Inventing Characters Is Not Wrong, but Characters Need Thinking Style Hats

NC

The **state nutrition council** was created a decade ago to help people develop healthy eating habits. It has launched programs over the years focused on various things, like reducing salt intake or limiting soda-drinking to one can a day. Their program to introduce fruits and vegetables in snack-able ways was largely successful. Now they are focused on increasing leafy greens in meal preparation.

Meal preparation, itself, is a difficult behavior to change, so the team did resarch to help them understand people's cognition, which is upstream of their behavior. The team found **thinking style** patterns in how people approach cooking dinner.

The Culinarian

Over the years, I've built up an extensive repertoire of meals in my head, so I get to select whichever ingredients are amazing right now to make a dish that is at its peak. The joy of cooking is having lots of things going on in the kitchen. I also enjoy perfecting a dish over time.

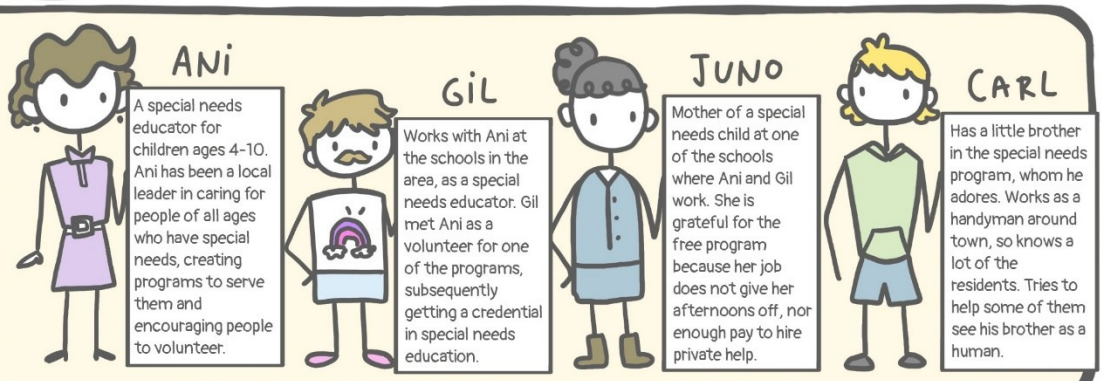
Creative Improviser

I start with an idea and then decide what goes with it based on ingredients that I have. I listen to my intuitive voice when layering flavors with aromatics or oils. I will make course corrections if it seems to be going in the wrong direction. It is a gamble, but that is okay. I will eat it anyway.

Peak Planner

I saw something I want to cook, and I want it to turn out just like that. There's always this climax in the kitchen, and it can get stressful. To make sure I don't mess up any steps, I get organized and maybe write notes about the recipe. If things don't turn out the way I want, it can be disappointing.

The team deepened their old personas into a **cast of characters**, who will wear these thinking styles (like hats). Each character has a backstory and relationships to other characters. Like a TV show, they all live and work in a particular place.



Ani

A special needs educator for children ages 4-10. Ani has been a local leader in caring for people of all ages who have special needs, creating programs to serve them and encouraging people to volunteer.

Gil

Works with Ani at the schools in the area, as a special needs educator. Gil met Ani as a volunteer for one of the programs, subsequently getting a credential in special needs education.

Juno

Mother of a special needs child at one of the schools where Ani and Gil work. She is grateful for the free program because her job does not give her afternoons off, nor enough pay to hire private help.

Carl

Has a little brother in the special needs program, whom he adores. Works as a handyman around town, so knows a lot of the residents. Tries to help some of them see his brother as a human.

These characters play roles in episodes that the team writes to seed **brainstorming sessions.** The ideas in these sessions will be more innovative, guided by the idea that you support each thinking style rather than change them.

