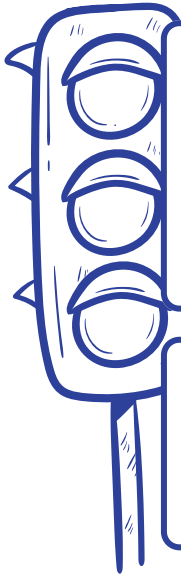# Red Light & Green Light Thinking

As leaders, we often face moments where a team is either stuck in over-analysis and can't move forward, or too quick to act without exploring the best options. That's where the Red Light & Green Light Thinking tool comes in. This simple framework helps teams separate creative idea generation (Green Light) from critical evaluation and decision-making (Red Light). By understanding and applying this tool, leaders can guide their teams to be more innovative and more decisive, without confusion or frustration. Understanding this model equips leaders to clearly identify which kind of thinking a situation requires—creative exploration or critical evaluation.

How to Facilitate This Tool

1. **Explain the Two Phases** - Clarify the difference between Green and Red thinking before starting.
2. **Begin with GREEN Phase** - Set a timer (e.g., 10–15 mins). Capture all ideas—no limits.
3. **Shift to RED Phase** - Announce the switch clearly. Begin reviewing, discussing, and deciding.
4. **Finalize & Assign Action** - Choose next steps, assign responsibilities, revisit if more clarity is needed.

Phase 1: GREEN LIGHT THINKING   Goal: Generate ideas freely and creatively

- **Exploration**: Open the floor to any and all possibilities.
- **Open-Mindedness**: Consider even the "unlikely" or "radical" ideas.
- **Divergent Thinking**: Aim for quantity over quality—you'll sort later.
- **Encouragement**: Build on others' suggestions with "Yes, and..." thinking.
- **No Judgment**: No criticism, evaluation, or filtering at this stage.
- **Delay Analysis**: Don't try to decide yet, just imagine what's possible.

Suggested Phrases:
"What else could we try?"
"Even wild ideas are welcome right now."
"Let's keep adding before we evaluate."
"There are no bad ideas in this phase."
"Build on what someone else just said."
"Let's imagine what's possible without limits."

Phase 2: RED LIGHT THINKING   Goal: Analyze, refine, and choose the best path forward.

- **Evaluation**: Critically assess all the ideas generated.
- **Critical Thinking**: Weigh risks, benefits, and practicalities.
- **Convergent Thinking**: Narrow ideas to the most viable options.
- **Decision-Making**: Choose based on values, evidence, and strategy.
- **Feedback**: Offer constructive critique to improve or combine ideas.

Suggested Phrases:
"What are the risks of this option?"
"Which idea fits our current goals best?"
"What evidence supports this idea?"
"What are the potential downsides or obstacles?"
"Is this realistic with our current resources?"

To apply this tool effectively, use visual cues like colored cards or signs to mark phase shifts, and appoint a facilitator to keep the team focused in the right mode. Be intentional, don't let the phases blur, and learn to recognize what the moment calls for: creative space when the team is stuck, or focused evaluation when there are too many ideas on the table.