

# Reasoning with Empathy

Across the 21 Valid Reasoning Styles



## REFERENCE TABLES

**LEVEL 1 - How Lucid Empathy interacts with the reasoning process**  
Key questions Empathy asks of each Reasoning Style  
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**LEVEL 2 - Calibrating Reasoning with Empathy**  
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# Level 1: Reasoning with Empathy

## Across the 21 Valid Reasoning Styles



Lucid Empathy changes the attentional field of each reasoning style. It asks each style to remain alert to human consequence while still preserving its own discipline.

Valid Reasoning Style	How Lucid Empathy interacts with the reasoning process	Empathic questions to ask
<b>Linear reasoning</b>	Keeps people visible within sequences, procedures, timelines, escalation pathways, and implementation steps.	Who is affected at each step? Where might delay, handoff, or sequencing create harm, exclusion, or loss of trust?
<b>Recursive reasoning</b>	Uses feedback, review, and learning to notice whether action has affected people as intended.	What have affected people experienced since the last decision? What should their feedback change in our next cycle of judgment?
<b>Cyclical reasoning</b>	Notices repeated human impacts across annual, seasonal, organisational, or service cycles.	Who repeatedly carries the burden of this cycle? What recurring harm, fatigue, exclusion, or unmet need keeps returning?
<b>Inductive reasoning</b>	Tests whether patterns drawn from evidence include lived experience, contrary cases, and affected voices.	Whose experience is included in the evidence? Are we generalising from too narrow, privileged, or convenient a sample?
<b>Abductive reasoning</b>	Helps generate explanations that include human motive, experience, vulnerability, and context without reducing people to assumptions.	What explanation best fits the evidence and the lived experience of those affected? What human factors might we be overlooking?
<b>Probabilistic reasoning</b>	Prevents likelihood, risk, and confidence estimates from obscuring severity, dignity, or unacceptable harm.	Even if the likelihood is low, who bears the consequence? Are we treating human harm as only a probability score?
<b>Counterfactual reasoning</b>	Uses alternative pathways to learn from harm, missed options, and preventable consequences without sliding into blame.	What might have been different for affected people if we had acted earlier, listened differently, or chosen another path?
<b>Nonlinear reasoning</b>	Attends to how small pressures can escalate into disproportionate human consequences, crises, or trust collapse.	Where could a small signal become serious harm? Who is most exposed if escalation, cascade, or tipping point occurs?
<b>Proportional reasoning</b>	Calibrates response to seriousness, burden, harm, dignity, evidence, and consequence.	Are we overreacting, underreacting, or responding proportionately to the human significance of the matter?
<b>Deductive reasoning</b>	Ensures rules, duties, and policies are applied without losing sight of people, discretion, context, and consequence.	What follows from the rule, and what human consequence follows from applying it this way? Is discretion required?

Valid Reasoning Style	How Lucid Empathy interacts with the reasoning process	Empathic questions to ask
<b>Categorical reasoning</b>	Tests whether categories clarify responsibility or obscure mixed, marginal, vulnerable, or transitional cases.	Who is helped or harmed by this classification? Does the category fit the person's actual situation?
<b>Fuzzy reasoning</b>	Supports attention to degrees of need, risk, vulnerability, harm, and partial fit.	To what extent is someone at risk, affected, included, excluded, or protected? Where should the action threshold sit?
<b>Systems reasoning</b>	Keeps human experience visible within interdependence, feedback, delays, dependencies, and unintended consequences.	How do system interactions affect people differently? Who experiences the downstream consequences of this decision?
<b>Analogical reasoning</b>	Tests whether comparisons respect differences in people, context, power, culture, history, and consequence.	Who might be harmed if we import this analogy too quickly? What human difference makes this case unlike the comparison?
<b>Dialectical reasoning</b>	Helps competing values, claims, and tensions remain connected to the people and responsibilities each side protects.	What human concern does each side of the tension protect? Who is harmed if one side is dismissed too quickly?
<b>Ecological reasoning</b>	Locates people within context, relationships, environment, dependencies, mission fit, and sustainability.	Does this fit the lived context of stakeholders? Are we adapting responsibly or shifting burden onto vulnerable people?
<b>Topological reasoning</b>	Examines how boundaries, access, proximity, centre-periphery relations, and interfaces affect voice and responsibility.	Who is inside, outside, central, marginal, connected, or blocked? What does this boundary do to dignity, access, or accountability?
<b>Strategic reasoning</b>	Ensures positioning, advantage, timing, and trade-offs remain governed by purpose, legitimacy, trust, and human consequence.	What strategy protects people as well as position? What are we tempted to justify in the name of advantage?
<b>Ethical reasoning</b>	Deepens attention to duty, harm, fairness, dignity, care, legitimacy, responsibility, and repair.	What ought we to do for those affected? What duties, harms, vulnerabilities, and responsibilities must govern this judgment?
<b>Narrative reasoning</b>	Tests whose stories are heard, whose are missing, and whether narrative coherence is replacing evidence or complexity.	Whose story is shaping the decision? Whose story is absent, simplified, romanticised, or used instrumentally?
<b>Morphological reasoning</b>	Expands possible forms, designs, structures, and options to include more humane and responsible alternatives.	What alternative design would better protect dignity, reduce harm, preserve trust, or repair relationship?

