



NOTES

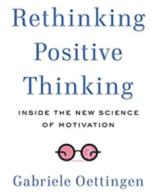
Rethinking Positive Thinking

INSIDE THE NEW SCIENCE OF MOTIVATION

GABRIELE OETTINGEN

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219 PAGES



KEY POINTS

Positive Thinking:
Doesn't work by itself

**Positive Thinking+
Mental Contrasting =
Power**

**Mental
Contrasting:**
What is it?

**Implementation
Intentions:**
If (situation x), then I
will (behavior y)

WOOP:
It's magic

WOOP: There it
is!

"What is your dearest wish? What dreams do you have for the future? What do you want to be or do? Imagine your dream coming true. How wonderful it would be. How fulfilling.

What holds you back from realizing your wish? What is it in you that stops you from really going for it?

Rethinking Positive Thinking is a book about wishes and how to fulfill them. It draws on twenty years of research in the science of motivation. And it presents a single, surprising idea: the obstacles that we think most impede us from realizing our deepest wishes can actually hasten their fulfillment."

Gabriele Oettingen from 'Rethinking Positive Thinking'

This book has the power to change your life via a tool called WOOP. This tool is powerful, but like everything for it to be powerful for you, you must actually use it. In this note I hope to convince you to give WOOP a shot and then to use it a lot. It will help you achieve what you want in life and it may also help you uncover deeper wishes that you can bring to life. This book shows us the line of thought that leads Gabriele Oettingen to discover WOOP. She first realized that positive thinking by itself doesn't help us to turn dreams to reality, but she did find out what does help us to realize our dreams. It's called WOOP. Let's dive in and find out how we can shape our lives by using this great tool.

Positive Thinking Doesn't Work By Itself

"For some people I've seen, the idea of change does become gratifying in and of itself. Whether it's innovation or a new product idea or a new strategy, the idea sometimes becomes so salient that there is little sense of the execution that might be required to bring it about. It's as if just having the idea will make it happen"

Have you ever wanted something to materialize in your life? You have spent hours dreaming of the specifics and thinking about how wonderful it will be when it all comes together. This is great but did you actually achieve that goal? Gabriele started her research investigating positive thinking but found that it didn't motivate people to take action. Sometimes the thought itself was satisfying enough that individuals felt no desire to engage in the actions that would actually bring the vision to life. So she wondered what would? What technique or tool could help individuals to set goals but that would also motivate them to take the action to make it happen? Enter mental contrasting.

Positive Thinking + Mental Contrasting = Power

“The solution, affirmed by many other experiments I’ve done, isn’t to do away with dreaming and positive thinking. Rather, it’s making the most of our fantasies by brushing them up against the very thing most of us are taught to ignore or diminish: the obstacles that stand in our way.”

What is your deepest wish?

What is it in you that stops you from really going for it?

In order for us to achieve our dreams we must know what they are and most importantly we must take action to make them happen. Many of us have dreams but can’t seem to show up on a consistent basis to take the action required to bring the dream to life. Mental Contrasting can help us to realise what it is ‘within us’ that is stopping us from moving forward. It’s the key to WOOP. Start rubbing your dreams up against reality and feel the force that then motivates you to take action. Let’s dive into the idea of mental contrasting in a little more depth.

Mental Contrasting: What is it?

“Another way to visualize our future exists, a more complex approach that emerges out of work I’ve done in the scientific study of human motivation. I call this method “mental contrasting,” and it instructs us to dream our dreams but then visualize the personal barriers or impediments that prevent us from achieving these dreams.”

Here it is again. This idea that in order to bring a dream to life we must work out what it is ‘with in’ us that stops us from taking action to reach the goal. What personal barriers are stopping you from reaching your dreams?

“In particular, since positive fantasies tended to relax people, was there a way that I could use dreaming to wake them up, get them into gear, and motivate them to succeed?

I reasoned that the best way to get people up and moving was to ask them to dream and then to confront them right away with the realities that stood in the way of their dreams. I called this confrontation “mental

contrasting.” If I could ground fantasies in reality through mental contrasting, I might be able to circumvent the calming effects of dreaming and mobilize dreams as a tool for prompting directed action.”

It’s so interesting that positive fantasies tend to relax people and demotivate them. When we are relaxed we are not taking the action needed to have the life we want. So keep dreaming those dreams but rub them up against reality fast.

