

DeBono's Thinking Course

by Dr. Edward de Bono a former Rhodes Scholar

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Book Review by Jackie Jacobi

Edward de Bono says, “There are three basic aspects of thinking:

1. What Is
2. What May Be
3. What Can Be

We underestimate the extremely valuable contribution that ‘what may be’ has made to progress. We do very little about ‘what can be’ even though our future depends entirely on this aspect. Thinking should be constructive; in the end ‘thinking’ is the ultimate human resource. The goal is to explore a subject, and exploring a subject in teams is more effective than just individual thinking. Synergy can Create Change in Concepts and Perceptions; change is necessary so an individual doesn’t just keep trying harder using the same Concepts and Perceptions.”

De Bono says thinking is a skill, and his definition of thinking is: ‘Thinking is the operating skill with which intelligence acts upon experience. This definition focuses attention on three elements: operating skill, intelligence and experience.’ Operating skill is pro-active thinking, involving such aspects of thinking as: other people’s views; priorities; objectives; alternatives; consequences; guessing; decisions; conflict-resolution; creativity and many other aspects not normally covered in the type of thinking used for information analysis. These things are part of ‘pro-active’ thinking, not the usual ‘reactive’ thinking. Reactive thinking is like: “Here is something – what do you think of it?” In other words: how do we react to what is already in existence?

It is not surprising that business has shown more interest in Dr. de Bono’s work than any other part of society. In business there is a bottom line. Just defending a point of view means nothing. Thinking is concerned with actions, decisions and new ideas. This is very much what Dr. de Bono is about. Business also knows that people are its main resource. That is why

business has been so concerned to improve the thinking of its people. Dr. de Bono has usually been asked in at the senior level to help with the thinking required for change, strategies, improvement and new directions.

In business you want to invest time in thinking things thru. A thoughtful decision is likely to be better than an impulsive one. A careful design is likely to be better than the first idea that comes to mind. If you put in time thinking thru the choice, decision, organization, plan or design it will be better.

In business you want to see if there is a better way. Could it be done faster, could it be done with less errors, wastage, pollution, damage, etc. Could it be done in a simpler way? Could it be done at less cost? This sort of thinking is extremely important in business where there is an emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness and cost cutting. The same thing applies to your personal life. But you must do this kind of thinking because you want to.

FOCUS - SITUATION - TASK

Focus: Where are we focusing? What are we looking at right now? Very few people are good listeners. A good listener listens slowly to what is being said. He does not jump ahead nor does he rush to judge, nor does he sit there formulating his own reply. He focuses directly on what's being said.

Situation: What is the situation? What type of situation is it? Getting more information from the outside can involve three things: use of information sources; questions; experiments. Knowing where to look for information is valuable and selecting the relevant information is extremely important.

Task: What are we trying to do right now? What task shall we set ourselves? Know where you want to end up and how are you going to get there.

Listening and Learning are Key Steps to Thinking in Teams.

Thinking should be constructive; in the end **Thinking** is the ultimate human resource. The goal is to explore a subject, because exploring a subject in teams is more effective than just individual thinking. Synergy can Create Change in Concepts and Perceptions; change is necessary so an individual doesn't just keep trying harder using the same Concepts and Perceptions.

Thinking as defined by Dr. Edward de Bono (inventor of the term 'lateral thinking'): Thinking is the operating skill with which intelligence acts upon experience. The definition focuses attention on three elements: operating skill, intelligence and experience. Operacy Thinking – means the skill of doing and is pro-active thinking. Operacy involves such aspects of thinking as: other people's views; priorities; objectives; alternatives; consequences; guessing; decisions; conflict-resolution; creativity and many other aspects not normally covered in the type of thinking used for information analysis. These things are part of 'pro-active' thinking, not the usual 'reactive' thinking. Reactive thinking is like: "Here is something – what do you think of it?" In other words: how do we react to what is already in existence?

Emotions and Values

In the end all thinking is emotional. And so it should be. In the end our decisions, choices and courses of action are all determined by emotions, feelings and values. There is nothing wrong with gut feelings and emotions as the final judges of options. The danger arises if we place them first and use them as a substitute for thinking.

So I am all in favor of using gut feeling at the end of our thinking but not as a substitute for it. I would also like to insert a "sense of humor" as one of our gut feelings which otherwise are always so solemn.

Values are the link between events and our basic emotions. They are converters which convert events into matters about which we can feel strongly. Values are the most important ingredient in civilization. It is by means of values that civilization turns selfish, greedy, aggressive, short-term behavior into social cooperation which makes life better for everyone and cares for the weak.

Thinking Skills

Intelligent Objectivity

Entrepreneurs add value to resources and take advantage of CHANGE. They recognize that problems can be opportunities.

Think about these questions:

1. What frustrates me the most when I go to buy something?
2. What product or service would really improve my life?
3. What really annoys me?
4. What product or service would eliminate that annoyance?

An IDEA is different than an OPPORTUNITY?

For an idea to also be an opportunity it must lead to the development of a product or service that would be of value to consumers.

