

Exploring Leadership

PROBLEM SOLVING: CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Many people think creativity is only for artists, musicians, or inventors. In reality, creativity is a skill anyone can develop. Creativity helps people come up with ideas, solve problems, and find new ways to approach challenges. The more people practice creative thinking, the stronger this skill becomes.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

If you were stranded on an island and only had a paperclip, what are some different ways you could use it?

When faced with a problem, many people focus on the first solution they think of. Creative thinkers take a different approach. They explore possibilities and consider different perspectives before deciding what to do. This often helps them discover solutions that others might miss and leads to stronger solutions.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand how creative thinking helps people solve problems.
- Practice looking at problems from different perspectives.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Problem-Solving Scenarios (Appendix A)
- Six Ways to Think About a Problem (Appendix B)
- Blank paper
- Pens or pencils
- Bowl or container

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

In this activity, participants will use the Six Thinking Hats method to explore a problem from different perspectives and generate creative solutions.

- Before the activity, cut apart the problem-solving scenarios (see Appendix A) and place them in a bowl.
- Divide participants into groups of 4–6. Have each group select a scenario.
- Give each group a copy of Appendix B: Six Ways to Think About a Problem, a blank sheet of paper, and pencils.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

- Encourage participants to explore multiple ideas before choosing a solution.
- Remind participants that creative problem solving is about considering different perspectives, not finding the perfect answer.
- Focus on the thinking process and discussion rather than which solution is best.

- Have groups write their scenario at the top of their paper and divide the paper into six sections labeled White Hat, Yellow Hat, Red Hat, Black Hat, Green Hat, and Blue Hat.
- Go over Appendix B with the entire group.
- Then have groups discuss their scenario using one hat at a time, recording important ideas in the matching section of their paper.
- After all six hats have been discussed, have groups review their ideas and identify their best solution.
- Invite each group to briefly share their scenario, solution, and which thinking hat helped them the most.
- Discuss how looking at a problem from different perspectives helped generate new ideas and stronger solutions.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What was the most challenging part of solving your group's problem?
- Which thinking hat helped your group the most, and why?
- How did looking at the problem from different perspectives change your thinking?
- What ideas or solutions did your group discover that you might not have considered at first?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Why is it important to consider more than one solution to a problem?
- When might looking at a problem from a different perspective help you find a better solution?
- What can you do when your first solution does not work?
- How can creative problem solving help people become better leaders?



CONCLUSION:

Creativity is an important leadership skill because many challenges do not have simple answers. Leaders who think creatively are more likely to find new opportunities, adapt to change, and overcome obstacles. Creative thinking helps people find solutions where others only see problems.

The next time you face a challenge, remember that there is often more than one solution. Being willing to think differently and explore new ideas can help you find opportunities that others may miss.

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REFERENCES

- The 'flow state': Where Creative Work Thrives by BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190204-how-to-find-your-flow-state-to-be-peak-creative>
- 5 Fun Exercises to Rev Up Your Team's Creativity by Apolitical: <https://apolitical.co/en/articles/5-fun-exercises-to-rev-up-your-teams-creativity>
- The 6 Thinking Hats - Creative Thinking by De Bono by Potential: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQNCrEHxlr0> (2:32 minutes)
- Brainstorming Test by Klaxoon: <https://klaxoon.com/community-content/>



APPENDIX A: PROBLEM SOLVING SCENARIOS

Directions: Cut apart the scenarios below and place them in a bowl or container. Have each group select one scenario to use during the activity.

- How can we make lunchtime more enjoyable at school?
- How can we increase participation in our club or group?
- How can we welcome new members and help them feel included?
- How can we make meetings more engaging and productive?
- How can we encourage more people to volunteer?
- How can we improve a community service project?
- How can we reduce distractions during activities or meetings?
- How can we encourage kindness and respect in our school?
- How can we make a school event more successful?
- How can we help students feel connected and included?
- How can we make our school or community more accessible for people with disabilities?
- How can we make activities more welcoming for people with different abilities and needs?
- How can we encourage teamwork within our group?
- How can we help people communicate more effectively when working together?
- How can we improve an area of our school or community?



APPENDIX B: SIX WAYS TO THINK ABOUT A PROBLEM

The Six Thinking Hats method helps people look at a problem from different perspectives. Focus on one hat at a time before moving to the next.

WHITE HAT – FACTS

Focus on facts and information.

Questions to Ask:

- What do we know?
- What information is missing?
- What facts are important?
- How do we know this is true?



YELLOW HAT – POSITIVES

Focus on the positive side of the idea.

Questions to Ask:

- What are the benefits?
- Why might this work?
- What opportunities does this create?
- What is the best possible outcome?



RED HAT – FEELINGS

Focus on emotions, reactions, and intuition.

Questions to Ask:

- How do people feel about this?
- What is my first reaction?
- What excites me about this idea?
- What concerns me?



BLACK HAT – CAUTION

Focus on risks, weaknesses, and challenges.

Questions to Ask:

- What could go wrong?
- What are the risks?
- What challenges might we face?
- Why might this not work?



GREEN HAT – IDEAS

Focus on new ideas, possibilities, and creative solutions.

Questions to Ask:

- What are some new ideas?
- Is there another way to solve this problem?
- How could we improve this idea?
- What have we not considered yet?



BLUE HAT – PROCESS

Focus on organizing ideas and making decisions.

Questions to Ask:

- What is our goal?
- What have we learned?
- What solutions seem most promising?
- What should we do next?



Final Question: What is the best solution your group developed?