

Lateral Thinking



Can you think of the times when you found a solution to a problem without going through a logical step by step process? Maybe you allowed yourself to be a little crazy, tried humour, asked many whys, or just opened yourself to new ideas. And voila – the solution presented itself to you!

Lateral thinking is solving problems through an [indirect](#) and [creative](#) approach. It uses [reasoning](#) that is not immediately obvious and involves ideas that may not be obtainable through the traditional step-by-step [logic](#). This term was coined in 1967 by [Edward de Bono](#).

Edward de Bono divides thinking into two methods: He calls one “**Vertical Thinking**”-The traditional, historical method using the process of logic.

The other “**Lateral Thinking**” – It involves disrupting the obvious thinking sequence and **arriving at the solution from another angle**.

Differences between Lateral Thinking and Vertical Thinking

Vertical Thinking	Lateral Thinking
Selective	Open - Generative
Moves only if there is a direction in which to move	Moves in order to generate a direction
Analytical	Provocative
Sequential	Makes jumps
Needs to be correct at every step	There is no such requirement
Uses the negative in order to block off certain pathways	No negatives
Concentrates and excludes what is irrelevant	Welcomes chance intrusions
(categories) Classifications and labels are fixed	Nothing fixed
Follows the most likely paths	Explores new or least likely paths
Is a finite process	Looks at probabilities

Lateral thinking is very useful in:

- Creating new ideas
- Problem solving
- Processing
- Periodic reassessment
- Developing fresh thinking



Basic methods of lateral thinking are:

- Brainstorming
- Cross stipulation
- Debate
- Discussion
- Conversation
- Sharing ideas
- Practise
- Evaluation

Go ahead and challenge the usual ways in which things are done. Look for and search for a different outcome than the expected one. Don't settle for the known and predictable – have the courage to seek the unknown. That's the path of the lateral thinker.

