

is trying to produce as many alternatives as possible. One is not looking for the best approach but for as many different approaches as possible.

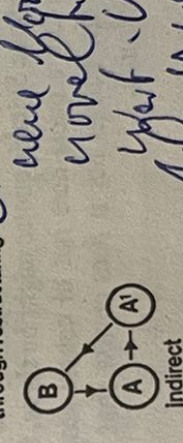
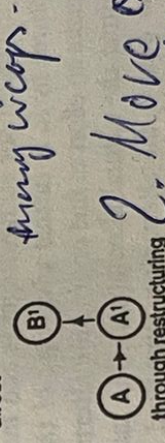
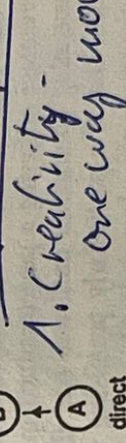
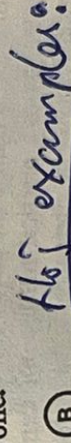
In the natural search for alternatives one to a promising approach and may return to it later acknowledges the generating other alternatives.

but one goes on generating other alternatives only reasonable alternatives. In the lateral search for alternatives these do not have to be reasonable.

The natural search for alternatives is more often an intention than a fact. The lateral search for alternatives is deliberate.

The main difference is the purpose behind the search for alternatives. The natural inclination is to search for alternatives in order to find the best one. In lateral thinking however the purpose of the search is to loosen up rigid patterns and to provoke new patterns. Several things may happen with this search for alternatives.

One may generate a number of alternatives and then return to the original most obvious one.



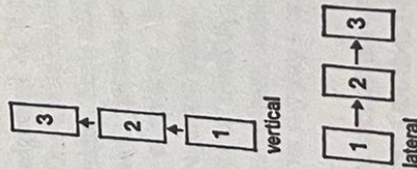
A generated alternative might prove a useful starting point.
 A generated alternative might actually solve the problems without further effort.

Not examples:
 1. Creativity - One way woodworker many weeps - polyfete
 2. Move established new boxes and novel ideas and
 Adapt - Voice from
 Aufgaben weise Produkt
 mit Fed - und will
 Zeit durch Rekonstruktion
 viele Wege - schnell und

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The generation of alternatives

The most basic principle of lateral thinking is that any particular way of looking at things is only one from among many other possible ways. Lateral thinking is concerned with exploring these other ways by restructuring and rearranging the information that is available. The very word 'lateral' suggests the movement sideways to generate alternative patterns instead of moving straight ahead with the development of one particular pattern. This is indicated in the diagrams below.



It may seem that the search for alternative ways of looking at something is a natural search. Many people feel that this is something that they always do. To some extent it is, but the lateral search for alternatives goes far beyond the natural search.

In the natural search for alternatives one is looking for the best possible approach, in the lateral search for alternatives one

Basic nature of lateral thinking

In Chapter Two the nature of lateral thinking was indicated by contrasting it with vertical thinking. In this chapter the basic nature of lateral thinking is indicated in its own right.

Lateral thinking is concerned with changing patterns

By pattern is meant the arrangement of information on the memory surface that is mind. A pattern is a repeatable sequence of neural activity. There is no need to define it any more rigidly. In practice a pattern is any repeatable concept, idea, thought, image. A pattern may also refer to a repeatable sequence in time of such concepts or ideas. A pattern may also refer to an arrangement of other patterns which together make up an approach to a problem, a point of view, a way of looking at things. There is no limit to the size of a pattern. The only requirements are that a pattern should be repeatable, recognizable, usable.

Lateral thinking is concerned with changing patterns. Instead of taking a pattern and then developing it as is done in vertical thinking, lateral thinking tries to restructure the pattern by putting things together in a different way. Because the sequence of arrival of information in a self-maximizing system has so powerful an influence on the way it is arranged some sort of restructuring of patterns is necessary in order to make the best use of the information imprisoned within them.

In a self-maximizing system with a memory the arrangement of information must always be less than the best possible arrangement

The rearrangement of information into another pattern is insight restructuring. The purpose of the rearrangement is to find a better and more effective pattern.

A particular way of looking at things may have developed gradually. An idea that was very useful at one time may no longer be so useful today and yet the current idea has developed directly from that old and outmoded idea. A pattern may develop in a particular way because it was derived from the combination of two other patterns but had all the information been available at one time the pattern would have been quite different. A pattern may persist because it is useful and adequate and yet restructuring of the pattern could give rise to something very much better.

In the diagram overleaf two pieces come together to give a pattern. This pattern then combines with another similar pattern in a straightforward manner. Without the addition of any new pieces the pattern can suddenly be restructured to give a much better pattern. Had all four pieces been presented at once this final pattern is the one that would have resulted, but owing to the sequence of arrival of the pieces it was the other pattern that developed.

Lateral thinking is both an attitude and a method of using information

The lateral thinking attitude regards any particular way of looking at things as useful but not unique or absolute. That is to say one acknowledges the usefulness of a pattern but instead of regarding it as inevitable one regards it as only one way of putting things together. This attitude challenges the assumption that what is a convenient pattern at the moment is the only possible pattern. This attitude tempers the arrogance of rigidity and dogma. The lateral thinking attitude involves firstly a refusal to accept rigid patterns and secondly an attempt to put things together in different ways. With lateral thinking one is always trying to generate alternatives, to restructure patterns. It is not a matter of declaring the current pattern wrong or inadequate. Lateral thinking is never a judgement. One may be quite satisfied

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