WOOP   Self-Coaching Guide

How can I be more motivated?

We all lack motivation at times, even very successful people. We know what to do to improve life but don't have the energy to do it. What can we do to increase our motivation and achieve our goals?

Wish Outcome Obstacle Plan (WOOP) is an approach designed to increase our motivation and change our behaviour. 20 years of research has shown the things that can stop us from fulfilling our goals can actually help us to realise them. Through *mental contrasting* (i.e. imagining our dreams and facing the obstacles that stand in their way) and *implementation intentions* (i.e. making definite plans for how we can reach a certain goal), WOOP can give us the direction and energy to take action to fulfil our wishes.

WOOP's Fours Steps

Before you start, make sure you feel calm, comfortable, and your mind is clear of any distractions.

1) *Wish.* Think about the next 24 hours / week / month / year. What's the one, most important wish you would like to fulfil, and think you could fulfil, during your chosen timeframe? The wish should be challenging for you, but you should feel that it is possible for you. Summarise it in 3 to 6 words.

2) *Outcome.* What's the best thing; the best outcome, about fulfilling your wish? How would this best outcome make you feel? Summarise it in 3 to 6 words. Now, imagine this best outcome as vividly as possible. Close your eyes, if that helps you imagine, and feel it as fully as you can.

3) *Obstacle.* What's holding you back from fulfilling your wish? What's the one, main inner obstacle that stops you? Digging deeply, what behaviour (emotion, belief or habit) of yours hinders you? Summarise it in 3 to 6 words. Now, imagine that inner obstacle occurring as vividly as possible. Again, close your eyes, if that helps you imagine, and feel it as fully as you can.

4) *Plan.* What can you do to overcome your inner obstacle? Identify one effective action you can take, or one effective thought you can think, to overcome your obstacle. Summarise it in 3 to 6 words. Then make an 'if-then plan' – If … (obstacle) … then I will … (action or thought to overcome your obstacle). Slowly repeat and imagine this if-then plan several times.

(A summary of WOOP's four steps and a WOOP Card are given overleaf).

WOOP can be used for many areas of behaviour change: helping adults to become healthier (lose weight, drink less alcohol, quit smoking) and to improve their social behaviour (sustain healthier relationships); and supporting children and adolescents to improve their academic performance (improve school attendance as well as effort and achievement, get better grades).

Learning to apply WOOP takes time, so be patient with yourself and practice it as often as you can, possibly daily. Experiment with WOOP. It will help you become more motivated and skilled to connect with others, engage with the world, and take action.

"If you find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere." *Frank A. Clark*
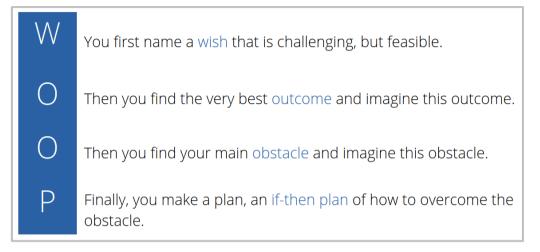
More Information

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Continued …

WOOP's four steps are summarised below.

W	You first name a wish that is challenging, but feasible.
O	Then you find the very best outcome and imagine this outcome.
O	Then you find your main obstacle and imagine this obstacle.
P	Finally, you make a plan, an if-then plan of how to overcome the obstacle.

WOOP Card reminds you of WOOP's four steps.

Wish _____

Outcome _____

Obstacle _____

Plan

   If _____ then I will _____
      obstacle   action

Further information:

More information about applying WOOP is given on the WOOP My Life website.
Also, a WOOP app is available (Android and iOS).
More details about the WOOP approach are given in: *Rethinking Positive Thinking: Inside the New Science of Motivation* by Gabriele Oettingen (2014).

More Information

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