# Level 1: Reasoning with Empathy

## Across the 21 Valid Reasoning Styles (cont'd)

Valid reasoning style	How Lucid Empathy interacts with the reasoning process	Empathic questions to ask
<b>Categorical reasoning</b>	Tests whether categories clarify responsibility or obscure mixed, marginal, vulnerable, or transitional cases.	Who is helped or harmed by this classification? Does the category fit the person's actual situation?
<b>Fuzzy reasoning</b>	Supports attention to degrees of need, risk, vulnerability, harm, and partial fit.	To what extent is someone at risk, affected, included, excluded, or protected? Where should the action threshold sit?
<b>Systems reasoning</b>	Keeps human experience visible within interdependence, feedback, delays, dependencies, and unintended consequences.	How do system interactions affect people differently? Who experiences the downstream consequences of this decision?
<b>Analogical reasoning</b>	Tests whether comparisons respect differences in people, context, power, culture, history, and consequence.	Who might be harmed if we import this analogy too quickly? What human difference makes this case unlike the comparison?
<b>Dialectical reasoning</b>	Helps competing values, claims, and tensions remain connected to the people and responsibilities each side protects.	What human concern does each side of the tension protect? Who is harmed if one side is dismissed too quickly?
<b>Ecological reasoning</b>	Locates people within context, relationships, environment, dependencies, mission fit, and sustainability.	Does this fit the lived context of stakeholders? Are we adapting responsibly or shifting burden onto vulnerable people?
<b>Topological reasoning</b>	Examines how boundaries, access, proximity, centre-periphery relations, and interfaces affect voice and responsibility.	Who is inside, outside, central, marginal, connected, or blocked? What does this boundary do to dignity, access, or accountability?
<b>Strategic reasoning</b>	Ensures positioning, advantage, timing, and trade-offs remain governed by purpose, legitimacy, trust, and human consequence.	What strategy protects people as well as position? What are we tempted to justify in the name of advantage?
<b>Ethical reasoning</b>	Deepens attention to duty, harm, fairness, dignity, care, legitimacy, responsibility, and repair.	What ought we to do for those affected? What duties, harms, vulnerabilities, and responsibilities must govern this judgment?
<b>Narrative reasoning</b>	Tests whose stories are heard, whose are missing, and whether narrative coherence is replacing evidence or complexity.	Whose story is shaping the decision? Whose story is absent, simplified, romanticised, or used instrumentally?
<b>Morphological reasoning</b>	Expands possible forms, designs, structures, and options to include more humane and responsible alternatives.	What alternative design would better protect dignity, reduce harm, preserve trust, or repair relationship?

# Level 1: Reasoning with Empathy

## Across the 21 Valid Reasoning Styles

The questions in the table above offer initial empathic prompts for each reasoning style. In more complex or consequential deliberations, directors can deepen the inquiry by applying the six core calibration lenses of Lucid Empathy: regulatory, receptivity/coregulatory, epistemic, role-ethical, systemic-power, and temporal-action. These lenses do not replace the reasoning style being used. They help ensure that its use remains humane, bounded, evidence-aware, context-sensitive, and accountable.

