

# The Six Thinking Hats

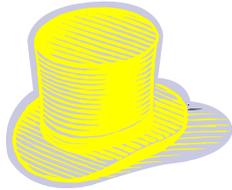
(Edward De Bono)

In cultures with a tradition of argument, one person takes a position on a subject and another person attacks that position. These 'positions' are often the result of habitual thinking and behaviour patterns or internalised beliefs about who we are, how we think and how we behave.

Why do we assume there is one setting that will be adequate for all our thinking? What makes us think that we can only have one thinking and behaviour style? Why do we try to do everything at once?

The Six Thinking Hats allows us to unleash our innate potential for thinking and behaving differently in different situations. When we put on each hat we are free to adopt the style of thinking and behaviour associated with the hat...just like an actor... curiously with practice we find that the 'adopted' thinking style and behaviour becomes our 'actual style'...until we take the hat off.

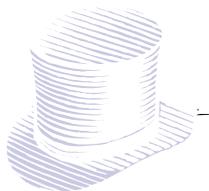
This technique is especially valuable for Improvement Team activity (for example, using the 'GROW Model').



## THE YELLOW HAT

Yellow suggests sunshine and optimism. Under the yellow hat we develop compelling goals for the future. We also make a direct effort to find the value and benefits in a suggestion. Even if we do not like the idea, the yellow hat asks us to seek out the good points: "Where are the benefits?", "Who is going to benefit?", "how will the benefits come about?"

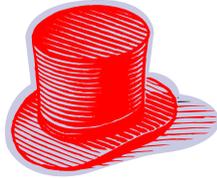
This is very useful in the initial part of the 'Goal' phase of the GROW Model. It is also useful during the 'Options' and 'Way Forward' phases to ensure all ideas are considered.



## THE WHITE HAT

White suggests paper. The white hat concerns information. When we wear the white hat, we ask the following kinds of questions: "What information do we have?", "What information do we need?", "What information is missing?", "How are we going to get the information we need?", "What questions should we be asking?" The white hat is used to direct attention to available or missing information.

This hat is very useful for the 'Reality' phase of the GROW Model. The crystal clear thinking of the white hat is also useful for creating clarity around the goal and deadlines.



### THE RED HAT

Red suggests fire and warmth. The red hat is to do with feelings, intuition and emotions. You may not know the reasons why you like something or why you do not like something, but when the red hat is in use, you have the opportunity to put forward your feelings and intuitions without any explanation at all. Your feelings exist and the red hat gives you permission to put these feelings forward.

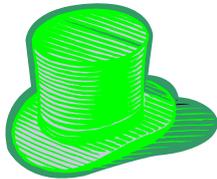
This hat is very useful for challenging the goal established in the 'Goal' phase of the GROW Model. It also enables us to challenge the options for change and actions during the 'Way Forward' phase.



### THE BLACK HAT

Black reminds us of a judge's robes. The black hat is for caution. The black hat stops us from doing things that may be harmful. The black hat points out the risks and why something may not work. Without the black hat we would be in trouble all the time. However, the black hat should not be over-used, as over-use may be dangerous.

This hat is very useful for challenging the goal established in the 'Goal' phase of the GROW Model. It also enables us to challenge the options for change and actions during the 'Way Forward' phase.



### THE GREEN HAT

Green suggests vegetation, which suggests growth, energy and life. Under the green hat, you put forward proposals, suggestions, new ideas and alternatives with energy! - you become aware of many possibilities in every situation. When the green hat is in use, everyone is creative.

This hat is very useful for the 'Options' phase of the GROW Model.



### THE BLUE HAT

The blue hat is for looking at the thinking process itself. Use the blue hat at the beginning of a discussion in order to define what we are thinking about and to decide what we want to have achieved by the end of our thinking. The blue hat is used to order the sequence of hats that we are going to be using and to summarise what has been achieved.

The Improvement Team Leader should wear this hat. The Team should wear this hat when reviewing the effectiveness of the process followed.

## Group Exercise

### Goals:

1. To develop an understand of the concepts of the 6 Thinking Hats
2. To develop people's mental flexibility and ability to adopt different types of thinking
3. To practice innovative problem solving

### Tasks:

1. The tutor identifies a possible future situation; for example:
  - **A pill is developed which can make food taste bad**
  - **A machine is developed to enable people to exercise in their sleep**
  - **All schools are made responsible for developing and managing a small park**
  - **Driving in town centres is banned**
2. The tutor asks all members of the team to respond to the situation wearing the same colour hat (not the blue hat)
3. The tutor gives a different hat to each team member (not the blue hat) and asks people to respond to the situation wearing this hat
4. All team members adopt blue hat thinking and work out which order the hats should be used in future improvement teams.
5. The team uses this process to deal with a current challenge (e.g. childhood obesity levels).