- Mary Kay Ash – gave women a flexible way to work
- Mrs. Fields Cookies – Moms are at work and not at home to make cookies.
- Can you think of other examples?

Dr. Edward de Bono

Author of *de Bono's Thinking Course*

Dr. Edward de Bono is regarded by many as the leading authority in the world in the field of creative thinking and the direct teaching of thinking as a skill. He has written 62 books with translations into 37 languages and has been invited to lecture in 54 countries. He is the originator of lateral thinking.

Contrary to what most people believe and have been taught, thinking is not the same as intelligence. It is not an ability that individuals are born with. Several decades of research have revealed that thinking is a skill that can be developed through direct training and practice.

Thinking skills are the foundation upon which all other organizational improvement theories and practices rest. Without an underlying competence in assessing complex situations, solving problems, making decisions, and planning for future problems and opportunities, an organization is unlikely to advance any initiative successfully.

Understanding Lateral Thinking. The Oxford English Dictionary defines lateral thinking as: seeking ways to solve problems by apparently illogical means.

Our thinking traditions are very firmly based on logical thinking in which we start off with a certain way of looking at things and then see what we can deduce from that. This can be called vertical thinking since it moves forward by sequential steps each of which must be justified. Vertical thinking is necessary and important. However, it is limited when new and non-traditional alternatives are needed; in these instances, there is a need for lateral thinking. Lateral thinking creates the new ideas that vertical thinking then carefully develops.

Lateral thinking involves moving “sideways” to look at things in a different and sometimes illogical way. With lateral thinking one creates as many alternative approaches as one can. Lateral thinking is generative and provocative. Vertical thinking is selective and analytic. Richness is what matters in lateral thinking. Rightness is what matters in vertical thinking. Vertical Thinking selects a pathway by excluding other pathways. Lateral thinking does not select but seeks to open up new pathways.

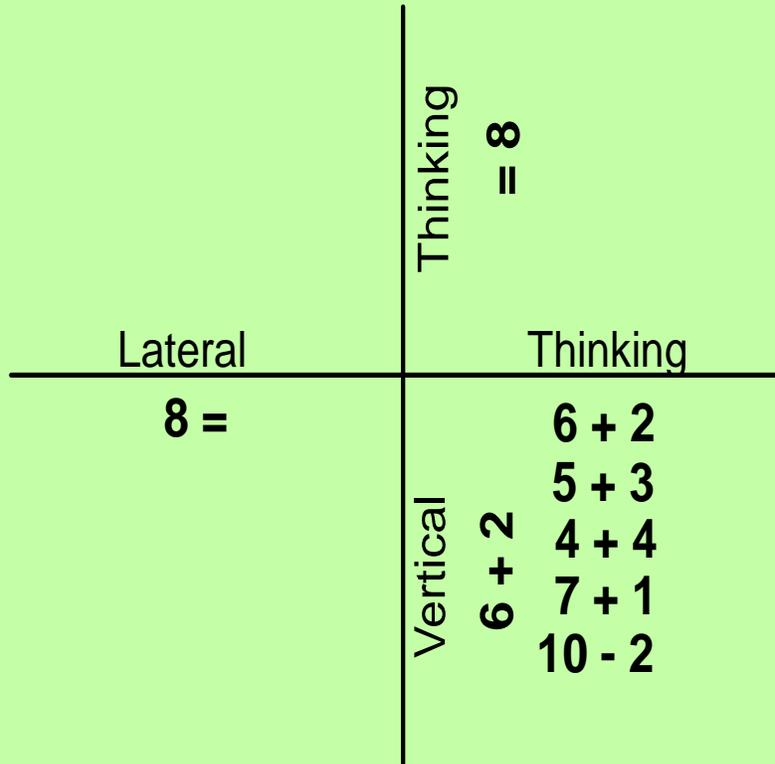
Lateral thinking is the ability to look at things in different ways, it is a neutral process. Lateral thinking is an attitude of mind that involves the willingness to try to look at things in different ways. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes in order to look at the world from that position. It involves an appreciation that any way of looking at things is only one among many possible ways. The word **po**, it is derived from such words as: **hypothesis**, **suppose**, **possible** and **poetry**. The syllable “**po**” is in all these. Also all these words describe the “forward use” of an idea; what does the idea lead on to? **PO** is the same as maybe. It is a matter of operating outside the judgment system. Lateral thinking has to do with change, especially when change involves escaping from a pattern that has been satisfactory in the past. It is now used in a formal manner by most of the major advertising agencies in the world.

Vertical Thinking vs. Lateral Thinking

Vertical Thinking	Lateral Thinking
Looking for the right approach	Looking for as many approaches as possible
Rightness	Richness
Proceeds if there is a direction	Proceeds to generate direction
Is analytical	Is provocative
Is sequential	Can make jumps
One must be correct at every step	One does not have to be correct at every step
Uses negative to block off certain pathways	There is no negative
Excludes what is irrelevant	Welcomes chance intrusions
Fixed categories/labels	Labels may change
Explores most likely paths	Explores least likely paths
Is a finite process	Is a probabilistic process

Thinking Skills

Intelligent Objectivity



Foundation to Success