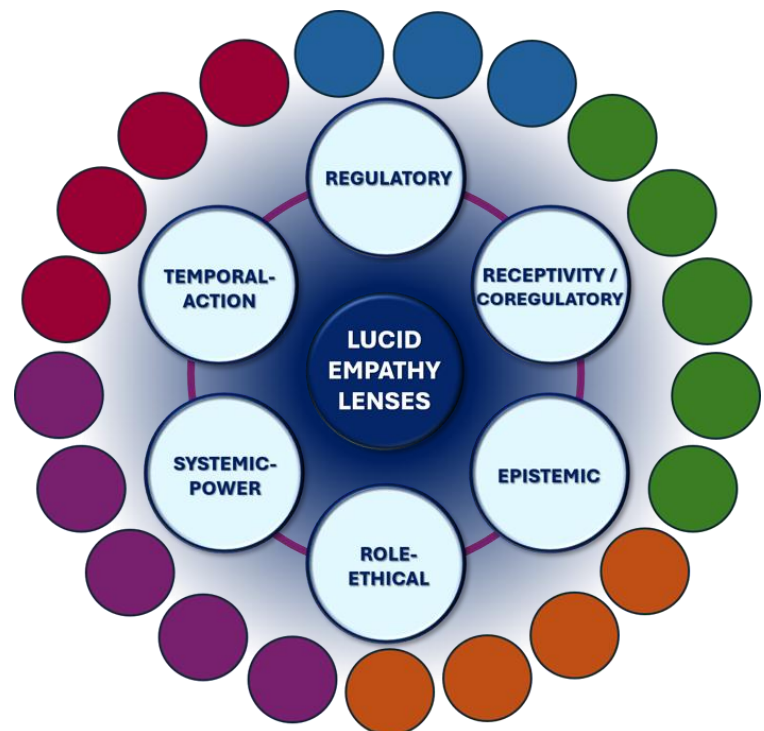
Calibration lens	Generic question to apply to any reasoning style
<b>Regulatory</b>	Are emotional arousal, urgency, defensiveness, or fatigue affecting how this reasoning style is being used?
<b>Receptivity / Coregulatory</b>	Can the people affected, and the people deliberating, receive, test, and respond to what is being considered without loss of agency?
<b>Epistemic</b>	What is the relationship between lived experience, testimony, evidence, inference, uncertainty, and decision criteria?
<b>Role-Ethical</b>	Are care, mandate, authority, fairness, proportionality, and accountability being held together?
<b>Systemic-Power</b>	How are power, voice, identity, structure, culture, access, and institutional design shaping the issue?
<b>Temporal-Action</b>	What past context, present pressures, future consequences, timing issues, and implementation responsibilities matter here?

Level 1 of Reasoning with Empathy introduces how Lucid Empathy modifies each reasoning style. It answers:

***When using this reasoning style, what human consequence should remain visible?***

See also **Level 2: Calibrating Reasoning with Empathy**, which deepens the inquiry by applying primary and secondary calibration lenses. It answers:

***Which calibration lens is most important for this reasoning style, and what secondary check should prevent distortion or omission?***



# Level 2: Calibrating Reasoning with Empathy

The questions below are designed as a practical extension of the earlier “Reasoning with Empathy” Level 1 table. Rather than providing all six core calibration questions for every reasoning style, each style is paired with two prompts:

- a **primary calibration question**, which reflects the calibration lens most directly implicated by that reasoning style; and
- a **secondary calibration question**, which introduces a further check where empathy, judgment, role, evidence, power, timing, or consequence may otherwise be underweighted.

The six core calibration perspectives are: **regulatory**, **receptivity/coregulatory**, **epistemic**, **role-ethical**, **systemic-power**, and **temporal-action**. The purpose of these questions is not to replace the reasoning style being used. It is to help directors use each style with greater attentiveness to human consequence while preserving the discipline of the reasoning itself.

These prompts are intended for selective use. In routine decisions, one question may be enough. In complex, high-stakes, contested, or emotionally charged deliberations, directors may need to move across several calibration lenses before judgment becomes decision.

Valid reasoning style	Primary calibration question	Secondary calibration question
<b>Linear reasoning</b>	<b>Temporal-action:</b> Who is affected at each step, handoff, delay, escalation point, or implementation stage?	<b>Role-ethical:</b> Are our procedures being applied in a way that preserves fairness, discretion, dignity, and accountability?
<b>Recursive reasoning</b>	<b>Temporal-action:</b> What have affected people experienced since the last decision, and what should that feedback change in the next cycle?	<b>Epistemic:</b> Are we treating feedback as evidence for learning, or merely as reassurance that our previous decision was acceptable?
<b>Cyclical reasoning</b>	<b>Temporal-action:</b> Who repeatedly carries the burden of this cycle, and what recurring harm, fatigue, exclusion, or unmet need keeps returning?	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Do recurring patterns reveal structural disadvantage, voice imbalance, or institutional habits that need redesign?
<b>Inductive reasoning</b>	<b>Epistemic:</b> Whose experience is included in the evidence, and are we generalising from too narrow, privileged, or convenient a sample?	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Which groups, cases, or perspectives are missing from the pattern we think we see?
<b>Abductive reasoning</b>	<b>Epistemic:</b> What explanation best fits both the evidence and the lived experience of those affected?	<b>Regulatory:</b> Are urgency, anxiety, defensiveness, or institutional self-protection making one explanation feel more plausible than it is?
<b>Probabilistic reasoning</b>	<b>Role-ethical:</b> Even if the likelihood is low, who bears the consequence, and do our duties require prevention, disclosure, mitigation, or care?	<b>Temporal-action:</b> Could a low-probability risk become more serious over time, or create irreversible harm if ignored?
<b>Counterfactual reasoning</b>	<b>Temporal-action:</b> What might have been different for affected people if we had acted earlier, listened differently, or chosen another path?	<b>Regulatory:</b> Are we using the counterfactual to learn responsibly, or sliding into blame, shame, defensiveness, or avoidance?
<b>Nonlinear reasoning</b>	<b>Temporal-action:</b> Where could a small signal, pressure, or omission escalate into disproportionate harm, crisis, or loss of trust?	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Who is most exposed if escalation, cascade, or tipping point occurs, and who has least capacity to absorb the impact?