Episode 1:

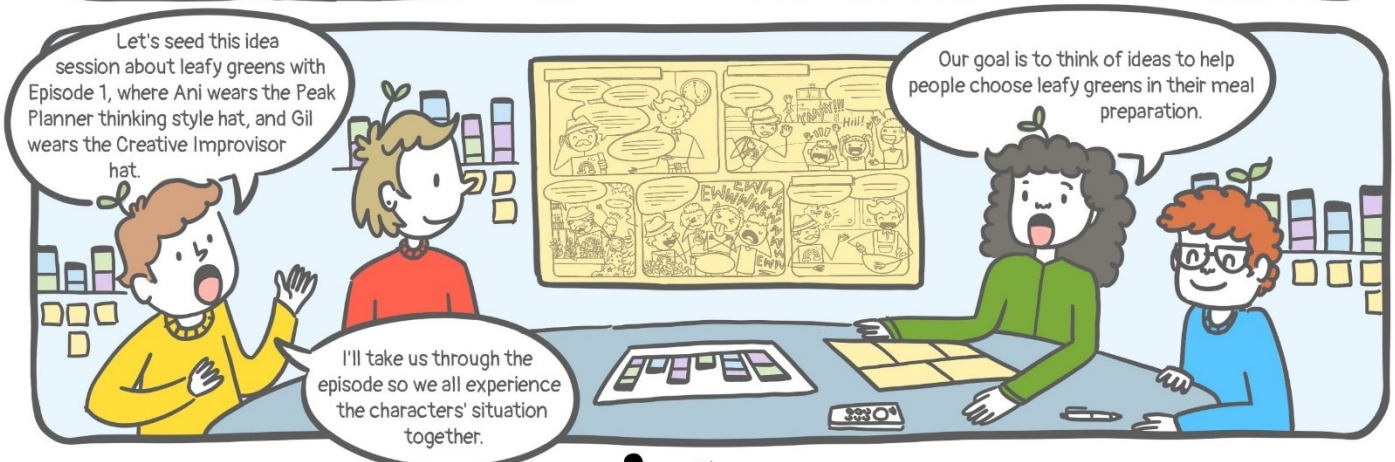
Ani invites Gil for dinner because Gil's refrigerator broke

Episode 2:

