

Tree Like A Tractor

By George M. Prince

What connections can you make between:

- ❖ An orchid and a pineapple
- ❖ A movie and a TV show
- ❖ An automobile and a child's wagon
- ❖ An automobile and a totem pole

Did you feel the difference? What did it feel like? What was your impulse?

In the Synectic®'s process there is a step called 'Excursion'. We generate material that does not seem to have any relevance to the problem. The purpose is to give us material for new, unexpected connections.

It is very useful if we can be aware that we need to shift our gears and open ourselves to non-rational connections.

The Exercises

Exercise 1

Step 1: What connection can you make between a tree and a tractor?

Step 2: Team up with another person. One of you becomes the tree and the other the tractor. Now take turns trying to stump the other.

For example, the 'tree' says, "I am a tea tree and I can make tea out of my leaves." The 'tractor' might reply, "I can accelerate and give my driver the sort of stimulation he gets from tea."

Variation:

In pairs, 'A' takes a specific, like a tractor wheel or carburetor, or gasoline, and asks, "How is a tree like a tractor wheel?" 'B' figures it out and then gives 'A' one to answer.

Exercise 2

Collect a list of pairs of totally unlike things: a stone and water, a blade of grass and a house, etc. Everyone writes the list down on their pad. Then going down the list, working around the room, each person tells how one of the unlikely pairs is really alike.

Shift In Thinking

The ability and willingness to connect are central to our ability to think. Our culture systematically insists on precision and this tends to reduce connecting. It is possible to learn to connect to just about anything if we are flexible enough.