



# Do Your Goals for 2020 Need a Boost? Give 'WOOP' a Try



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There are obstacles that stand in our way to achieving our goals—like the feeling of not wanting to get up in the morning when you need to go for a run, the thought of pizza when you're trying to stick to a diet or even the resistance to make a phone call when you've been meaning to keep in touch.

'WOOP,'—which stands for wish, outcome, obstacle, plan—is a behavior modification technique based on 20 years of research by NYU professor Dr. Gabriele Oettingen. This mental strategy has been proven to help people be healthier (e.g. increase physical activity or lose weight), improve social behaviors (e.g. reduce unsafe behavior or overcome negative feelings like anxiety or anger) and improve academic performance (e.g. test preparation or time management). Here's how it works:

### Wish

- Pick an important wish or concern you would like to address in the next four weeks.
- Make sure your wish is challenging, but attainable.
- Summarize your wish in three to six words.

### Outcome

- If your wish was fulfilled, where would that leave you? How would you feel? What would you be able to do? What would be the most positive outcomes?
- Take a few minutes to visualize what it would feel like, clearly picture it in your head, and then summarize your outcome in three to six words.

### Obstacle

- What holds you back from fulfilling your wish? Specifically name the biggest *internal* obstacle such as an emotion, an irrational belief or a bad habit that gets in your way for fulfilling this wish.
- Identify the main inner obstacle, visualize it for a few minutes and then summarize the obstacles in three to six words.

### Plan

- What can you do to overcome your obstacles? Think of the plan as an if/then statement: "If (obstacle), then I will (plan)."
- Your plan can be something you plan to think, or something you plan to do. Either way, take a moment to clearly see yourself executing your plan in the moment you face your obstacle. Summarize your plan in three to six words.

WOOP can be done on a daily basis and it only takes a few minutes to write everything out and complete the visualization exercise. If your wish feels too big, try and see if you can break it down into smaller wishes and complete WOOP for the smaller wishes. After using WOOP, when you find yourself faced with the obstacle you identified, your brain will more easily recall the plan you outlined. You can use this process for as many wishes as you'd like to make; start with the wish that is most important to you and go from there.

### Additional Resources



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- [Resilience In Focus - WOOP Infographic](#)
- [Resilience In Focus - WOOP Video](#)
- Oettingen's website with research and how-to videos: <https://woopmylife.org/>
- The WOOP App (free download and available in 13 different languages)

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