**Purpose:**

To look at problems and decisions from several different perspectives

Edward de Bono developed The Six Thinking Hats model to encourage decision makers to consider different perspectives. It encourages people to move away from their habitual ways of thinking, thus enabling them to think about problems and issues from different angles and consider different points of view.

Most people typically look at a problem from their own perspectives, be that of a logical thinker, a pessimist, a creative thinker or an optimist for example. This then has an effect on the decision or outcome that results.

The Six Thinking Hats technique can help to optimise a decision or outcome by encouraging an approach incorporating logic, creativity, feelings and emotions, optimistic and pessimistic positions and also the need for contingency plans.

**Directions:**

The technique requires individuals and teams to consider decisions as though they are wearing a series of different coloured hats.

There are six metaphorical hats which can be put on or taken off (metaphorically) to indicate the type of thinking being used. The metaphorical process of putting on and taking off each hat is important.

Each hat represents a different style of thinking.



**White Hat Thinking**

White Hat thinking is concerned with facts, figures, information needs and gaps. It means focusing on the available information seeing what can be learned from it. Gaps in your knowledge should be identified and then attempts made to either fill them or take account of them.

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**Red Hat Thinking**

Red Hat thinking is about intuition, feelings and emotions. The Red Hat allows the thinker to put forward an intuition without needing to justify it. Usually within business, feelings and intuition can only be introduced into a discussion if they are supported by logic. The Red Hat gives full permission to a thinker to put forward his or her feelings on the subject at the moment.



**Black Hat Thinking**

Black Hat thinking is about judgement and caution. It is a very valuable approach. It should not be viewed as a negative hat, but the one which can be used to point out why a suggestion does not fit the facts, the current system, the organisation's policy or agree with what your previous experience suggests. The Black Hat is always logical.

Black Hat thinking is about looking at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively and trying to spot why ideas and approaches may not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan or course of action. They can then be eliminated, your approach altered, or contingency plans made to counter problems that could arise.

Wearing the Black Hat helps to make your plans stronger and more resilient. It is crucial to spotting fatal flaws and risks before embarking on a course of action. Black Hat thinking is one of the real benefits of this technique, as it helps those who are used to relying on positive thinking to see problems in advance, thus preparing them for difficulties.

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**Yellow Hat Thinking**

Yellow Hat thinking is about taking a logical and positive approach and focusing on why something will work and why it will be beneficial. It can be used to look forwards but also to look backwards and find the positives in what has already happened.

The Yellow Hat allows you to think positively and is particularly useful when things are difficult and you are getting downbeat. This optimistic viewpoint helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and to spot the opportunities that arise from it.



**Green Hat Thinking**

The Green Hat is about creativity, alternatives, proposals, what is interesting and changing things. When wearing the Green Hat, you can think creatively and 'out of the box' without experiencing criticism, in the same way as when brainstorming. This is the hat to wear when you are looking for creative solutions to a problem.



**Blue Hat Thinking**

This is the overview or process control hat. It looks not at the subject itself but at the 'thinking' about the subject – i.e. identifying which of the other hats is required and asking for that type of thinking. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings. When emotions are running high for example, they may recognise the need for White or Yellow Hat thinking and direct the meeting accordingly.

**Additional Information:**

The Six Thinking Hats model can be used either by groups or alone. One of its advantages in a group situation is that it can help to defuse conflicts and disagreements that can happen when people with different thinking styles discuss the same problem. The model results in more considered decisions because they have been looked at from all different perspectives and therefore allowed people to approach the decision in their own preferred style, but also allowing other approaches to be tried out as well. Whilst recognising that individuals will typically prefer one thinking style, it is important that the Six Thinking Hats are not used to categorise people.