

Mental WOOP Guide

Before you start with the WOOP exercise, please be aware that WOOP is different from other exercises: it involves thoughts and images rather than rational or effortful thinking. It involves going slow, creating time and space for thinking and imagining. When you are pausing, it is tempting to want to fill in the silence, but please be patient and stay focused.

It is critical that no interruptions occur during the exercise. Phones and electronic devices should be shut off and put away. Start the WOOP session when you feel calm and comfortable.

Introducing WOOP

I'd like to introduce you to WOOP which stands for "Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan." WOOP is a tool that you can use to ease your everyday life, fulfil your wishes, and solve your concerns.

Because WOOP draws on your imagery, it is important that you create space to imagine. So take a deep breath and make yourself comfortable. This is your time now. Everything else has to wait. Clear your mind...

Wish

Think about the next four weeks*, what is your one dearest wish that you would like to fulfil and that you also think you could fulfil during this time frame? Fulfilling your wish should be challenging for you, but you should feel that it is possible for you.

If you have several wishes, select the one that is most important to you. The wish can be about your children, your relationships, your health, a job, school, or anything else that is important to you. Find this one specific wish, summarize it in 3 to 6 words, and keep it in the front of your mind.

Short pause

**You can also use another timeframe (e.g., 24 hours, 12 months or no timeframe)*

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Outcome

Now, what is the best thing, the best outcome that you associate with fulfilling your wish?

How would fulfilling your wish make you feel? What would be the best thing about achieving your wish? Find the best outcome, summarize it in 3 to 6 words, and keep it in the front of your mind.

Short pause



Now, imagine this best outcome as vividly as possible. Give your thoughts and images free reign. Let your mind go. You can close your eyes if you would like. Imagine and feel it as fully as you can.

Long pause

Slowly come back, and we will continue.

Obstacle

What holds you back from realizing your wish? What is it in you that stands in the way of you making your wish come true? What is the obstacle in you that stands in the way of you fulfilling your wish? What behavior of yours or what emotion could hinder you from fulfilling your wish? Dig deeper, what is in you that stops you from realizing your wish? What is your one main inner obstacle? Find it, summarize it in 3 to 6 words, and keep it in the front of your mind.

Short pause

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And again, imagine your one main inner obstacle occurring as vividly as possible. Give your thoughts and images free reign. Let your mind go. You can close your eyes if you would like. Imagine this one main obstacle. Imagine and feel it as fully as you can.

Long pause

Slowly come back, and we will continue.

Plan

What can you do to overcome your obstacle? Identify one action you can take or one thought you can think to overcome your obstacle. What can you do? Identify one action or one thought. Find it, summarize it in 3 to 6 words, and keep it in the front of your mind.

Short pause

Now make an if-then plan:

Take your obstacle and place it after the word “if.” As in ...if [obstacle]. Similarly, place the behavior to overcome your obstacle after the word “then.” As in ...then I will [... The behavior to overcome your obstacle]:

If ... (obstacle) ... then I will ... (action or thought to overcome your obstacle).

Once more:

If ... (obstacle) ... then I will ... (action or thought to overcome obstacle).

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This was the four-step WOOP exercise. WOOP always works the same:

- W You first name a challenging, but feasible **wish**.
- 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.

You can use WOOP for long-term as well as short-term wishes.

You can use WOOP for big as well as for small wishes

WOOP when you are stressed or when you feel uneasy.

WOOP helps you to sort things out. WOOP every day!

WOOP is a companion to guide you through everyday life and long-term development.

You may have some difficulties at the beginning. Be patient, the more often you WOOP, the better you will become in using WOOP and the more you will get engaged in life.

Practice WOOP as often as you can – play with it!

For further information refer to:

The website (www.woopmylifetoolkit.org)

The mobile app (WOOP app)

The book [**RETHINKING POSITIVE THINKING: Inside the New Science of Motivation**](#) has been published by Penguin Random House, in October 2014.