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THE SIX THINKING HATS CONCEPT

*Thinking is
divided into six
different modes.*

When we attempt practical thinking, there are three fundamental difficulties:

1. *Emotions.* We often have a tendency not to think at all but to rely on instant gut feeling, emotion and prejudice as a basis for action.
2. *Helplessness.* We may react with feelings of inadequacy: “I don’t know how to think about this. I don’t know what to do next.”
3. *Confusion.* We try to keep everything in mind at once, with a mess as a result.

The six thinking hats method is a simple and practical way of overcoming all three difficulties.

Emotions are an important part of thinking and, in the end, all decisions and choices are made on the basis of our feelings. Emotions at the right place in thinking are essential. Emotions at the wrong place can be disastrous. The six hats method allows us to use emotions and feelings at the right place.

Helplessness arises when we do not have any general-purpose thinking actions that can be taken. The six hats method provides us with a basic framework for thinking actions. There are now definite “next steps” that can be taken.

Confusion arises when we try to do too much at once. Often when we try to think about something, our minds go off in several different directions at the same time. The six hats method allows us to take one direction at a time.

Full-Colour Thinking, One Colour at a Time

In the kitchen, have you ever found yourself stirring a sauce, chopping up carrots, mixing a batter and reading a recipe all at the same time?

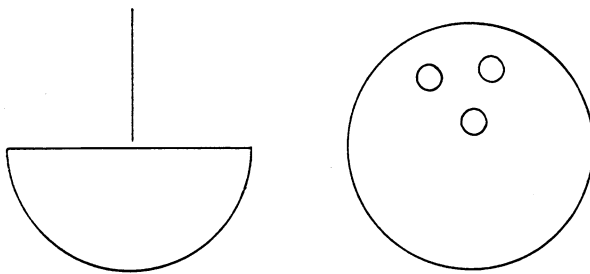
In the classroom, have you ever found yourself marking the roll, collecting money, making announcements and tending to an ill child all at the same time?

Follow these steps to introduce the green hat: lead-in, explanation, demonstration, practice and elaboration.

Lead-in

Begin by making a simple outline drawing on the board or overhead projector. This might be a half circle with a straight line sticking out from the half-circle's flat edge. Then ask the class for suggestions as to what the drawing might represent. (It might be a pendulum, a boat, an upside-down umbrella, a golf course hole, an upside-down drawing pin, etc.)

Then make another simple drawing and ask what this could be. As students make suggestions, point out that their ideas are *possibilities*, *creative ideas* or *alternatives*. These are the sort of words you want to use to lead into the green hat concept.



After discussing the drawings, ask students to make a diagram showing how the human head could be improved.

“How would you improve the human head? What ideas do you have?”

Usually this produces eyes on the back of the head, octopus-like tentacles, rearrangement of the hair, bigger ears, etc. Accept all ideas without comment, since the green hat does not evaluate. Invite students to swap diagrams or display their ideas so that all can see the variety of possibilities that the class has proposed.