

Six Thinking Hats

This tool was developed by Edward de Bono to encourage people to move beyond a habitual thinking style and develop a more rounded understanding of an issue or situation.

The process disentangles our thinking so that single thought modes are used at any given time. Using all the different modes enables more holistic thinking.

It can be used in a variety of situations wherever structure will be of assistance and a broad range of perspectives are needed. This includes strategic or project planning and evaluation. It allows the negative views or sensitive areas to be brought into the open and discussed without any stigma.

White Hat Thinking – is neutral and objective, focussing on facts and figures.
What information do you have? What more do you need? Where will it come from?

Red Hat Thinking – suggests anger and rage and highlights the emotional view.
How do you feel about this? What might upset you or make you angry?

Black Hat Thinking – is gloomy and pessimistic, looking for reasons it can't be done.
What don't you like? What are the weaknesses, the pitfalls?

Yellow Hat Thinking – covers optimism, hope and positive thinking.
What are the best things about this? The strengths, the potential benefits?

Green Hat Thinking – focuses on creativity, abundance and growth of new ideas.
What are the possibilities? The new ideas and things that haven't been tried before?

Blue Hat Thinking – is for organization and control of thinking, bringing it all together.
What's been achieved? What are the major outcomes? What will you do?

Introduce the group to the Six Thinking Hats approach and explain the function of each colour.

In a whole group process we have found using the hats in the order shown to have merit – starting with the facts, highlighting the negatives, focussing on the positive and creative aspects before, under blue hat thinking, bringing it all together for a better decision.

Others have used the tool where one or two people in a group have a specific colour to focus their thinking in that mode.

Reference: Edward de Bono (1985) *Six Thinking Hats*, Penguin, London