WOOP Overview

SELF-CONTROL

WHAT IS WOOP?

WOOP is a practical, accessible, evidence-based activity that helps students find and fulfill their wishes. In character development terms, WOOP builds self-control.

WOOP is named for each step in the process: identifying your Wish, imagining the Outcome, anticipating the Obstacle, and developing a specific Plan.

More than 20 years of research shows that WOOP improves students' effort, attendance, homework completion, and GPA.

WHEN CAN I USE WOOP?

You can introduce WOOP any time of the year. It works best when it becomes a habit, not a one-off activity, so we recommend introducing it early in the semester. The earlier and more often you help students WOOP, the more they develop a habit of WOOPing. Make it a regular practice to check in about previous WOOPs and develop new ones.

WOOP can help with any kind of wish, whether it's something large ("I want to start a school newspaper") or comparatively small ("I want to get an A in Science this quarter"). WOOP works equally well for academic, athletic, or personal wishes. It can be used one-on-one, in a small group, or with an entire class.

WHO SHOULD USE WOOP?

Everyone can use WOOP, including teachers. In fact, it's most effective when teachers have first-hand experience with the process. Try WOOP yourself before teaching it to your students.

WOOP is especially helpful for anyone who procrastinates, who feels anxious about taking the first step—and the next step—toward their wish.

WHAT'S THE SCIENCE?

Developed by Gabriele Oettingen and Peter M. Gollwitzer, professors at New York University, WOOP has been tested in classrooms, gyms, and health care settings.

In schools, WOOP significantly improves effort, attendance, homework completion, and GPA. Outside of schools, WOOP has been shown to reduce stress, increase engagement, improve time management, and promote physical health.
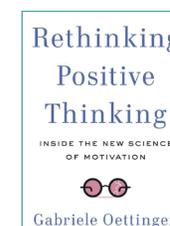
WHAT MAKES IT EFFECTIVE?

Often, people fixate on how great it would feel to achieve their wish—but overlook the obstacles to that wish. WOOP works because it guides students through those in-between and oft-forgotten steps.

Rather than pursuing goals that feel imposed by others, WOOP taps into a student's intrinsic interests.

WHAT ELSE?

Like any skill, WOOP takes practice and patience to master. It's common to struggle at first. When practicing WOOP yourself, be willing to experiment with different approaches. When teaching WOOP, go slowly so students can WOOP thoughtfully, without interruption. It's worth it: Teaching students how to achieve important wishes is the difference between a lifetime of "I wanted to" and a lifetime of "I did."

WOOP RESOURCES:

1 MINUTE OVERVIEW VIDEO

FACILITATION GUIDE

STUDENT EXAMPLE

STUDENT ACTIVITY

PREP ACTIVITY

Rethinking Positive Thinking
INSIDE THE NEW SCIENCE OF MOTIVATION
Gabriele Oettingen

RETHINKING POSITIVE THINKING BY GABRIELE OETTINGEN