Valid reasoning style	Primary calibration question	Secondary calibration question
<b>Proportional reasoning</b>	<b>Role-ethical:</b> Are we overreacting, underreacting, or responding proportionately to the seriousness, burden, dignity, evidence, and consequence involved?	<b>Regulatory:</b> Is our sense of proportion being distorted by emotional arousal, public pressure, fatigue, anger, fear, or avoidance?
<b>Deductive reasoning</b>	<b>Role-ethical:</b> What follows from the rule, policy, duty, or principle, and what human consequence follows from applying it this way?	<b>Epistemic:</b> What contextual information or lived experience is needed before we decide that the rule has been properly applied?
<b>Categorical reasoning</b>	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Who is helped or harmed by this classification, and does the category fit the person's actual situation?	<b>Role-ethical:</b> Are we using the category to clarify responsibility, or to avoid discretion, nuance, or accountability?
<b>Fuzzy reasoning</b>	<b>Epistemic:</b> To what extent is someone at risk, affected, included, excluded, protected, or only partially served by this option?	<b>Role-ethical:</b> Where should the action threshold sit, given uncertainty, vulnerability, proportionality, and duty of care?
<b>Systems reasoning</b>	<b>Systemic-power:</b> How do system interactions, dependencies, feedback loops, and delays affect people differently?	<b>Temporal-action:</b> Who experiences the downstream consequences of this decision, and when will those consequences become visible?
<b>Analogical reasoning</b>	<b>Epistemic:</b> What human difference makes this case unlike the comparison, and what would be distorted if we imported the analogy too quickly?	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Does the analogy respect differences in context, power, culture, history, vulnerability, and consequence?
<b>Dialectical reasoning</b>	<b>Role-ethical:</b> What legitimate human concern, duty, value, or responsibility does each side of the tension protect?	<b>Receptivity/coregulatory:</b> Can participants hold the tension without dismissal, over-identification, humiliation, or premature closure?
<b>Ecological reasoning</b>	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Does this fit the lived context, relationships, dependencies, culture, and stakeholder ecology in which people actually operate?	<b>Temporal-action:</b> Are we adapting responsibly over time, or shifting burden onto vulnerable people, future users, staff, partners, or communities?
<b>Topological reasoning</b>	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Who is inside, outside, central, marginal, connected, blocked, proximate, or distant in this decision space?	<b>Receptivity/coregulatory:</b> What do these boundaries, interfaces, or access points do to voice, dignity, agency, and accountability?
<b>Strategic reasoning</b>	<b>Role-ethical:</b> What strategy protects people as well as position, and what are we tempted to justify in the name of advantage?	<b>Systemic-power:</b> How will this strategy affect legitimacy, trust, stakeholder voice, power relations, and those least able to absorb trade-offs?
<b>Ethical reasoning</b>	<b>Role-ethical:</b> What ought we to do for those affected, given duty, harm, fairness, dignity, care, legitimacy, responsibility, and repair?	<b>Regulatory:</b> Are moral urgency, guilt, outrage, sympathy, fear, or loyalty distorting our ethical judgment?
<b>Narrative reasoning</b>	<b>Epistemic:</b> Whose story is shaping the decision, whose story is absent, and is narrative coherence replacing evidence or complexity?	<b>Receptivity/coregulatory:</b> Are stories being heard in a way that preserves dignity, agency, consent, and ownership rather than using them instrumentally?
<b>Morphological reasoning</b>	<b>Temporal-action:</b> What alternative design, structure, or option would better protect dignity, reduce harm, preserve trust, or repair relationship?	<b>Systemic-power:</b> Which possible forms redistribute voice, access, burden, authority, or benefit more fairly across the system?