

Hats off to this idea!

There are some problems that never seem to go away. They are around in our organizations year after year. Is there any way of trying to solve these old problems — something that you have never tried before?

At WI area conventions last fall a presentation called the Magic of Thinking in Color was part of the program. Since the majority of Home & Country readers did not attend those conventions, the following is a synopsis of the magical presentation!

The idea is based on a book by Edward de Bono called Six Thinking Hats. It suggests there are different ways of looking at any situation or problem and if we are able to use each of the ways effectively, we can come up with new and realistic ways of solving old problems.

These different ways are designated by different hats or colors and there are six of them in total. The first is white. Pretend you are wearing a white hat. While you are wearing this hat, you are concerned with objective facts and figures, put forward in a neutral manner. Argument, interpretations and opinions are not permitted while you're wearing a white hat. For example, the weather is cold in February. In Ontario, we experience an average snowfall of 44 centimeters in February.

Now, replace the white hat with a red hat. When wearing this hat, you will give your emotional views. You will say how you feel about the problem or issue and those feelings don't have to be based on facts. For example, I hate the weather in February. I feel like I can't get out from under all that snow.

When you have donned a yellow hat, you will be looking at the positive side of a matter. You will be thinking constructively. For example, if we didn't have snowfall, a lot of snowplow drivers would be out of

work. The cold weather provides us with opportunities to ski and skate.

As you may have guessed, a black hat wearer is opposite to the yellow hat wearer. This person will play the role of the devil's advocate and will tell why something can't be done and what is wrong with an idea. While looking at the negative side, the black hat thinker must be logical and give reasons. For example, skiing isn't an ideal sport — there are injuries incurred and also it depends upon the amount of natural snow and the perfect conditions for making snow.

When you are wearing a green hat, you will present new ideas, new approaches, new concepts. You don't have to concern yourself with whether the ideas presented will or won't work. It gives you a chance to let your imagination fly unfettered. For example, let's go to Florida for February and forget about the weather!

Last but not least is the blue hat. When you are wearing this hat, imagine you are sitting in front of a control panel. The blue hat helps co-ordinate wearing the other hats. It tells which hat to wear, when to switch hats, even if we are mixing up our hats!

The important points to remember in this colored hat approach are:

1. each hat has merits
2. every person in your organization can wear any hat, ie. no one has to wear the same hat all the time
3. sometimes it takes more than one hat to solve a problem
4. some people may need encouragement to try on new hats

Perhaps when the same old problem rears its ugly head again, your group could try this approach for finding a solution.

