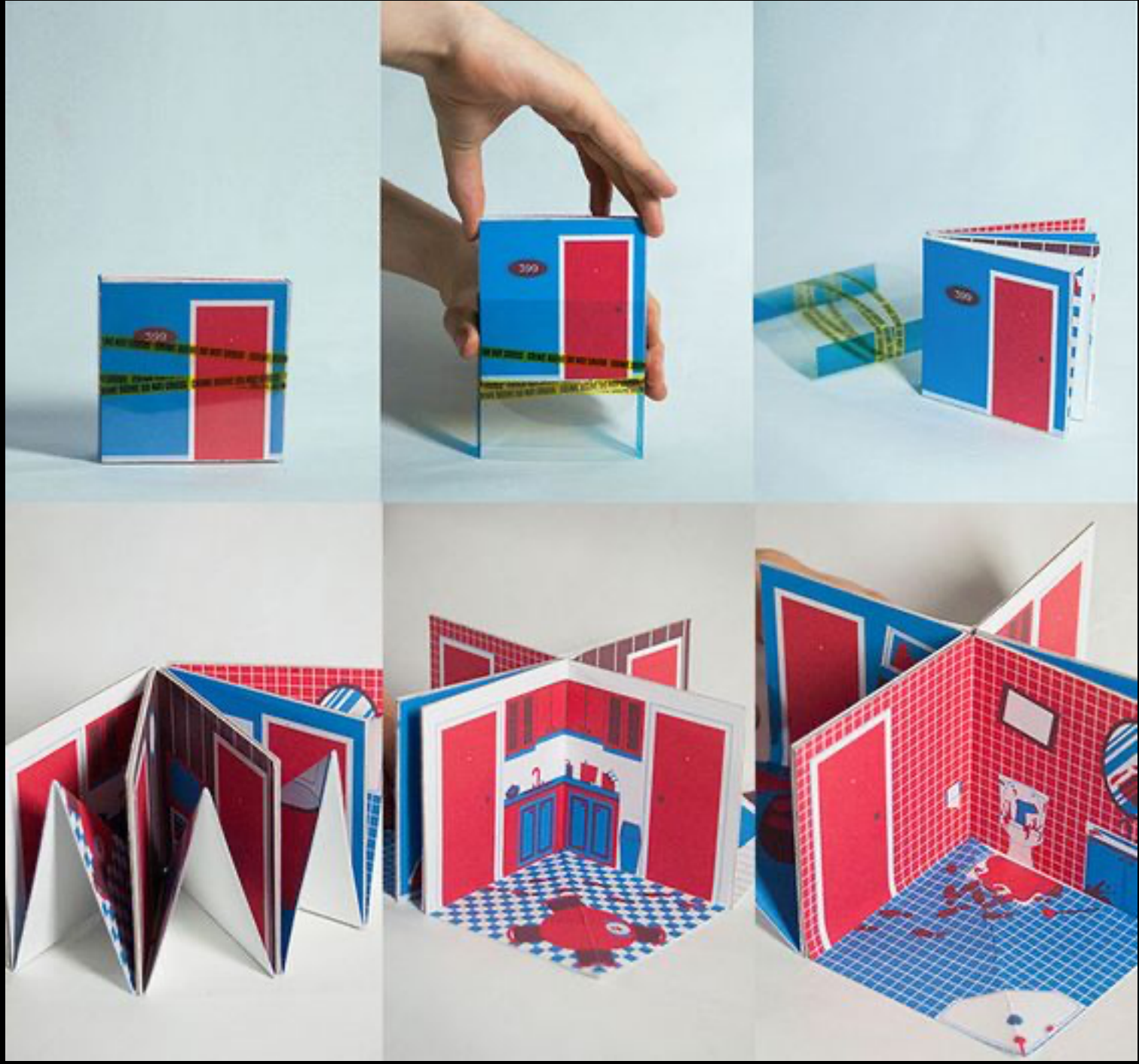
What - A book that helps children build empathy by experiencing common disabilities

Who - Children from 3rd-5th grade (primarily without disabilities)

Why - Reduce bullying in schools caused by disabilities and build empathy

When - In class and at home.

How - Book/Zine that allows children to have an interactive learning experience



Series 1 - Visual Impairment

Tie your shoe lace with your eyes closed - A page with holes and shoe laces provided

Tie a tie - A page with a shirt collar and a tie

Name the vegetable - A page with vegetable shapes

What's the time - A page with a clock

Name the colour - Descriptions of different colors

Series 1 - Visual Impairment



Series 1 - Visual Impairment (Blind)

Series 2 - Physical disability

Series 3 - Dyslexia

Series 4 - Color Blind

Further exploration

The first step is to understand the issues, and think about services & facilities in the way that disabled people do. Once we recognize the barriers faced by disabled people, we can think about how we remove them. Barriers can often be overlooked because service-providers just don't realize that they exist.