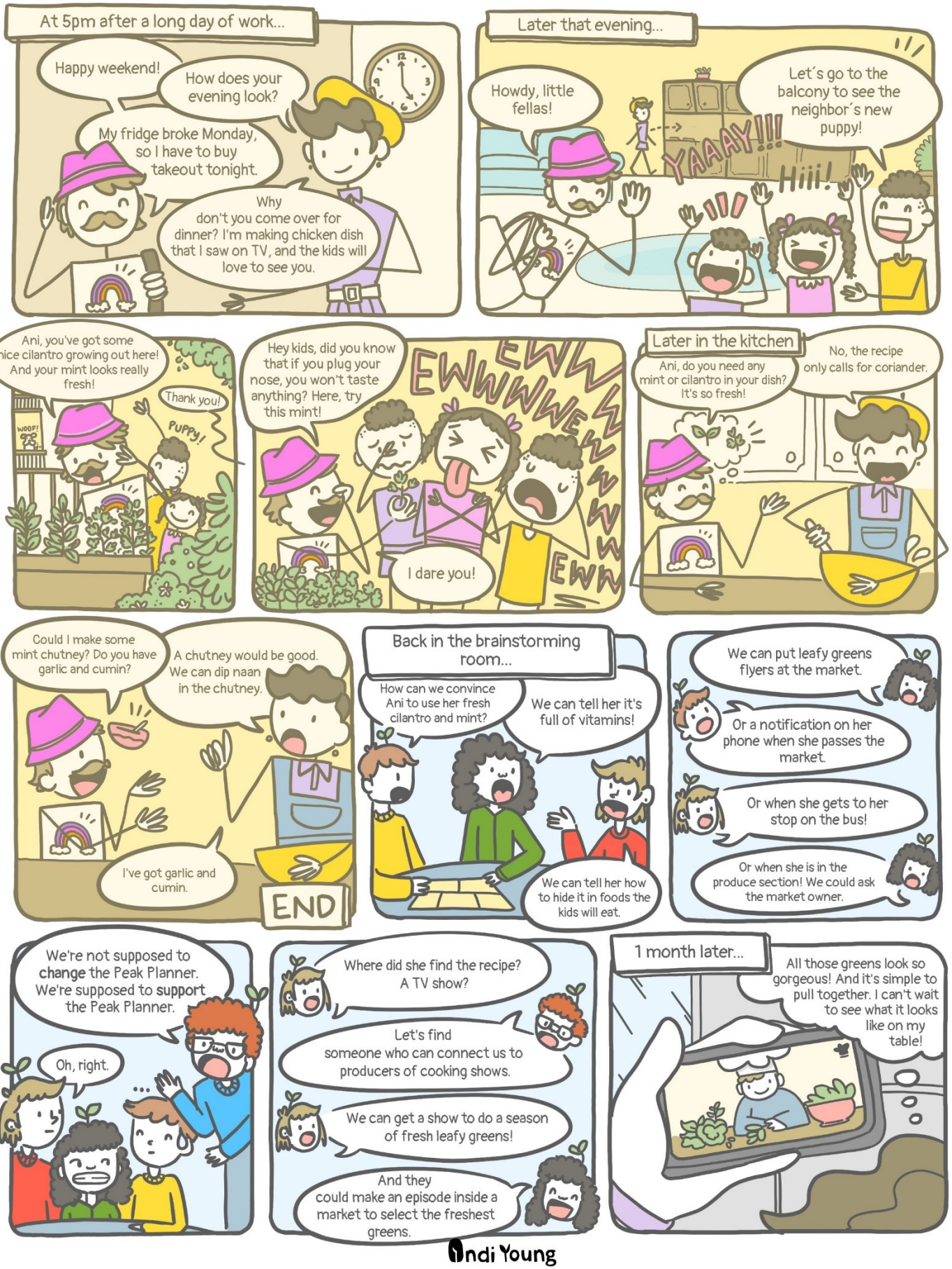
Gil gets their refrigerator replaced with Carl's help

Episode 3:

Carl brings a dish to a celebration that Juno attends



Andi Young


At 5pm after a long day of work...
Happy weekend!
How does your evening look?
My fridge broke Monday, so I have to buy takeout tonight.
Why don't you come over for dinner? I'm making chicken dish that I saw on TV, and the kids will love to see you.
Later that evening...
Howdy, little fellas!
Let´s go to the balcony to see the neighbor´s new puppy!
YAAAY!!!
Hiii!
Ani, you've got some nice cilantro growing out here! And your mint looks really fresh!
Thank you!
WOOF!
PUPPY!
Hey kids, did you know that if you plug your nose, you won't taste anything? Here, try this mint!
EWWWWWWWWW
I dare you!
Later in the kitchen
Ani, do you need any mint or cilantro in your dish? It's so fresh!
No, the recipe only calls for coriander.
Could I make some mint chutney? Do you have garlic and cumin?
A chutney would be good. We can dip naan in the chutney.
I've got garlic and cumin.
END
Back in the brainstorming room...
How can we convince Ani to use her fresh cilantro and mint?
We can tell her it's full of vitamins!
We can tell her how to hide it in foods the kids will eat.
We can put leafy greens flyers at the market.
Or a notification on her phone when she passes the market.
Or when she gets to her stop on the bus!
Or when she is in the produce section! We could ask the market owner.
We're not supposed to change the Peak Planner. We're supposed to support the Peak Planner.
Oh, right.
Where did she find the recipe? A TV show?
Let's find someone who can connect us to producers of cooking shows.
We can get a show to do a season of fresh leafy greens!
And they could make an episode inside a market to select the freshest greens.
1 month later...
All those greens look so gorgeous! And it's simple to pull together. I can't wait to see what it looks like on my table!
Indi Young