Implementation Intentions!

“We also discovered that introducing a new element—the formation of an explicit plan in case the obstacle was encountered—made the mental contrasting work even better than it had on its own.”

This brings to mind the common saying. “If you don’t know where you are going, how are you going to get there?” Gabriele and her team discovered that: a specific plan designed to be implemented if the obstacle was encountered improved the effectiveness of mental contrasting. This is brilliant. But what’s even cooler is that it was her husband’s research that helped her to work this out.

“During the 1990’s, as I was experimenting with mental contrasting, my husband, Peter M. Gollwitzer, was pursuing fascinating research of his own in a related area. He was studying a concept that he called “implementation intentions,” the forging of explicit intentions about how to achieve a wish. If you break down the process by which people pursue wishes, you can distinguish the phases: an initial phase in which you weigh your options and decide to commit to a goal, and a second phase in which you plan how to take action to attain the wish. Decades of research had shown that strongly intending to pursue a wish can improve the chances that the wish will be realized.”

We need to make a specific plan of how we are going to bring our goals and wishes into action. Peter Gollwitzer (Gabriele’s husband) calls these plans implementation intentions.

IF (this happens) THEN (I will take this specific action)! It’s a powerful tool. Here are some examples.

IF I come up with an excuse for going for a walk THEN I will put on my shoes and start walking.

IF I feel lazy after dinner THEN I will go to my desk and study.

IF I start roaming around in the Internet THEN I will turn the WiFi off.

You get the idea.

Gabriele then brought mental contrasting and implementation intentions together and discovered something magic. WOOP.

Mental Contrasting + Implementation Intentions = WOOP

WOOP: It's magic!

Wish...

Outcome...

Obstacle...

Plan...

"On a blank sheet of paper, name the wish in three to six words. Identify the best outcome (also in three to six words) and write it down. Now let your thoughts lead your pen, taking as much paper as you need. Then name your obstacle and write it down. Imagine the obstacle, again letting your thoughts wander and lead your writing. To create a plan, first write down the if-then plan: "If obstacle x occurs (when and where), then I will perform behaviour y." Repeat it once to yourself out loud."

"What is your dearest wish? What 'within you' is holding you back from achieving it?" Let's put WOOP into action!

Wish _____

Outcome _____

Obstacle _____

Plan _____

IF _____ THEN _____

WOOP! There is it

"What might you learn from using WOOP? Where might WOOP take you? If you're like many people, you've found it hard at times to realize wishes even though they are in your grasp to achieve. Now is your chance to

engage your nonconscious mind and get all your energies behind a specific goal. It's your chance to discover what has been holding you back all this time and how to conquer it. It's your chance to connect with the world and those around you more forcefully than you ever have. What are you waiting for?"

Yes! What are you waiting for? The pages of Gabriele's book 'Rethinking Positive Thinking' are filled with an incredible array of research that she and her team have carried out over the last 20 plus years. They have tested WOOP so rigorously and I have found it so useful that it is now a tool I use on a daily basis. With the tool of WOOP you really can change in ways that you perhaps never thought possible. I highly recommend you get the book to find out all the specific details about WOOP and the research. It's a wonderful read. On that note the last words of the book are....

"Wishing you good luck on your journey of discovery, I'll end with two vital questions that I hope you never stop asking yourself: What is your dearest wish? What holds you back from achieving it?"

"What's your dearest wish?"

"What is it in you that holds you back from achieving it?"

Now WOOP it!

Wish _____

Outcome _____

Obstacle _____

Plan _____

IF _____ THEN _____

About the Author of 'Rethinking Positive Thinking' **Gabriele Oettingen**

Gabriele is a professor of psychology at New York University and the University of Hamburg and the author of more than a hundred articles and book chapters on the effects of future thought on cognition, emotion, and behaviour. She lives in New York City and in Hamburg, Germany. That's from her profile on Amazon. You can find out more about WOOP at www.woopmylife.org and you can download the woop app.

About the Author of this Move Note **Hazel Boot**

Hazel has a degree in Exercise and Sports Science. She is also an Anatomy Trains Structural Integrator and a Restorative Exercise Specialist. She works with clients to improve movement and reduce pain. She loves reading and geeking out on movement books. She writes notes on the books she loves to help others learn faster.

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I hope you enjoyed the content of this note but please remember that it is not medical advice and should not be used as such.